The Nordic Council of Ministers is a central platform for cultural co-operation in the Nordic countries. The activities of the Council of Ministers in the field of culture have ramifications in other areas of formal and informal Nordic co-operation, both in and outside the Nordic region.

Nordic cultural co-operation will manage the historical, cultural and linguistic heritage of the Nordic region. This will secure continuity while incorporating new cultural expressions and impulses in this co-operation. Changes in framework conditions for cultural life and art, population structure, technology, etc. require flexibility and innovation.

Fundamental to Nordic cultural co-operation is the principle of Nordic benefit, i.e. that the co-operation involves areas where the Nordic countries have common interests and challenges, and that co-operation at Nordic level increases the efficiency of development work. Greater experience and skills, and formation of networks, will develop and strengthen the Nordic region. Greater understanding of languages in the Nordic region will be encouraged. The principle of freedom of expression and the arm’s length principle will be defended. The cultural co-operation will promote sustainable development. Broadly-based cultural co-operation will develop a sense of unity and understanding between Nordic people and thereby promote cohesion in the Nordic welfare societies.

The strategy for Nordic cultural co-operation 2013–2020 consists of five themes:

- The sustainable Nordic region
- The creative Nordic region
- The intercultural Nordic region
- Young people in the Nordic region
- The digital Nordic region

The Council of Ministers for Culture hopes that, through these themes, changes and challenges in modern society will be captured, and specifically in the field of culture. The themes supplement and overlap each other.

More research and a broader knowledge base are needed when the culture policy is to be formulated and implemented. Digitalisation and other technological development, economics and demography, and internationalisation, globalisation and changing patterns of culture consumption change the conditions. In the work to implement the strategy, one priority will be to develop a knowledge base.

The interaction between the Nordic and the national level will be strengthened, to maximise the impact of the Nordic cultural initiatives.

The strategy will serve as a policy document for institutions and co-operation bodies in the Nordic Council of Ministers, and will be realised in the following ways:

- Through the institutions’ own operational objectives, target and performance contracts, and annual reports. The institutions will be encouraged to set up operational targets that will demonstrate the tangible effects of the overall objectives of the strategy on the institution’s activities
- In budget texts that stipulate priorities for the subsequent years
- In the strategic initiatives implemented by the Nordic Council of Ministers for Culture
- By strengthening co-operation between the national authorities for culture and Nordic cultural co-operation
- By intensifying dialogue at all levels
- Through an annual culture forum, where the Nordic institutions, co-operation bodies and programmes will discuss the opportunities and challenges involved in realising the strategy at policy level
- In the presidency programmes

In 2016, an interim report will be produced, which will examine the progress of the work to realise the objectives of the strategy, and whether they are still relevant or whether amendments are needed.

The Nordic Council of Ministers Strategy for Cultural Co-operation was adopted by the Council of Ministers for Culture on 31 October 2012.
The five themes of Nordic cultural co-operation 2013–2020

The sustainable Nordic region

Objective: Nordic cultural life will improve sustainability in the Nordic societies by being more accessible and engaging.

A vibrant art and cultural life is necessary in a modern society. Cultural experiences and activities are important for social development, identity and inclusion, and help to establish trust, respect and social bonding between people. Art and culture challenge and develop us as individuals and as a society, and thereby help to promote a sustainable society. Accessibility to a wide variety of art and cultural experiences is important, and everyone must be able to express themselves through art and culture. To solve some of the major challenges facing the Nordic welfare societies, a holistic approach is needed that embraces many sectors and policy areas. Investment in culture is very important for other social objectives, such as business development and employment, integration and inclusion, health, education and creativity.

The creative Nordic region

Objective: The Nordic region will be perceived as a vibrant, dynamic and creative cultural region.

Art and culture are pillars in the Nordic co-operation. Nordic institutions and programmes support everything from collective cultural expressions to the work of individual artists. The Council of Ministers for Culture will stimulate and support the production of high-quality culture and art. Cross-sectoral co-operation encourages Nordic exports to global markets, parallel with the Nordic countries prioritising the work to promote cultural and creative industries. Stronger and more long-term co-operation will strengthen the domestic market, and stimulate economic growth and international impact. Culture-specific objectives for the creative industries will strengthen the Nordic brand.

The intercultural Nordic region

Objective: All citizens of the Nordic countries will feel they belong and will participate in the cultural life of the Nordic region.

The cultural sector offers common arenas and meeting places for co-operation, dialogue and debate. An active and dynamic cultural life, manifested in a variety of cultural expressions, plays a key role in an inclusive society. Interculturality refers to the “existence and equitable interaction of different cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect” (UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions). Nordic cultural co-operation will promote openness and inclusion, and reflect the diversity in the Nordic community. The understanding of language in the Nordic countries will be promoted, thereby helping both integration and mutual learning. Public service broadcasting companies, cultural institutions and other bodies and people that create and disseminate art and culture play an important role in ensuring visibility of Nordic diversity.

Young people in the Nordic region

Objective: Children and young people in the Nordic region will create, participate in and have views on art and culture.

Children and young people have an important place in Nordic cultural co-operation. The Nordic countries have a common view of children and young people, and acknowledge their rights and their ability to exert influence over their own lives. It is essential that culture relating to children and young people is prioritised in Nordic support. The Council of Ministers for Culture will examine how children and young people can become involved in decision-making processes that affect them. Nordic co-operation must relate dynamically to the forms of cultural expression used by children and young people. Nordic cultural co-operation increases children’s and young people’s interest in and understanding of Nordic languages. Literature plays a particular role. Both physical and digital meeting places will stimulate greater interest in art and culture among children and young people.

The digital Nordic region

Objective: Nordic culture will benefit fully from digital technology

Digitalisation offers great opportunities for the Nordic region in an increasingly globalised world. Digitalisation enables common experiences – cultural and linguistic – and can thereby promote Nordic unity. Nordic cultural co-operation will use new technology in the work to protect freedom of expression and freedom of the press, and will ensure access to and awareness of Nordic art and culture. Digital communication is an important part of the work to democratise access to culture. The Nordic copyright model will be developed on democratic grounds, and public service and high-quality films will be supported, to ensure that a broad range of Nordic culture will be accessible to all. Further research in the field and greater media knowledge will improve opportunities for Nordic citizens.
Nordic co-operation

Nordic co-operation is one of the world’s most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland.

Nordic co-operation has firm traditions in politics, the economy, and culture. It plays an important role in European and international collaboration, and aims at creating a strong Nordic community in a strong Europe.

Nordic co-operation seeks to safeguard Nordic and regional interests and principles in the global community. Common Nordic values help the region solidify its position as one of the world’s most innovative and competitive.

Nordic Council of Ministers

The Nordic Council of Ministers is a central platform for cultural co-operation in the Nordic countries. The activities of the Council of Ministers in the field of culture have ramifications in other areas of formal and informal Nordic co-operation, both in and outside the Nordic region.

The interaction between the Nordic and the national level will be strengthened, to maximise the impact of the Nordic cultural initiatives.

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