

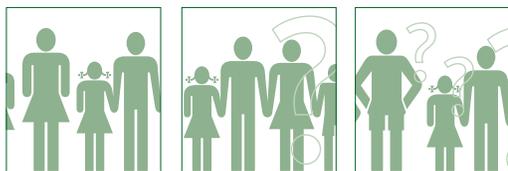
Nordic Cooperation

Nordic citizens on Nordic cooperation. An opinion poll in
Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden



Nordic Cooperation

Nordic citizens on Nordic cooperation
An opinion poll in Finland, Denmark, Iceland,
Norway, and Sweden



Contents

Foreword · 5

About the poll · 6

The main message · 6

Summary · 6

Results of the poll · 8

1

Familiarity with Nordic cooperation · 8

2

The value of
Nordic cooperation · 10

3

The future significance
and scope of cooperation · 11

Foreword

In 1993, the Nordic Council took a poll of Nordic citizens' familiarity with and attitude to Nordic cooperation. At that point, only Denmark was a member of the EU, while discussions were being carried on in Sweden, Norway, and Finland about EU membership. Sweden and Finland joined the EU in 1995, while Norway and Iceland began cooperation with it through the EEA Agreement. The Baltic States and Poland became members of the EU on May 1, 2004. The Northern Europe we live in today has undergone political transformations.

This is why it has been exciting to have this new poll taken of our citizens' familiarity with Nordic cooperation, so that we can see how the figures have changed since 1993.

Some readers might focus mostly on the figures for their homeland. But as Secretary General of the Nordic Council, I am pleased that as a whole, there is greater familiarity with the Nordic Council and its sister organization, the Nordic Council of Ministers, throughout the Nordic countries. And it is no small accomplishment that a growing proportion of the population mentions the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Ministers as important national bodies in international cooperation.

There are also figures that Nordic politicians will view with interest. There is a widespread wish for the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Ministers to concentrate on projects that can improve the everyday life of citizens in the Nordic countries. It is important to have the backing of the people for Nordic cooperation. Fortunately, we have it, but we must not rest on our laurels.



Frida Nokken
Secretary General of the Nordic Council

About the poll

This folder presents the main results of an opinion poll carried out among citizens in the Nordic countries. The poll reveals their familiarity with Nordic cooperation and how important they consider various fields of cooperation. It is a follow-up of a poll that the Nordic Council commissioned in 1993. The poll was taken by Research International Denmark for the Nordic Council.

Interviews were carried out with a representative sample of the adult population in the Nordic countries: Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. A total of 2,500 telephone interviews were conducted in October 2006.

The main message

- **Citizens in the Nordic countries want Nordic cooperation.** Eight out of ten know about the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Ministers.
- **This cooperation is only one of several forms of cooperation that the interviewees wish to engage in.** The EU, the USA, China, Russia, and the Baltic States are viewed as future partners.
- **A clear majority of Nordic citizens believes that this cooperation should be expanded.** A majority expects this cooperation to be of major significance in the years to come.
- **Work to protect the environment and combat crime has considerable support.** Cooperation in the fields of language and culture, in contrast, has only limited support.

Summary

In 2006, more than eight out of ten Nordic citizens are aware of the existence of the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Ministers. This is a fall from the figure in 1993 (nine out of ten) but is still a very high frequency. One of the reasons for the fall might be that in 2006 there is a very low frequency of familiarity among persons under 30 years of age.

A markedly higher number of citizens in 2006 than in 1993 states that the work of the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Ministers has value for the people of the Nordic countries. While in 1993, just over half stated that it had value, the proportion rose to three out of four in 2006.

Even though citizens know of the organizations by name, they do not feel that these organizations play a concrete role. The work of the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Ministers is considered to have only a minor influence on the everyday life of the individual Nordic citizen.

Two fields enjoy special favor when cooperation among the Nordic countries is to be evaluated. Protecting and improving the environment and combating crime across borders are considered the most important areas by six out of ten.

More traditional fields of cooperation in the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Ministers have very little relevance for Nordic citizens. Only 4% of the interviewees feel that cultural exchanges are the most important field. Only 2% feel that expanding the use of the Nordic languages is most important.

Eight out of ten expect that Nordic cooperation will increase in importance or remain on the same level. More citizens in 2006 than in 1993 do, however, believe that its importance will remain unchanged and not increase. There are also more in 2006 than in 1993 (16% compared with 11%) who expect a fall in the importance of cooperation in the years to come.

Nordic citizens emphatically want cooperation among the Nordic countries. 94% consider the level to be appropriate or want more cooperation. More citizens in 2006 than in 1993 consider the level of cooperation to be appropriate. Cooperation among the Nordic countries is expected to lose importance as the countries' involvement in other international and global organizations grows. There is an emphatic wish for cooperation, however, and only a negligible fraction wants to reduce cooperation.

