



Nordic children's and
youth committee
Action plan 2006-2009

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Nordic Council of Ministers

Store Strandstræde 18
DK-1255 Copenhagen K
Phone (+45) 3396 0200
Fax (+45) 3396 0202

Nordic Council

Store Strandstræde 18
DK-1255 Copenhagen K
Phone (+45) 3396 0400
Fax (+45) 3311 1870

www.norden.org

Nordic co-operation

Nordic co-operation, one of the oldest and most wide-ranging regional partnerships in the world, involves Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. Co-operation reinforces the sense of Nordic community while respecting national differences and similarities, makes it possible to uphold Nordic interests in the world at large and promotes positive relations between neighbouring peoples.

Co-operation was formalised in 1952 when *the Nordic Council* was set up as a forum for parliamentarians and governments. The Helsinki Treaty of 1962 has formed the framework for Nordic partnership ever since. The *Nordic Council of Ministers* was set up in 1971 as the formal forum for co-operation between the governments of the Nordic countries and the political leadership of the autonomous areas, i.e. the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

Introduction

The Nordic Council of Ministers' policy on children and young people is implemented by means of a multi-sector action plan. Previous action plans have met with limited success. As a result, the new action plan for children and young people is based on a different structure and applies to all sectors covered by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The new strategy and action plan will also determine the work of the Nordic Children's and Youth Committee (NORDBUK). The aim is to co-ordinate multi-sectoral activities with NORDBUK's own activities. A children and youth perspective will be integrated into all relevant Nordic Council of Ministers' activities and the work of NORDBUK will be accorded a higher profile. NORDBUK co-ordinates work on issues affecting children and young people in the Nordic countries and the Autonomous Territories. It is made up of representatives of national governments and youth organisations. The definition of children and young people covers everyone aged 0–25. The range does, however, vary according to the context.

Objective and purpose

The purpose of this action plan, and of NORDBUK, is to work towards the policy goals stipulated in the overall strategy for Nordic co-operation on children and young people. The main objective of the Nordic Council of Ministers' policy on children and young people is to promote opportunities for the young to enjoy a decent standard of living and exert influence over their own lives. This is done through:

1. NORDBUK's multi-sectoral co-ordinating role, the purpose of which is to incorporate a children and youth perspective into all relevant Nordic Council of Ministers' activities.
2. NORDBUK's own activities.

1. NORDBUK'S multi-sectoral co-ordinating role

NORDBUK provides input into the work done in all sectors in pursuit of the overall strategy for children and young people. It is responsible for following up on the strategy and co-ordinating all the work done by the Nordic Council of Ministers on issues relating to children and young people. NORDBUK also promotes a multi-sectoral approach to the themes covered by the strategy and serves in an advisory and consultative capacity on matters of participation and influence.

NORDBUK:

1. Provides input to support the work done by the councils of ministers, e.g. providing information about young people's lives by co-ordinating and collating research at Nordic level.
2. Disseminates information about the strategy.
3. Stimulates contact and discussion between sectors.
4. Acts in an advisory and consultative capacity whenever the Nordic Council of Ministers considers new action plans that fall within the remit of the strategy.
5. Collates annual reports from the sectors on activities that have a bearing upon children and young people.

NORDBUK's work on the strategy will be evaluated in 2008.

2. NORDBUK's own activities

In pursuit of the main strategic goals, and in addition to its multi-sectoral activities, NORDBUK also runs projects on subjects not covered by the other sectors into which the Nordic Council of Ministers divides up its activities:

2.1 Helping children's and young people's organisations to organise autonomously and work together at Nordic level.

NORDBUK allocates funding for youth projects and for children's and young people's organisations. Funding is only available to activities closely linked to the overall aims of the strategy. The Nordic Council of Ministers' strategy for children and young people is based on age (0–25), diversity (i.e. it is irrespective of ethnic origin, gender, disability, etc.), Nordic synergy and international co-operation. The same considerations inform all funding decisions. Grant-funded activities must reflect strategic priorities, but funding for organisations run by children and young people must be flexible enough to ensure that new methods of organisation are stimulated.

