



norden

Nordic Council

Rules of Procedure for the Nordic Council



2012
English

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

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

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

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



norden

Rules of
Procedure for the
Nordic Council

2012
English

Rules of Procedure for the Nordic Council

ISBN 978-92-893-2309-3

<http://dx.doi.org/10.6027/ANP2012-710>

ANP 2012:710

© Nordic Council

Cover: Jette Koefoed

Layout: Jette Koefoed

Print: Rosendahls-Schultz Grafisk A/S, Albertslund

Copies: 1000

Printed in Denmark



Nordic Council

Ved Stranden 18

DK-1061 Copenhagen K

Telefon +45 3396 0400

www.norden.org

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 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.

Content

- 1 Organisation and Sessions**
- 2 The Plenary**
- 3 The Presidium**
- 4 The Committees**
- 5 The Control Committee**
- 6 Processing business prior to final decisions**
- 7 Plenary debates and decisions**
- 8 Elections**
- 9 Other provisions**

PART 1

Organisation and Sessions

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

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

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

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

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

§5 *Committees*
The Council has five committees: the Culture, Education and Training Committee; the Welfare Committee; the Citizens' and Consumer Rights Committee; the Environment and Natural Resources Committee; and the Business and Industry Committee. The committees process business within their areas of competence prior to final consideration by the Council.

§6 *The Control Committee*
The Control Committee exercises parliamentary oversight over activities funded from Nordic budgets and conducts any other audits determined by the Plenary.

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

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

§9 *Party groups*
The elected members are entitled to form party groups. A group must have a minimum of four members from a minimum of two different countries.

PART 2

The Plenary

§10 *Members*
At the opening of a session, the Plenary approves a list of members who are present and of alternates who have replaced elected members. Alternates are called in the order determined by their country. Changes to the list must be determined by the Plenary and cannot be made during a debate or other deliberation.

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

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

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

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

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

§16 *The Public*
Meetings are open to the public unless the Plenary decides otherwise due to particular circumstances.

§17 *Agenda*
At the opening of a session the Plenary must approve the agenda proposed by the Presidium, which includes all matters to be considered and a timetable for the whole session. Amendments can be made later by a two-thirds majority.

Unless the Plenary decides by a two-thirds majority to change it, the agenda for sessions other than regular ones may not cover any business not included in the original summons to attend.

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

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

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

§21 *Supplementary rules*

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

PART 3

The Presidium

§22 *Composition*
The Presidium consists of the President, Vice-president and a maximum of 11 elected members. All countries and party groups must be represented.

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

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

§25 *Allocation of duties and planning of meetings*
The Presidium decides which bodies prepare matters for deliberation by the Plenary and is generally responsible for the planning and co-ordination of meetings of the various Council bodies.

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

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

In a tied vote the chairperson has the casting vote. Under special circumstances, the Presidium may be deemed quorate if the members are able to contact each other without them physically gathering for a meeting. The President is responsible for ensuring that minutes are taken at such meetings.

§28 *Meetings*
Unless the Presidium decides otherwise its meetings are not public. Representatives of the delegations and the party groups' secretariats have the right to be present unless there are particular grounds why they should not. The Presidium can also invite other individuals to attend and speak at its meetings.

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

§30 *Working groups and preparatory bodies*
The Presidium can set up working groups for particular tasks, determine their composition and set out their mandate, remit and time frame. Ordinary preparation of cases as per Article 19 is not affected by such arrangements.

§31 *Report*
Each year the Presidium submits a report to the Plenary covering all the activities of the Council and guidelines for future work.

PART 4

The Committees

§32 *Appointment and composition*
Each committee must consist of 13–15 members. The Plenary appoints the members, chairperson and vice-chairperson. In the absence of both the chairperson and vice-chairperson the committee appoints a chairperson for the day.

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

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

§34 *Decisions*
The regulations in Article 27 apply.

§35 *Meetings and public access*
The committees decide the time and place of their meetings. However, whenever the nature of the deliberations necessitates that several committees meet simultaneously, the time and place is determined by the Presidium. Extraordinary meetings can be called by the committee chairperson and must be called if one quarter of the committee's ordinary members so request.

Meetings are not public unless a committee so decides in a particular case. Otherwise, the regulations in Article 28 apply.

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

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

§38 *Duties*
In addition to matters referred by the Presidium, committees must monitor developments within their area of competence and pay particular attention to following up and evaluating reforms. Every committee must have a current plan of activities.

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

§40 *Further rules*
The Presidium is entitled to set overarching regulations for the work of the committees.

