



An Open Nordic Region

Looking back at the past year

in the Nordic Council and

Nordic Council of Ministers

2003



The pictures on the back cover and on pages 1, 2 and 24 are from the exhibition *Reflections – in a New Nordic Light*.

On the back cover, left is a work by *Magne Furuholmen* (Norway), top right one by *Vignie Johansson* (Iceland), and bottom right one by *Trondur Patursson* (Faroe Islands). On page 1 is a work by *Olle Bonniér* (Sweden), and on page 2 *Per Kirkeby* (Denmark) is supervising the installation of a large decorative piece. On page 24, left is a picture of *Per Hebsgaard's* glass studio, top right a work by *Frans Widerberg* (Norway), and bottom right one by *Per Kirkeby*.

Photo: Lars Gundersen.

Excerpt from the Exhibition Brochure

The art of glasswork can be extremely versatile. In the hands of renowned Nordic artists, this traditional material has entered new aesthetic dimensions. Glass sculptures, painting, objects and tableware are only few of the multiple artistic forms that glass can take. This exhibition includes works of both young artists and already recognized masters, each distinguished by an original creative approach. The exhibition will acquaint the viewer with the infinite and exciting possibilities of this medium, altering our common conceptions of what glasswork can be.

Artists who normally work with painting and sculpting find ways to express new ideas in the medium of glass. Glass is undoubtedly an old and familiar material. Traditional techniques of glass working have been known since the time when stained glass was manufactured in the Middle Ages. However, in the hands of contemporary artists this material becomes capable of transforming a traditional art into a progressive one, breaking out of its ordinary boundaries. In addition to the significance of the artist and of the artist's work in this exhibition, there is another factor that contributes to

the experience: All of the works presented have been created in the studio of *Per Steen Hebsgaard*.

It is impossible to imagine the world of Danish art without *Per Hebsgaard*, who has also earned an international reputation. Due to his vast knowledge and particularly to his unlimited desire to experiment with glass, he enjoys universal acclaim. Nothing seems to be impossible for him. A variety of fresh and original techniques have emerged out of his innovative spirit. The glassworks created in his studio are more than merely applied art in the traditional sense. *Reflections – in a New Nordic Light* attempts to introduce the public to the multitude of embodiments and forms of Nordic glasswork.

ASTRID LA COUR



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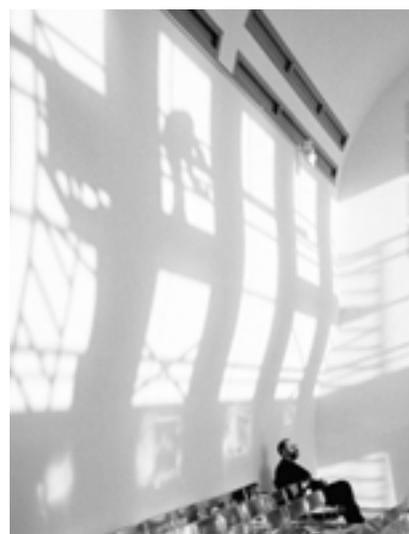
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Preface

SEVERAL MAJOR CHALLENGES characterised Nordic co-operation in 2003. The most important were the intensification of co-operation all round the Baltic Sea – a natural reaction to EU enlargement – and the efforts to remove border obstacles in the Nordic Region. The significance of this co-operation is growing.

Within Nordic co-operation work continued with undiminished effort to find solutions to cross-border barriers in 2003. The simplification of customs procedures, joint vocational qualifications, a new Nordic social convention, and new and faster national civil registration systems as well as a tax agreement for Swedish and Danish border commuters are some of the results. Through these and future efforts to make it simpler to work in the neighbouring countries, the Nordic Region will gain a competitive edge internationally.

Further steps were taken towards co-operation between partners of equal standing with the Baltic States. Forms of co-operation within Europe and the EU were debated both at governmental and parliamentary levels. Through joint Nordic-Baltic ministerial and parliamentary meetings, relationships were consolidated in order to create a joint region in Northern Europe, and to take advantage of common interests e.g. in the EU.

The Nordic Annual Report for 2003 is a simplified edition in comparison to previ-

ous years. Nevertheless, we hope that the selected items give a representative picture of Nordic co-operation over the past year. Please also visit www.norden.org to find more detailed information on Nordic co-operation. Formal statements of accounts and other facts will be issued by the respective organisations during the first half of 2004.

A brand new publication focusing on issues relating to the future of the Nordic countries will appear in the second half of 2004.

The Nordic Region which is being built now is an open Nordic Region – facing towards our neighbours and all those who are seeking a new future in our part of Europe.



FRIDA NOKKEN

Director of the Nordic Council



PER UNCKEL

*Secretary General of
the Nordic Council of Ministers*

Nordic Co-operation

THE IDEA OF close political co-operation between the Nordic countries arose immediately after World War II. The Nordic Council was set up in 1952 to facilitate co-operation between Nordic parliamentarians, and a series of groundbreaking reforms were implemented over the next few years. The Nordic governments have co-operated in the Nordic Council of Ministers since 1971.

The Nordic passport union, the joint Nordic labour market and the same social security rights for Nordic citizens living in another Nordic country are three impor-

tant results of early Nordic co-operation. In later years, the focus has been on issues such as the environment, gender equality, education and research, and integration. Co-operation with the Baltic States and Northwest Russia has especially been emphasised.

Nordic co-operation involves Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden as well as the autonomous areas of the Faroe Islands, Greenland and the Åland Islands.

See also the organisation diagrams on page 31.

■ Nordic Council

The Nordic Council is the inter-parliamentary body of the parliaments of Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland, as well as of the autonomous areas of the Faroe Islands, Greenland and the Åland Islands.

The Council consists of 87 members elected by their respective parliaments.

The political composition should reflect the political balance in the individual national parliaments as far as possible, but in the Council the members work together in party groups across national boundaries.

The Nordic Council's task is to take initiatives, advise the Nordic ministers and

to monitor the implementation of decisions about Nordic co-operation. The Presidium consisting of the President and 12 ordinary members is in charge of the everyday affairs of the Nordic Council.

Nordic Council of Ministers

The Nordic Council of Ministers is the inter-governmental body of the governments of the Nordic countries and of the autonomous areas. The one-year Presidency alternates between the five Nordic countries.

General responsibility for the Nordic Council of Ministers lies with the Prime Ministers but is delegated in practice to the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation and to the Nordic Committee for Cooperation. In addition to the Prime Ministers and the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation, the Nordic Council of Ministers

consists of about 20 different ministerial councils. The Nordic Council of Ministers co-operates across national boundaries. In exceptional circumstances, decisions taken by the Nordic Council of Ministers are subject to approval by the national governments or parliaments.

