

## **NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS' SUPPORT PROGRAMME FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION**

### **Background**

On December 10, 2004, the Nordic ministers for co-operation adopted guidelines for co-operation with Northwest Russia and the Baltic States respectively for the period 2006-2008. These guidelines form the framework for the Nordic Council of Ministers' co-operation with Russia and the Baltic States. On October 27, 2005, the Nordic ministers for co-operation adopted a special programme for Russia for the period 2006-2008 to firm up the guidelines for co-operation with Northwest Russia. This programme confirms the view that NGOs have a key role to play in efforts to evolve a democratic society.

### **Why is the Nordic Council of Ministers supporting NGOs?**

The Nordic countries have a long tradition of public participation in societal development and public affairs through non-governmental and voluntary organisations. There is a firm belief among the Nordic governments that co-operation between NGOs in the Baltic Sea Region will promote pluralistic contacts across the borders and prosperity and democracy in the region. The Nordic governments have asked the Nordic Council of Ministers to set up a NGO programme to support these efforts. The Nordic Support Programme for Non-Governmental Organisations in the Baltic Sea Region was adopted in May 2006.

### **What is the NGO programme?**

The NGO programme is a Nordic instrument that supports the development of a strong and dynamic civil society in the Baltic Sea Region through cross border co-operation. A gender equality perspective has been integrated in the NGO programme in compliance with the overall principles that have been approved by the Nordic ministers for co-operation.

The NGO programme will be co-ordinated with national programmes in the Nordic countries. The programme will also be co-ordinated with corresponding programmes under the Nordic Council of Ministers' "knowledge building and network" programme.

### **How does the programme define a non-governmental organisation?**

NGOs are defined in the programme as non-profit civil society organisations that are neither owned nor controlled by the authorities or commercial companies and have a transparent and democratic decision-making structure. NGOs are however allowed to receive government or private financial funding.

### **What is a partnership project?**

The NGO programme supports partnership projects. Partnership projects are so called tripartite co-operation projects with Nordic, Estonian/Latvian/Lithuanian/Polish and Russian/Belarusian participation. Programme activities are designed to strengthen NGOs which are already active in Russia and Belarus as well as to help establish new organisations. The projects should primarily support broad organisational structures that can be further developed without additional assistance when the co-operation project is

concluded. It must be made possible for official bodies in Russia and Belarus to enter into partnerships with NGOs around projects that promote closer collaboration between official decision-makers and civic society. The NGO programme covers only project-related activities and not the operational costs of the participating NGOs.

### **Who can apply for funding from the NGO programme?**

Nordic, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian and Belarusian organisations may apply for funding. In order to be eligible for support, there must be at least one partner in either Russia or Belarus, at least one partner in the Nordic region, and at least one partner in the three Baltic States or Poland. The Nordic Council of Ministers can also initiate initiatives together with NGO's in the region and stimulate co-operation between different partnership projects.

The Nordic Council of Ministers can promote the establishment of larger structures by combining several applications if their subjects are mutually relevant. Funds will be divided between the Russian and the Belarusian sub-programmes in accordance with identified potential activities. A minimum of one third of the estimated funds must, however, be given to each of the two sub-programmes.

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The NGO programme was launched in early October 2006. Please follow the news on [www.norden.org](http://www.norden.org) under International co-operation.

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