PART 5

The Control Committee

§41 *Composition* The Plenary appoints the chairperson, vice-chairperson plus five other members and their personal alternates. None of these may be a member or alternate in the current Presidium or have been a member or alternate in the previous calendar year. Each country must be represented.

The regulations in Articles 23 and 28 apply. Extraordinary meetings can be called by the chairperson and must be called if two members so request.

§42 *Quorum* The Control Committee is quorate when three members are present. The regulations in Article 27 paragraph 2 apply.

§43 *Special responsibilities* The Control Committee can submit its opinion to the Presidium on the interpretation of the Helsinki Treaty, other agreements on Nordic co-operation, these Rules of Procedure and other internal regulations.

PART 6

Processing business prior to final decisions

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

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

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

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

A member has the right to state reservations about a white paper or a statement under Article 45. If the white paper contains a proposal for a decision, the reservation must follow the same procedure as the recommendation or statement.

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

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

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

§50 *Deferring items of business*
The Plenary is entitled to defer deliberation of an item of business to a later date during the session or to a later session. The latter requires a two-thirds majority and involves the item of business being prepared again. Otherwise the same regulations apply as in Article 49.

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

PART 7

Plenary debates and decisions

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

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

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

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

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

§56 *Decisions*
When the debate on an item of business has concluded, the Plenary makes its decision. The chairperson must put each proposal forward in such a manner that it may be answered either Yes or No. A vote must be taken if required by an elected member or if the chairperson deems the outcome to be unclear.

§57 *Divisions* Voting is open and is done by roll call or by means of the electronic voting system. It is possible to vote Yes, No or Abstain. In the event of a tied vote, lots will be drawn to decide the outcome.

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

§58 *Questions* Elected members may pose questions to the national governments, including those of the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland, as well as to the Nordic Council of Ministers. Oral questions must be posed and answered during a special question time to be held at a time proposed by the Presidium in accordance with Article 21. Written questions must be answered within six weeks of receipt.

PART 8

Elections

§59 *The Election Committee*
The Election Committee consists of seven members and appoints its chairperson and vice-chairperson from among its own number.

§60 *Decisions*
The regulations in Article 27, paragraph 2 apply.

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

When submitting nominations a balance must be sought between the Nordic countries and between genders.

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

§63 *Proposals by the Election Committee*
The Election Committee draws up a proposal for names and, if required, the number of members. It must take into account Article 61, paragraph 2.

The Plenary can reject a proposal but cannot amend it. If it is not accepted, an election by secret ballot must be conducted as per Articles 64 or 65.

§64 *Election of a single person*
If only one person needs to be elected, this will be done by secret ballot if an elected member so requests.

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

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

§67 *Method of election*
Proportional elections are decided according to the D'Hondt method. In each round of voting, the person with the highest divisor is elected. The divisor for a list is equal to the votes cast for the list as long as none from the list concerned has been elected yet. Once a person has been elected, the figure is divided by two, and when two are elected, by three, and so on. Where there is a tie in the number of votes or the divisors, the outcome is decided by drawing lots. Candidates are elected in the order they appear on the list.

§68 *By-elections*
If the need for by-elections arises between sessions, they are conducted by the Presidium following nominations in accordance with Article 61, within a time period specified by the Presidium and following a proposal from the Election Committee.

§69 *Alternates*
In the absence of a member of a body other than the Plenary or Control Committee, the appropriate party group appoints an alternate who must be a member or alternate member of the Council. For members who do not belong to a party group, the member's party nominates the alternate. Delegations from the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland appoint alternates in the absence of ordinary members. Alternates on all bodies are subject to the same regulations as members.

PART 9

Other provisions

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

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

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

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

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

The Presidium appoints the personnel and sets the guidelines for the work of the Council Secretariat, which

prepares the business to be processed by Council bodies. During this preparation process, the Secretariat must collaborate with the secretariats of the delegations and the party groups.

§75 *The Delegations*
The delegations elect their chairperson and vice-chairperson from within their own number.

Each delegation is responsible for ensuring that decisions, including those of the Council of Ministers, are implemented in their own country.

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

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

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

§78 *Funding for individual members*
A member who does not belong to a party group receives the same individual allowance, unless a previous party grouping has already received the allowance for the individual concerned as per Article 77.

§79 *Accounts* Those who receive funding under Articles 77 or 78 must submit accounts for the previous year no later than 31 May. The Presidium must audit the accounts at its first meeting after 31 May and may set further rules for bookkeeping and accounting.

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



norden

Nordic Council

Ved Stranden 18
DK-1061 Copenhagen K
www.norden.org



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

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

ANP 2012:710
ISBN 978-92-893-2309-3