The Nordic Council of Ministers is responsible for approximately 1,700 on-going projects, and more than 30 Nordic institutions are financed either wholly or in part by its budget. The institutions solve specific tasks in clearly defined spheres.

■ Building Blocks of an Open Nordic Region

The removal of remaining obstacles to and the reduction of friction for freedom of movement were among the objectives of the Nordic Council in 2003. The creation of a stronger connection between Nordic co-operation and the national parliaments was another goal.

In the international arena, the Council aimed at using regional co-operation as a role model at European as well as at global level. Co-operation with the Baltic Assembly was to be strengthened and the Council was to contribute to the implementation of the Northern Dimension. Conflict prevention and civilian crisis management as well as the fight against cross-border crime and trafficking in human beings were to be highlighted.

Emphasis was placed on fighting racism, developing research and the IT society, and on improving the situation of children and young people.

Norwegian Inge Lønning was elected President of the Nordic Council to lead



Inge Lønning,
Nordic Council
President in 2003

parliamentary co-operation and to follow up on the Council guidelines. At the beginning of his period in office he declared that Nordic co-operation should contribute towards making life easier for the people living in the Nordic Region.

“We still have problems in many areas in all Nordic countries. It is now high time that we face up to the truth and accept the challenges ahead,” Lønning pointed out.

Throughout the year Lønning referred several times to the importance of solving the various obstacles to freedom of movement in the Nordic countries. In an article he wrote that the Nordic countries will be less attractive in the future if freedom of movement is limited within the region.

Integration was another subject that Lønning raised. In his opinion, all the Nordic countries have set admirable targets for their integration policies, but they must be self-critical enough to realise that there is a wide gap between aims and reality. Targets as such do not resolve any problems.

“Building a diverse and multicultural society is no easy task. Integration is not the same as assimilation. It requires sacrifices to be made by everyone, even by the relatively homogenous majority population,” said Inge Lønning.

EU enlargement and the Northern Dimension were also on the agenda under Lønning’s Presidency.



■ »Integration Norden«

The theme of the Swedish Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2003 was “Integration Norden”. The Swedish Minister Berit Andnor was chairperson for the Ministers of Nordic Co-operation in 2003.

“EU enlargement makes the deepening of Nordic co-operation a pressing matter. It is also important to extend it to include the new Baltic Member States. Then we can collectively promote issues such as the environment, consumer policies, gender equality and welfare with greater weight within the EU,” commented Berit Andnor about the work of integration in the Nordic countries.

The programme for the Swedish Presidency addressed four different aspects of integration.

The first concerned integration *within the Nordic countries* – e.g. influence in political, economic, social and cultural life,

immigrant women’s involvement and participation in society and stopping housing segregation.



Above:
“Integration Norden”,
the Swedish Presidency
logo 2003

Berit Andnor, Swedish
Minister for Nordic
Co-operation in 2003



A conference was held in Malmö to discuss the lives of immigrant women in the Nordic countries. Approximately 400 delegates attended from the entire Nordic Region, including ministers, civil servants and immigrant women. The conference dealt with widely differing subjects, such as arranged marriages, discrimination in everyday life and “men in alien cultures”.

The second aspect concerned integration *between the Nordic countries*. Although the Nordic countries have shared a common labour market for years and all the countries are included in the EU internal market, differences in certain national regulations raise unnecessary barriers for the free movement of people, businesses and organisations.

During its Presidency Sweden systematically dealt with specific obstacles and always set a fixed time frame for achieving results. A number of obstacles to freedom of movement were abolished during the year. An important element in the removal of cross-border obstacles was the appointment of former Danish Prime

Minister Poul Schlüter as special envoy to promote freedom of movement. Schlüter was a major contributor towards giving this work a central focus during the year.

The third aspect concerned the integration *between the Nordic countries and the adjacent areas*. It is important to develop co-operation with the Baltic States – especially against the background of EU enlargement. Co-operation with Northwest Russia was given high priority in the Nordic programme for co-operation with the adjacent areas. Greater importance was attached to the work between the EU and Russia to create a common European economic area.

The fourth aspect concerned the integration of the Nordic countries *in European co-operation*. Three Nordic countries are members of the European Union and two are part of the EU internal market through the EEA Treaty. Sweden worked to increase the impact of Nordic positions within the EU internal market. Nordic co-operation can conversely produce valuable input to the European agenda.

Meetings of the European Council are now preceded by a meeting of the Nordic Prime Ministers. This year the Baltic PMS were invited to these meetings. During the Swedish Presidency, formal EU co-operation was extended to the Ministers

of Gender Equality, Consumer Affairs and the Environment. Furthermore, the entire Nordic Council of Ministers is involved in EU issues to a greater extent in accordance with guidelines drawn up in a programme on an international Nordic Region.

■ New Secretary General for the Nordic Council of Ministers

Per Unckel from Sweden took over as Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers on 1 January 2003. Per Unckel is a former member of the Swedish Parliament. In 1998 he became chairman of the Committee on the Constitution, and in 1999 he was elected leader of the parliamentary party of the Moderate Party.

“I believe in networking with people rather than having them work in a hierarchy. I am goal-oriented and not afraid of change, and I adhere to the principles of

visionary management. That is the best way to achieve results,” he said in a comment at the time of taking office.

“There are many important areas within Nordic co-operation. Last year freedom of movement and the difficulties of moving between the Nordic countries drew most attention. Contact with the countries around the Baltic Sea will be of increasing importance in the new European co-operation structure which is being outlined now,” said Per Unckel.

■ Nordic Council Session in Oslo

The discussion on freedom of movement was the main theme at the Nordic Council Session on 27–29 October.

Co-operation with East and West, as well as with the EU, was the subject of much debate during the Session. The announcement of the Nordic Prime Ministers that the Baltic States had officially been invited to become full members of the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) met with wide acclaim. NIB is the first Nordic institution to include them. According to Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson, this was a tangible expression of Nordic willingness to deepen Nordic-Baltic co-operation, and could be the first of many.

Another example of advances in the Nordic-Baltic relationship was that, for the first time in the history of the Nordic Council, the chairman of the Baltic Council of Ministers, Lithuanian Prime Minister Algirdas Brazauskas, made a speech at the opening of the Council Session. The Swedish Moderate Party leader, Fredrik Reinfeldt, repeated his party’s demand for full Council membership for the Baltic States. The possibility for future Nordic-Baltic co-operation in Europe was emphasised from several sides.

Exchange programmes for young people in the Nordic countries and Northwest Russia, parliamentarians from Kaliningrad

visiting the Nordic countries, a theme meeting on the Northern Dimension with Russian parliamentarians, and an environmental action plan for the Murmansk area are some concrete measures for further co-operation with the East in 2004.