45% of Nordic citizens believe that the Nordic countries should first and foremost work together with other countries that share their views in international organizations. This is a significant increase from the level in 1993, when there was a clear majority for cooperation with the other Nordic countries.

Two out of three citizens, however, still consider the Nordic countries to be their own country's most important partners in cooperation in the long run.

Today there is a more pragmatic view of what countries one's own should work together with, whereas in 1993 there were greater reservations about

lands other than the Nordic countries. Two out of three still believe that it is especially important to have long-range cooperation among the Nordic countries. Nearly every fourth citizen, however, believes that the USA, China, and Russia will be important partners in cooperation in the long run. The motivation for international cooperation is thus quite strong among Nordic citizens.

Answers from Sweden do, however, show a lower level of interest in cooperation with the USA, China, Russia, and the Baltic States, but a stronger desire to intensify Nordic cooperation.

The poll also points to a challenge for the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Ministers, since only 16% of the interviewees in Sweden consider cooperation with the Baltic States to be important in the long run.

Results of the poll

1

Familiarity with Nordic cooperation

QUESTION 1

Can you mention one or more areas in which the Nordic countries cooperate today?

■ 2006	F	DK	IS	N	S	Total
Nordic Council/Council of Ministers	10	24	17	43	11	19
Culture	10	9	20	11	1	10
Trade agreements	14	9	8	17	5	10
Environmental protection	16	9	5	8	11	10
Education	6	10	20	4	1	9
Labor market	7	7	17	5	4	8
Foreign and security policy	8	8	7	12	3	7

Every fifth citizen of the Nordic countries is spontaneously familiar (without prompting) with the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Ministers. Familiarity is greatest in Norway (43%), while only one in ten in Finland and Sweden spontaneously mention the councils. Spontaneous familiarity in Finland

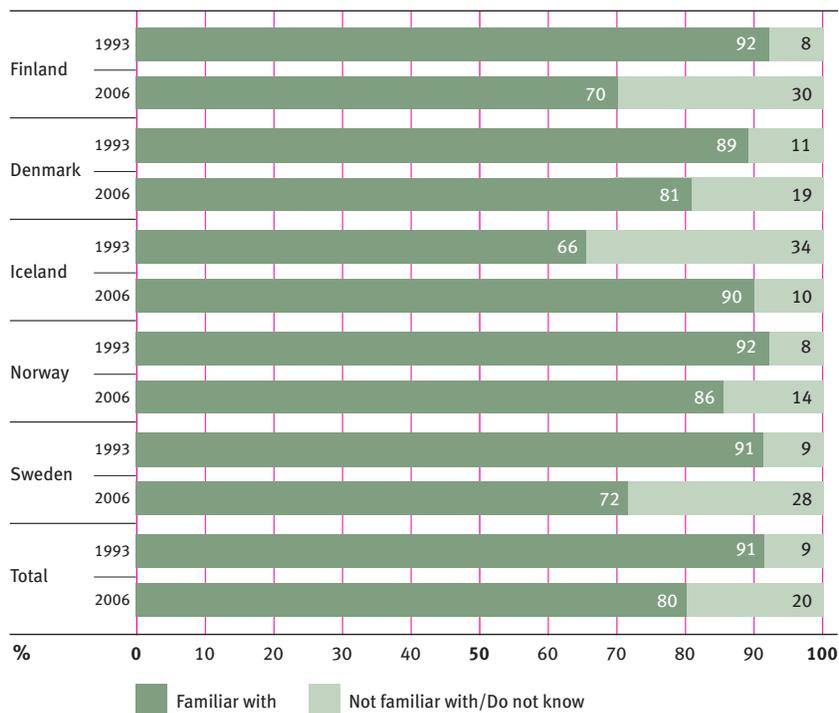
and Sweden is thus unchanged from 1993. Denmark, Iceland, and Norway have experienced a sharp rise in spontaneous familiarity.

Familiarity with environmental and cultural cooperation, which also top the list, has not changed significantly since 1993. Without prompting, on average every tenth citizen mentions one of the three fields as a forum for cooperation for the Nordic countries.

The most pronounced trend is the citizens' general familiarity with Nordic cooperation. In 1993, every second citizen was unable to name a single specific field of Nordic cooperation, while in 2006, it was only every third. This trend is found in all the Nordic countries, and is clearest in Finland, where in 2006 only 5% are unable to answer any questions about Nordic fields of cooperation.

QUESTION 2

Are you familiar with or have you heard about the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Ministers?



Since spontaneous familiarity with the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Ministers has risen sharply, it is somewhat surprising that fewer now than in 1993 know about the organizations when they are prompted. 80% of the citizens in 2006 answer that they had heard about the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Ministers, compared with 91% in 1993. The trend is due first and foremost to a clear fall in familiarity in Finland and Sweden, while there is a contrasting, very positive trend in Iceland.