2.2 Supporting the development and promotion of new ways for children and young people to participate in the democratic process.

Participation by children and young people has long been a subject of discussion, and is an important issue at all political levels in the Nordic countries. National youth policies in the Nordic Region revolve around participation, and new types of participation are encouraged at local level. Hitherto, the lack of interest among children and young people in traditional forms of involvement has been regarded as the core problem.

NORDBUK aims to reverse this situation and stress the failings of the existing structures. If the young are to exert an influence on their own lives, their immediate surroundings and their social development, the existing structures will have to allow them to make a real impact. NORDBUK practises ‘co-management’ within the Nordic Council of Ministers, i.e. the youth organisations and the official bodies participate on an equal footing.

2.3 More diverse funding.

Diversity and equality are basic pillars of the Nordic Council of Ministers’ strategy for children and young people. NORDBUK is not restricted to addressing age issues. It is also entitled to comment on issues pertaining to gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability. These subjects are often interwoven, so NORDBUK must deliberately aim to encourage diversity in all of its activities. NORDBUK will continue to meet the needs and challenges of the multi-cultural Nordic Region, primarily by informing and prioritising the funding system so that more young people enjoy the chance to apply for funding for their organisations and projects. The funding system also needs to be simpler and more accessible. One option is to make greater use of the Internet.

2.4 Promoting human rights and democracy.

NORDBUK’s vision is of a society open enough to deal with the complex issues related to the rights of children and young people in a democratic, inclusive and enriching way, rather than a society that responds in a manner that marginalises the young. In all of the Nordic countries and Autonomous Territories, the groundwork has been done to deliver on civil and political rights as well as economic and social rights. All the Nordic countries have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. All relevant individuals and organisations must familiarise themselves with the Convention and act in the spirit of it, if the human rights of children and young people are to be protected and promoted. One of NORDBUK’s tools is the funding system, which can be used to raise the level of awareness about human rights and democracy. Greater awareness encourages children and young people to stand up for their rights.

2.5 Closer collaboration and co-ordination at international level.

NORDBUK promotes co-operation with other international youth bodies, such as the Nordic Youth Council. NORDBUK promotes the exchange of information on European and international youth policy in order to benefit from synergy. NORDBUK also collaborates with the Autonomous Territories and with the Nordic Region’s neighbours. Another part of

NORDBUK's remit is to co-ordinate more effectively co-operation on issues affecting children and young people at regional level in the North of Europe.

2.6 Conducting research and disseminating the results via the NORDBUK youth research co-ordinator.

The higher education sector in the Nordic Region conducts extensive research into children and young people within a range of academic disciplines, as well as in stand-alone projects commissioned by national and local authorities. NORDBUK needs data on children and young people in order to achieve specific objectives and manage its activities. In particular, in-depth information is needed in order to provide input into the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers. One important element of NORDBUK's work consists of co-ordinating and communicating the information generated by this research. The overall knowledge base is improved by promoting joint Nordic research. It is the role of the co-ordinator to ensure that all relevant information is made available to the Nordic Council of Ministers, national authorities in the Nordic countries and Nordic youth organisations. On occasion, when it identifies a gap in research provision, NORDBUK initiates research, a process that may necessitate direct contact between the co-ordinator and youth groups.

Annual activity plans

The sector changes all the time, so action plans for children and young people have to be flexible enough to take the latest developments into account. Flexibility is ensured by planning for each incoming annual Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers. NORDBUK conducts an annual re-appraisal of the specific activities that fall within the framework outlined above. Room is left for other activities in the annual plans because it is impossible to predict everything that might happen. Local, national, Nordic and international policies on children and young people are often confronted by unforeseen challenges.

Follow-up and assessment

All NORDBUK activities are subjected to continuous follow-up and assessment. This action plan will be evaluated in 2008.

This action plan was adopted by the Nordic Ministers for Co-operation at their meeting in Copenhagen on 1st March 2006.