The sustainable use of marine resources, lack of transport infrastructure and the desire of the Faroe Islands for full membership in the Nordic Council were issues in the debate on the West Nordic Region. Many issues will be followed up during 2004 by the Icelandic Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

The Nordic countries need to coordinate their research resources to cope with European and American competition. There was broad agreement between parliamentarians and ministers when the Council of Ministers presented its White Paper on the future of research in the Nordic Region. This Paper proposes that a Nordic Research and Innovation Council, NoFIR, be set up. The debate stressed the need for attractive research environments to retain the best scientists and to ensure that Nordic Centres of Excellence are world leaders in their fields.

Environmental issues, especially concerning the Baltic Sea and oil transport, prostitution and trafficking in human beings, wolf hunting and whaling stirred up much emotion. The news of the establishment of a Nordic Film Prize was received with great interest by the media.

The annual Nordic prizes were awarded at a festive ceremony. The Swede Eva Ström won the Literature Prize for her poetry collection "Revbensstäderna" (The Rib Cities), and the Finnish Nature League the Nature and Environment Prize for their work with children and young people. The winner of the Music Prize, Marie Boine, attracted attention by



Poul Schlüter, special envoy of the Swedish Minister for Nordic Co-operation to promote freedom of movement

expressing her support for Sami membership of the Nordic Council.

The Nordic Prime Ministers met and also held a meeting with their Baltic colleagues. The Council Presidium met the leadership of the Baltic Assembly and agreed to hold the next joint session in Pärnu in Estonia in April 2005. The Environment, Citizens' and Welfare Committees debated *e.g.* gas and oil extraction as well as nuclear waste with the leader of the Murmansk Regional Duma, Pavel Sazhinov. The goal was to establish contacts with Northwest Russia.

"The Northern Dimension is more and more about democracy and sustainable development in Northwest Russia," said Jens Chr. Larsen from the Centre Group.

Swedish parliamentarian Gabriel Romanus from the Centre Group was elected President of the Nordic Council for 2004, and Swedish Social Democrat Anita Johansson was elected to the newly established office of Vice-President.



Mari Boine and Eva Ström

International Nordic Region

■ Nordic Countries and the European Union

“As the European Union welcomes new members it is taking a large and important step towards European unity, prosperity and peace. An enlarged EU will influence co-operation in other international forums too. Many different forms of co-operation will develop between the EU Member States, amongst other things co-operation in regional groups.”

This is a summary of the new challenges facing the Nordic countries in the

introduction to “Nordic Co-operation in the EU. The Nordic Council of Ministers’ European Activities 2002–2003”.

It is a report submitted by the Nordic Council of Ministers to the Nordic Council. Partnerships in Nordic co-operation will have to be adjusted to meet the requirements of the new challenges emerging from a Europe with a completely new political map.

■ Nordic Co-operation in a European Framework

The Nordic Council of Ministers issues a yearly report on its European activities. In 2003 the focus was on the relationship between Nordic co-operation and the enlarged European co-operation. Particular emphasis was placed on collaboration with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and with Northwest Russia. The 2003 report contains “The International Nordic Region – Nordic Co-operation in a European Framework”. This document was adopted by the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation on 5 September 2003 as guidelines for the future collaboration of the Nordic Council of Ministers with the surrounding world. Here are three quotations from the report:

“In a global age with a greatly enlarged EU, the challenge facing Nordic co-operation is to develop the intra-Nordic dialogue on international questions and on European questions even further.”

“The challenge is to maintain and develop Nordic influence on European co-operation as the EU is being expanded from 15 to 25 Member States. The Nordic Region pressed for EU membership to its Eastern European and Baltic neighbours. When the EU is enlarged, new institutional forms and decision-making processes will be unavoidable.”

“A joint Nordic regional approach within the EU is not synonymous with a Nordic bloc policy, but indicates that the

intention is to co-operate at a European level as far as possible. Conversely the EU has both a political and an operational interest in efficient regional co-operation

structures that can relieve the pressure on the EU's 'own' institutions and capacity. In this way Nordic co-operation will strengthen the Nordic Region in the EU."

■ Synergy through Better Co-ordination

"Nordic advantage must be the basis for all of our work in the adjacent areas. We need to co-ordinate efforts in order to use resources as efficiently as possible," said the Finnish Minister for Nordic Co-operation, Jan Erik Enestam, during the debate on co-operation with the adjacent areas at the Nordic Council Session in Oslo.

He referred to the Council of Ministers' report on the Nordic Region and Europe, and drew particular attention to the forging of closer contacts between the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Barents Council and the Arctic Council. While the Council of Ministers has an operating budget, the other councils are financed through programmes or on a project by project basis.

Enestam stressed that the entire Baltic Sea region is being strategically evaluated.

The Danish Minister for Nordic Co-operation, Flemming Hansen, was also concerned with the new Nordic direction during the European debate at the Nordic Council Session at the end of October.

"We have long been inward looking in the Nordic countries. We now need to turn the compass around and look at how international developments will affect the Nordic Region," said Flemming Hansen.

"The Nordic Region must continue to be a growth region in Europe and a model for others, but that will require prioritisation," he pointed out. Minister Hansen sees progress towards closer co-operation with the Baltic States – including from within the institutions of the Council of



Three Prime Ministers meet the press: Kjell Magne Bondevik, Anders Fogh Rasmussen and Göran Persson

Ministers – as a positive factor in the future development of Nordic co-operation.

Norwegian Prime Minister, Kjell Magne Bondevik, was also engaged with the new Europe during the Session, even though Norway, like Iceland, is not part of the EU but is a member of the economic co-operation through the EEA.

Extended co-operation through the EU/EEA is also of importance for future Nordic co-operation. This involves a reinforcement of Nordic-Baltic collaboration.

“We have many political tools today for the development of Nordic co-operation. The Nordic contribution in the future will also be significant with regard to the development and enlargement of the EU,” said Kjell Magne Bondevik.

The top priority for Iceland will be to strengthen Nordic co-operation on the marine environment, sustainable development and on the management of marine resources in the neighbouring regions in and around the North Atlantic. But Icelandic Prime Minister, Davíð Oddsson, was also concerned with the Nordic Region’s neighbours to the east:

“Nordic co-operation with the Baltic States and Northwest Russia has been fruitful, and we must continue to take great care of this region. Now that the Baltic States are joining the EU we must take stock of this co-operation to ensure that it continues to be efficient in the altered political climate.”

Stronger Northern Dimension

The enlargement of the EU to include Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will move its centre of gravity towards the North. This will strengthen the Northern Dimension. The Nordic work in the adjacent areas has been led by the responsible Councils of Ministers as part of their normal activities, but also through a separate Adjacent Areas Programme. The Council of Ministers has information offices in Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius and St Petersburg.

In 2003 new efforts were made to open an office in Kaliningrad. The following activities in the Baltic States and Northwest Russia are worth noting:

- Development programmes in the public sector, for companies and for specialists in e.g. energy.
- An action plan for children and young people.
- Cross-border co-operation.

As a partner in the EU Northern Dimension the Nordic Council of Ministers’ ambition is to coordinate Nordic efforts in the adjacent areas with the work taking place within the EU.

Once Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania join the EU, the nature of the activities in these countries will change towards more normal partnership. A large number of joint Nordic-Baltic ministerial meetings were held in 2003.

The Council of Ministers has decided to increase its efforts in Northwest Russia. An evaluation of the activities in the adjacent areas will take place in the first half of 2004. The result will form the basis for developing the future strategy for co-operation with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and with Northwest Russia.

■ Nordic-Baltic Dimension

Environmental issues and safety at sea, the war on organised drug-related crime and on trafficking in women and children were the central themes of the joint meeting of the Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly in Lund. Discussions at the meeting included EU issues, the Northern Dimension and co-operation in the Nordic-Baltic region as well as specific questions on civil crisis management and conflict resolution.

Co-operation between the Nordic and Baltic parliamentarians began in 1989 and has gradually expanded since the independence of the Baltic States, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dismantling of the communist dictatorships in the former Eastern European bloc.

Another theme was the protection of the marine environment of the Baltic Sea. This was brought about by the work in progress to classify the Baltic Sea as a particularly sensitive sea area (PSSA).

“The fact that parliamentarians from all of the countries around the Baltic Sea want to classify it as a particular sensitive sea area, and to ban single-hulled oil tankers, represents a major breakthrough for marine safety,” said Outi Ojala, chairperson of the Presidium for the 12th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in Oulu in September.

“The political process and practical co-operation with the Nordic Council in the run-up to Baltic EU membership are of great significance for our joint future in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania,” stated the head of the Baltic Assembly, Giedrė Purvaneckienė, during the Lund conference. She underlined the importance of the EU referendums and hoped that the Baltic

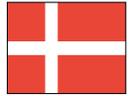
electorate would seize this historic opportunity to vote their countries into modern Europe.

Giedrė Purvaneckienė did not believe that Baltic EU membership would jeopardise co-operation with the Nordic Region. She believed that since the Nordic countries consult each other before EU meetings even though they are not all members, there is no reason why a combination of Baltic membership in the EU and institutionalised co-operation with the Nordic Region should not be of mutual benefit.

In the long term, Purvaneckienė thought the Baltic States should be members of the Nordic Council, and believed that a parliamentary body embracing eight countries would make a greater impact than one with five.

The President of the Nordic Council, Inge Lønning, stressed after the meetings that organised crime, the environment and especially the new regional policies in the EU discussed at the conference are subjects of mutual interest for both Nordic and Baltic politicians.

The fact that the issue of alleged corruption in Latvia was addressed from the floor shows that the new democracies are also beginning to exercise self-criticism. Inge Lønning thought this was a positive sign. “It takes time to build democracy after decades of suppression but the openness of the discussion is encouraging,” stated Lønning.





■ Baltic States Join Nordic Investment Bank

At the Nordic and Baltic Prime Ministers' meeting at the Session in Oslo, the Baltic States were officially invited to participate in the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB).

NIB is the joint international financial institution of the Nordic countries. It offers companies and organisations, both in the private and the public sector, long term loans for environmental purposes, amongst other things.

"This is a historic day," said Estonian Prime Minister, Juhan Parts, at the subsequent press conference. He also officially accepted the invitation to participate in the bank. The two other Baltic States also expressed themselves positively on membership.

NIB is giving an environmental loan of 45 million euros to the largest waste water treatment project in the Baltic. The construction of the south-west waste water treatment plant in St Petersburg can now

begin. The plant will be completed within three years.

Waste water from almost one million people currently flows untreated into the Gulf of Finland and negatively affects water quality throughout the Baltic.

The project also includes the construction of a sludge incinerator. The investment will greatly reduce outflows of dirty and polluted water into the Gulf of Finland and the Baltic Sea. Thus the project will have a significant ecological impact.

■ Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health

The Nordic Council of Ministers needs to push the EU Northern Dimension in a positive direction. The Nordic countries have their own Adjacent Areas Programme that could help produce results within the Northern Dimension.

The Council of Ministers released its contribution to the EU Northern Dimension Action Plan 2004–2006 in March with proposals for increased Nordic efforts to implement the Northern Dimension and to strengthen EU work in northern Europe. This submission should be seen as an expression of joint, regional, Nordic

action within the European framework.

The experiences of the Council of Ministers from long-term work in the Baltic States, especially with regard to environmental work and the exchange of know-how, could be of immense benefit. Funds from the Nordic budget could also be used to implement projects within the Northern Dimension.

A further step was taken when fifteen states, including the Nordic countries, and eight international organisations, inter alia the Nordic Council of Ministers, decided to establish a Partnership



in Public Health and Social Wellbeing within the framework of the Northern Dimension. This Partnership aims to

improve quality of life through the coordination of efforts and increased co-operation.

■ Focus on Baltic Sea Region

“The Nordic Region has demonstrated how co-operation can solve mutual problems. Now it is high time for the entire Baltic Sea region to be integrated in a similar way,” said former Danish Foreign Minister, Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, in a lecture in the joint Nordic Embassy Complex in Berlin in September. This lecture was just one of a series organised by the five Nordic embassies in Berlin together with the Nordic Council of Ministers. Other speakers have been the former President

of Iceland, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, and former Swedish Prime Minister, Carl Bildt. Bildt asserted that a more wholehearted Nordic participation in the European integration process would generate new opportunities for co-operation with the Baltic States. This would create better opportunities for affluence in the entire Nordic-Baltic region, he pointed out.

The lectures were part of the Nordic Council of Ministers’ international programme. Seminars in Northwest Russia

and in Poland also focused on the new opportunities in the Baltic Sea area. Helle Degn, the Baltic Council Commissioner for Democratic Development, was among the speakers at a seminar in Petrozavodsk, capital of the Russian Republic of Karelia, in May. She spoke of values such as social responsibility, human rights, openness, access to information, environmental considerations and food safety, which are seen as common to Northern Europe. These values should be emphasised in the expanded European family.

Regional co-operation in the new Europe was the theme of three events held in Warsaw and Gdansk in November. At the seminar in Gdansk, the new opportunities for collaboration and the Nordic efforts to renew the strategy for sustainable development were discussed.

“Regional co-operation can assist in attaining sustainable development. It may create mutual respect and understanding between people otherwise divided by physical, historical or religious barriers,”



said Svein Ludvigsen, the Norwegian Minister for Nordic Co-operation and Minister of Fisheries.

■ Safety at Sea and the Environment

Nordic politicians and the various organisations in the Baltic region have made tremendous efforts to ensure that the Baltic Sea environment is protected. Without the agreement of the Russian government, the International Maritime Organisation can not classify the Baltic Sea as a particularly sensitive sea area.

The Russian parliamentarians signed a declaration at the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in Oulu in Finland in the autumn, but if this is not followed up by action by the Russian government, the signatures are nothing more than an

expression of willingness to comply with the conventions.

“Now it is time to agree on safety for oil transports in the Baltic Sea,” said Asmund Kristoffersen, chairman of the Nordic Council Environment and Natural Resources Committee at the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference.

“If we are not able to deal with the problems of oil slips, how can we expect to solve the other serious problems we are facing, such as nuclear waste?” asked Asmund Kristoffersen.

There are several causes of concern in

relation to the marine environment in the Baltic Sea. The Baltic Sea is like an inland sea, and it is fed by large amounts of fresh water. The less oxygen the sea water contains, the poorer the growth conditions for fish and shellfish. Pollution killing the fish comes from algae growth, and the removal of algae naturally occurring in brackish water is not possible in an instant. The problem is certainly not solved by political resolutions – initiatives that produce tangible results are required.

The enormous volume of maritime traffic through the Öresund Sound and in the Baltic Sea worries politicians for several reasons. Some ships carry dangerous cargoes, and the dumping of ballast water in the Baltic Sea has become widespread. Single-hull vessels still transport heavy oils

in pack ice conditions. Oil transport has been particularly in focus lately, but other forms of transport must be carefully monitored too. Every day 600 ships sail through the Sound and more than 2,000 ships are on their way to or from a port in the Baltic at any given time.

Proposals for improved safety at sea include the compulsory use of a pilot, banning single-hull vessels in frozen seas and better surveillance of all ships attempting to dump ballast water.

The Nordic Ministers of the Environment have led the way to have the Baltic Sea classified as a particularly sensitive sea area. Furthermore, efforts have been made to protect the environment in the Barents Sea with regard to unregistered oil transport in the area.

■ Focus on West Nordic Region

In recognition of the fact that marine resources and environmental and climate issues are vitally important, the Nordic Council of Ministers launched a special programme for the West Nordic Region in 2003. Iceland continues to focus on this area in its Presidency programme for 2004, which has nature, culture, identity and democracy as its major themes.

Focus on the West Nordic Region naturally attaches great importance to the question of resources and in particular to the significance of marine resources to the economy. In short, the Nordic countries will concentrate on surveying the North Atlantic marine area to improve the economic benefit as well as the environment as a whole. The countries will achieve this objective through international involvement at conferences and in research in

Arctic core competencies. The transport infrastructure in the West Nordic Region needs to be improved. Existing networks can be exploited and central decision makers and the responsible traffic authorities in the various countries will be approached to achieve this goal. A stronger co-ordination of efforts in cultural partnership is also needed in the region. Collaboration between the different cultural Nordic Houses in the region should be extended so that each individual Nordic House can take on a co-ordinating role.

Icelandic Minister of the Environment, Siv Friðleifsdóttir, who chairs the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation in 2004:

– Neighbouring policies also affect the EU Northern Dimension which, in geographical terms, stretches all the way west to Greenland.



Freedom of Movement

■ Poul Schlüter Promotes Freedom of Movement

Freedom of movement across Nordic boundaries was high on the agenda of both the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2003.

The Swedish government appointed the former Danish Prime Minister, Poul Schlüter, as its special envoy to apply political pressure in order to reduce the number of cross-border obstacles.

The Nordic Council parliamentarians immediately welcomed this initiative. Referring to Poul Schlüter, Ole Stavad, who is chairman of the Danish Delegation to the Nordic Council and of the Council special working group on an “Open Nordic Region”, said:

– Previous agreements have not been modernised and brought up to date. In some areas there are no agreements at all, and many people struggle with unnecessary bureaucracy when they move within the Nordic countries. We must maintain and further develop Nordic co-operation, whilst at the same time developing and strengthening European co-operation.

Ole Stavad had the opportunity to discuss freedom of movement with Poul Schlüter during the joint Nordic-Baltic meeting in Lund in April:

– Even though he is working for the Council of Ministers, I told him that we parliamentarians on the Nordic Council



also consider him ‘our man’. He is good at asking questions which may sound naive, but are actually very pointed. I am certain he will present proposals for specific improvements. However, there will also be areas in which he will need the aid of parliamentary pressure to remove obstructions to freedom of movement.

An example was when several Council members simultaneously posed a question in their respective Nordic parliaments about the high bank charges for transferring money between the Nordic countries.

■ Nordic Region as a Single Market

During the course of 2003 Poul Schlüter took part in several ministerial meetings under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers. Furthermore, he addressed a number of conferences arranged by the Swedish Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers on themes such as “The Nordic Region as a Single Market”.

In a number of areas efforts to promote freedom of movement have already borne fruit, and some of the irritations experienced by commuters and people moving to another Nordic country have been eradicated. In other areas there is still a need to put political pressure on the responsible politicians and officials, so the efforts continue.

Poul Schlüter’s interim report gives 25 examples of solutions to difficulties, large and small, experienced in crossing Nordic boundaries. These cover simplified cus-

toms procedures for commercial traffic, inter-Nordic job procurement on the Internet, a virtual Nordic taxation office as well as improved processing of prescriptions.

The day before Schlüter presented his interim report at the Nordic Council Session in Oslo, the Danes dropped their Danish language requirement for Swedish and Norwegian students applying to study medicine in Denmark. The matter had been the subject of debate amongst the parliamentarians of the Nordic Council, and it was abandoned by the Danish government just before the start of the Session.

■ Cross-border Obstacles on the Session Agenda

A tax agreement benefiting the commuters across the Öresund Sound was concluded by the Danish and Swedish Ministers of Taxation just as the Nordic Council Session opened. “However, several barriers to cross-border freedom still remain – for example, other tax issues, unemployment benefit funds, and insurance and child benefit contributions,” said Kent Olsson from the Conservative Group on the Nordic Council.

The importance of this issue was stated right at the very start of the Session by the President of the Norwegian Parliament, Jørgen Kosmo.

“If the Council of Ministers can not show some results of its work, this Council Session could be the beginning of the end for Nordic co-operation,” he claimed.

The competitiveness of the Nordic countries is linked to free movement. The Federation of Nordic Associations believes that the credibility of Nordic co-operation rests on removing cross-border obstacles.

A satisfied Swedish Minister for Nordic Co-operation, Berit Andnor, stated that many obstacles had been torn down during the year. Results are e.g. joint vocational qualifications and the new Nordic social convention.

Andnor reported furthermore that it will be easier to bring pets and prescription drugs with you across Nordic borders.

“Cross-border obstacles can be of differing importance for different people. For those directly affected, for example, the matter of a national social security number is very important. The results we have achieved through better communication mean a great deal to many small businesses and especially to commercial traf-

fic. For example a Swede working with his mechanical digger in Norway used to have to pay a deposit of 25% of the value of the digger, which could be worth three million – a huge sum for him to find. We have solved this problem by working with the authorities involved and with industry.”

Other issues which came up in the debate were a Nordic taxation office, lower bank charges and shorter transfer times for Nordic money transactions.

■ Positive Nordic Integration

“Results such as the tax agreement between Denmark and Sweden are part of a positive circle as far as integration between the Nordic countries is concerned,” the Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers, Per Unckel, said at a meeting in the Danish parliament in Copenhagen in November 2003.

Per Unckel called for a vision of the development of the Nordic Region. According to him the removal of barriers to freedom of movement does not only affect individuals. In a greatly enlarged EU, greater mobility will make national economies more competitive.

Poul Schlüter will continue his work as special envoy for the Ministers of Nordic Co-operation in the first six months of 2004 during Iceland’s Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The next step will be to focus in particular on freedom of movement for business.

The main task still is to find solutions to specific legal and bureaucratic barriers to individual mobility between the Nordic countries.

To focus attention on the issues surrounding cross-border barriers, the Nordic

Council of Ministers has established a special Secretariat for Nordic Cross-Border Mobility. This Secretariat co-ordinates efforts between Poul Schlüter’s work, the specific issues arising from the Nordic information service Hello Norden, and the regional border committees. The Secretariat’s mandate is to render vigour, continuity and cohesion to the work of promoting freedom of movement.

The information service Hello Norden is available in all the Nordic countries – addresses and telephone numbers can be found on www.hallonorden.org. Hello Norden provides answers to questions regarding the formalities of moving from one Nordic country to another. These questions concern e.g. education and training, commuting, taxation, health insurance, child benefits, and pensions.

Nordic Culture on Tour

■ Nordic Design

A number of large projects characterised Nordic cultural co-operation. *Scandinavian Design beyond the Myth*, a large Nordic exhibition, was opened in Berlin in November by Swedish Minister of Culture, Marita Ulvskog, and German Federal Minister of Culture, Christina Weiss.

This exhibition commissioned by the Nordic Council of Ministers is based on Nordic design co-operation and recent research. It is partly retrospective and debates the myths and stereotypes that have flourished around the topic Scandinavian Design. In addition, the exhibits

represent contemporary design from each of the Nordic countries.

The exhibition will tour several countries after Berlin, opening in Milan, Ghent and Prague in 2004. The tour continues to Budapest, Riga, Glasgow, Copenhagen and Gothenburg in 2005 followed by Oslo, Reykjavík and Helsinki in 2006.

■ Cultural Exchange with West Balkans

The Nordic Ministers of Culture have launched a collaboration and exchange project with the West Balkan region, i.e. Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro.

The project entitled *Speak Up!* covers a wide range of contemporary art and various forms of culture but concentrates on contemporary art, modern dance, film, literature and music. Individuals and institutions in both regions will continue to work together throughout 2004.

Several galleries take part in the project and arrange exhibitions, for example wñw

in Zagreb, the Museum for Contemporary Art in Belgrade and Rooseum in Malmö.

As part of the project Mika Hannula and Tere Vadén will publish a book, *Rock the Boat*, which discusses ethical questions around the theme “Local–Global” and how these issues are expressed in contemporary art.

■ Nordic Glass Art in St Petersburg

Reflections – in a New Nordic Light is a major exhibition of Nordic glass art, which opened in September in St Petersburg. The exhibition consists of works by young and established Nordic artists and was also shown in Petrozavodsk.

All of the works were created in Per Steen Hebsgaard's glass studio in Denmark. The exhibition presents a broad range of Nordic artistic collaboration that has arisen in the long history of Hebsgaard's workshop.



Nordic Region as Global Research Leader

■ White Paper on Research and Innovation

The Nordic Region can – and must – become a global leader in the field of research. If not, Nordic research will lose ground, in particular to the USA.

This was the main conclusion of the White Paper “NORIA – Nordic Research and Innovation Area”. This paper is based on a recommendation to review Nordic research policies given by the Nordic Council in October 2001. Professor Gustav Björkstrand, Rector of Åbo Akademi University in Finland, was appointed to take charge of the project. The White Paper produced a number of proposals:

- A Nordic Research and Innovation Area (NORIA) should be established. The Nordic Research Council should play an important role in the start-up phase.
- A new advisory body (NoFIR) should be established by integrating both the Nordic Research Council and the Nordic Academy for Advanced Study.
- There should be major investment in Nordic research institutes where young researchers can work together and thus create a critical mass in a strong and competitive research environment.
- Nordic programmes for Centres of Excellence should be launched to make the research facilities more attractive and to create higher quality and greater visibility.

Today the Nordic countries spend about 64 billion Danish kroner of public funds on national research, whereas a mere 170 million kroner are available in the Nordic budget, including the existing research institutions. The author of the White Paper believes that there should be joint financing between Nordic and national budgets.

The White Paper is being circulated for comment among relevant organisations and ministries, and a definitive proposal is anticipated at the beginning of June 2004.



Professor
Gustav Björkstrand

■ Nordic Dimension in National Research Institutes

The Nordic Council of Ministers has decided to re-organise the Nordic institutions in the education, research and IT sectors.

In the future, some of the Nordic research institutions will be transferred to national level to give them a deeper root in their research environments. This will apply to the *Nordic Sami Institute*, *Scandinavian Institute of Maritime Law*, *Nordic Institute for Theoretical Physics*, *Nordic Institute of Asian Studies* and the *Nordic Volcanological Institute*. There are still deliberations over some of these institutions on what the change of responsibility will entail. Their Nordic profile will be maintained – thus the institutions will continue to be Nordic programmes or Nordic centres with their own board of directors.

In addition, the *Nordic Institute in Fin-*

land (Nifin) is transferred from the Ministers of Education to the Ministers of Culture. Finally, the *Nordic Council for Scientific Information* will be closed down on 1 July 2004. A working group will be established to make proposals for the development of network collaboration for scientific information.

In the future, co-operation in the field of adult education will take place within a Nordic network of the relevant organisations through a new programme, Nordplus Adult, which is administered by CIRIUS in Denmark. The Nordic Folk Academy will close on 1 August 2004.

These changes are made as a result of proposals presented by Dan Brändström in “A Nordic Dimension in National Research Environments – Nordic research institutes under national responsibility”.

■ Open Source Programmes from Nordicos

In August 2003 the Nordic Council of Ministers launched a joint Nordic website, from which *open source programmes* may be downloaded free of charge for both private and professional use. The basic idea of open sources is simple: when users can modify the source codes of a programme, it can be improved by the users.

The website www.nordicos.org has been developed by *Consumer Information in Denmark* with the support of the other Nordic countries. The intention is to make it easier for computer users to get an overview of which open source programmes can be recommended for downloading and installation.

In small language areas such as the Nordic countries open source programmes have an additional advantage. As the users can make changes in the source code themselves, the programmes can freely be translated. Thus open source codes become an important tool in retaining language and national identity.

Running parallel with this, the Business and Industry Committee of the Nordic Council is working intensively on a committee proposal aiming to create a Nordic centre of competence for using open sources. The subject has been thoroughly discussed through hearings with IBM, Microsoft and Nordicos.

■ New NordPlus Educational Programmes

The Nordic Council of Ministers' educational action programmes, NordPlus, have been well-established in the education and training sector for years. The objective of NordPlus is to promote a spirit of fellowship in Nordic culture, language and values; to develop knowledge, competency, education and research; and to improve competitiveness of the Nordic countries and of the adjacent areas.

As of 1 January 2004 the NordPlus educational action programmes have been restructured to address these objectives. There are five new programmes reflecting different target groups, regions and cultures:

NORDPLUS JUNIOR

NordPlus Junior supports co-operation in primary and secondary education, whereby schools can apply for grants to support mobility of pupils and teachers in the Nordic countries. The activities must have an educational content, be rooted in school work and, for the pupils, take place via the Nordic Schoolnet www.nordskol.org. This programme is administered in Sweden.

NORDPLUS

NordPlus supports co-operation between universities and colleges in the Nordic countries, both within subject areas and across them. Universities and colleges can apply for grants for networks which create a foundation for a wholehearted Nordic educational fellowship in which each institution's special competencies are utilised. This programme is administered in Finland.

NORDPLUS ADULT

NordPlus Adult provides funding for co-operation and professional motivation in the field of adult education and lifelong learning. Funds can be granted for the development of new ideas, teaching methods, course models and the like for both teachers and participants. Importance is attached to the dissemination of project results. This programme is administered in Denmark.

NORDPLUS LANGUAGE

NordPlus Language is a cross-sector programme emphasising the importance of continued political initiatives to promote the understanding of the Nordic languages.



The purpose is to ensure that Nordic co-operation be conducted in the Nordic languages in the future too. Grants can be given to institutions, organisations, networks and individuals who meet specific requirements. This programme is administered in Iceland.

NORDPLUS NEIGHBOUR

The main objective of the NordPlus Neighbour programme is to develop cross-sector network co-operation between the Nordic countries and the

adjacent areas of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Northwest Russia. It focuses on education and the transfer of know-how. This programme addresses all areas of education from primary to higher education, including adult education and voluntary educational organisations. This programme is administered in Norway.

Facts

Ministers for Nordic Co-operation

The Ministers for Nordic Co-operation have overall responsibility for Nordic Co-operation. In each country a Minister for Nordic Co-operation is appointed by the government. In addition to his/her own ministry, the Minister has particular responsibility for the co-ordination of Nordic co-operation. The Presidency of the Council of Ministers rotates annually.

Ministers for Nordic Co-operation as of October 2003:

Berit Andnor	Sweden	Svein Ludvigsen	Norway
Jan-Erik Enestam	Finland	Lise Lennert	Greenland
Siv Friðleifsdóttir	Iceland	Høgni Hoydal	Faroe Islands
Flemming Hansen	Denmark	Olof Erland	Åland Islands

Presidium of the Nordic Council as of January 2003:

Inge Lønning	President	Norway
Eero Akaan-Penttilä	Conservative Group	Finland
Berit Brørby	Social Democratic Group	Norway
Rannveig Guðmundsdóttir	Social Democratic Group	Iceland
Anita Johansson	Social Democratic Group	Sweden
Jens Christian Larsen	Centre Group	Denmark
Ragnwi Marcelind	Centre Group	Sweden
Outi Ojala	Left-wing Socialist and Green Group	Finland
Ísólfur Gylfi Pálmason	Centre Group	Iceland
Riitta Prusti	Social Democratic Group	Finland
Jan Sahl	Centre Group	Norway
Ole Stavard	Social Democratic Group	Denmark
Sigríður A. Þórðardóttir	Conservative Group	Iceland

Rotating Presidencies

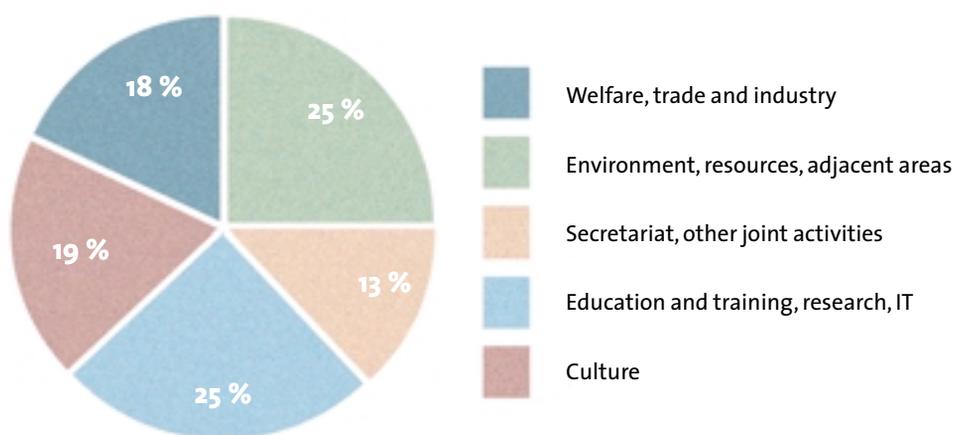
The Presidencies of the two Councils rotate according the following roster:

Nordic Council of Ministers	Nordic Council
Norway	Finland
Sweden	Norway
Iceland	Sweden
Denmark	Iceland
Finland	Denmark

Nordic Council of Ministers Expenses Breakdown

In 2003 the budget of the Nordic Council of Ministers was 811 million Danish kroner.

Main Areas	Million DKK	Percent
Welfare, trade and industry	150	18
Environment, resources, adjacent areas	199	25
Secretariat, other joint activities	106	13
Education and training, research, IT	204	25
Culture	151	19



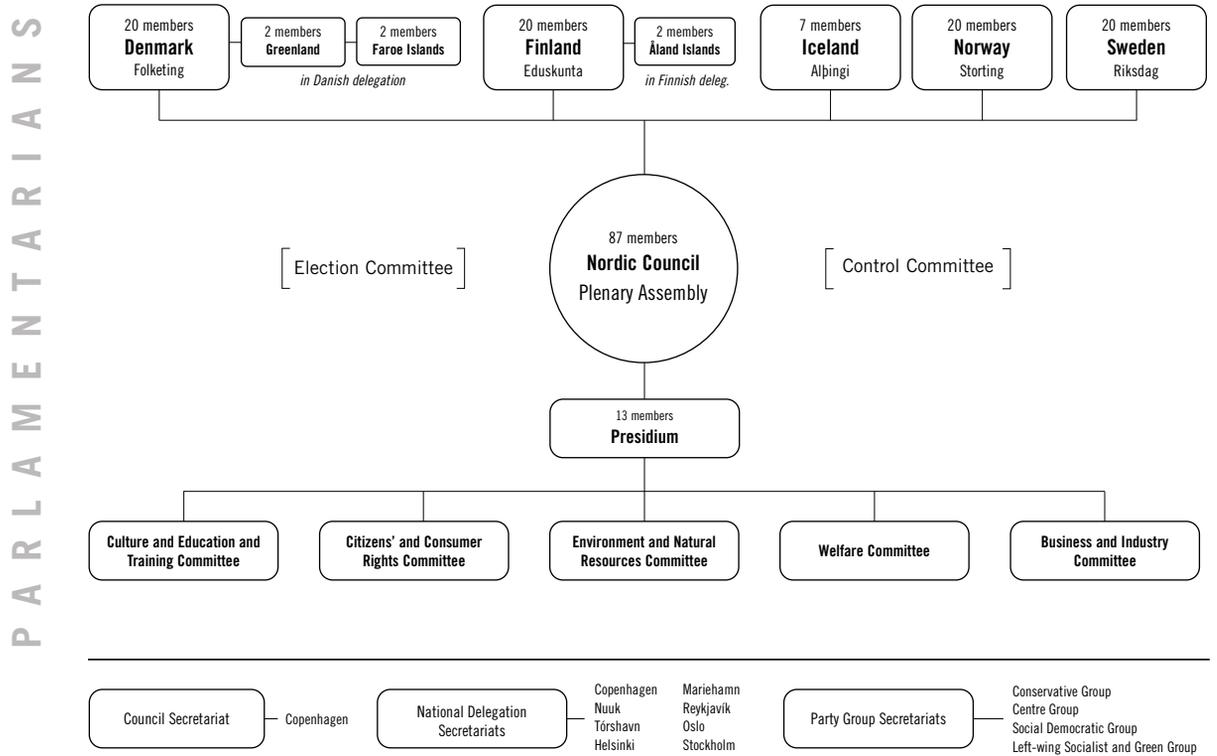
Approximately 20 percent of the Nordic Council of Ministers' budget goes towards co-operation with Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Northwest Russia.

Nordic Council Budget

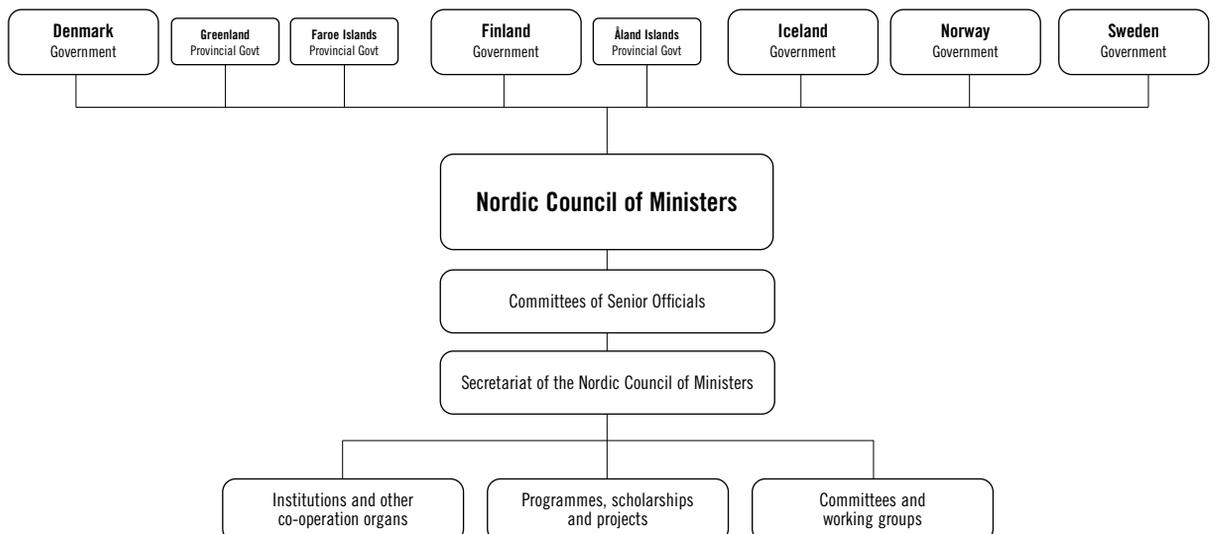
The Council budget of 2003 was 31 million Danish Kroner.

This amount covers parliamentary co-operation.

Structure of the Nordic Council



Structure of the Nordic Council of Ministers



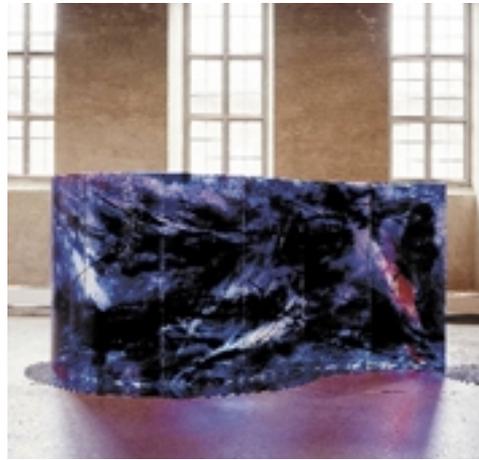
Loss of a Great Nordic Politician

SHOCK, GRIEF AND LOSS. These were the reactions to the murder of Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh in September 2003. She was an outstanding and hugely popular politician who will be sadly missed in the Nordic arena. Anna Lindh leaves a major void in the entire Nordic Region. She was strongly committed to Nordic and Barents co-operation. In 2003 she was chairperson of the Nordic Foreign Ministers as well as of Barents co-operation.

As Foreign Minister from 1998 Anna Lindh took part in the Nordic Council Sessions. She was also deeply involved in the process leading up to the enlargement of the EU to amongst others the Baltic States and Poland.

As Minister of the Environment she took the initiative to formulate a Nordic Strategy for Sustainable Development that was adopted by the Prime Ministers in the autumn of 1998. This strategy has not only been the Nordic instrument for managing sustainable development but it has also aroused interest in other parts of the world.

Anna Lindh will be remembered for her many political achievements, and not least for her personality, radiant smile and relaxed manner which rubbed off on everyone around her.



Nordic

COUNCIL & COUNCIL OF MINISTERS