In all the countries, it is young people under 25 who have a very low level of familiarity with the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Ministers.

2

The value of Nordic cooperation

QUESTION 3

Have the discussions and decisions of the Nordic Council/ Nordic Council of Ministers so far been of any value for the people of the Nordic countries?

■ 2006/1993, %	F	DK	IS	N	S	Total
Yes, absolutely	15 ¹¹	26 ¹⁰	27 ⁵⁵	34 ¹⁴	31 ¹⁰	27 ¹¹
Yes, to a certain extent	55 ⁵¹	43 ⁴⁷	61 ²⁷	46 ³⁶	39 ³⁸	49 ⁴²
No, not much	14 ²²	11 ¹⁸	7 ²⁰	9 ¹⁴	6 ¹²	9 ¹⁶
No, absolutely not	5 ⁶	4 ¹²	1 ¹¹	2 ⁵	1 ³	2 ⁶
Do not know	11 ¹⁰	13 ¹³	5 ³⁷	9 ³¹	23 ³⁸	12 ²⁵

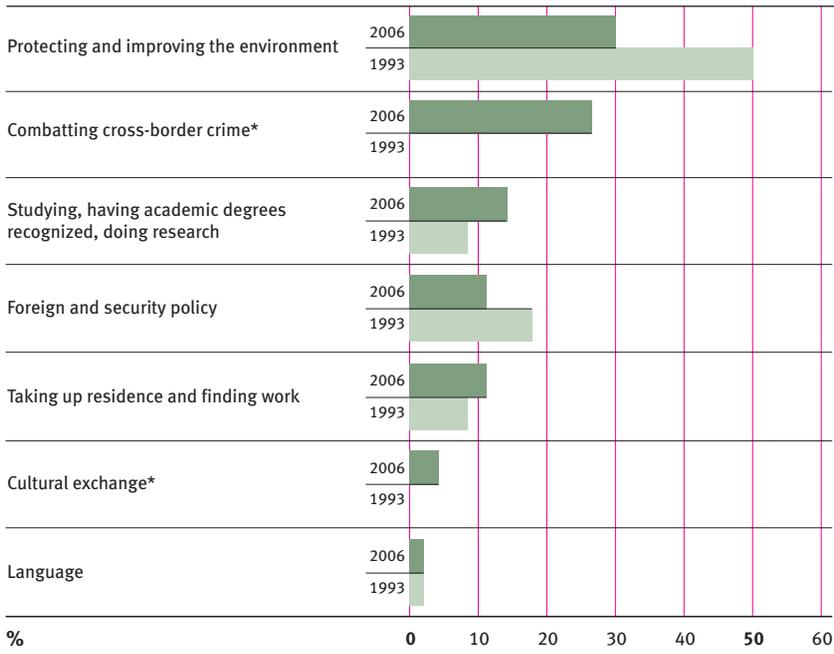
A markedly larger number of citizens than in 1993 consider the existence of the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Ministers to be useful. Three out of four believe that the organizations' decisions are of importance for the people of the Nordic countries. This trend is due primarily to the increase in the percentage of those who believe that the decisions of the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Ministers are of major importance for the Nordic countries.

Despite agreement that the decisions of the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Ministers are of great value for the people of the Nordic countries, relatively few believe that the organizations' activities have an influence on their own everyday life.

QUESTION 4

What field within Nordic cooperation do you consider to be most important?

The answers show that cross-border crime and environmental problems are at the top of the Nordic citizens' agenda. People are interested first and foremost in preventing and solving problems that cross national borders in the region and that can have a negative impact here and now on the individual citizen's everyday life. There is less interest in more long-term areas such as language, culture, and to some extent foreign and security policy.



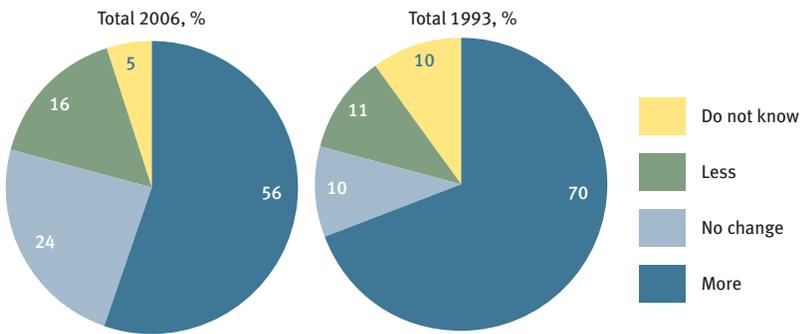
* Question not asked in 1993.

3

The future significance and scope of cooperation

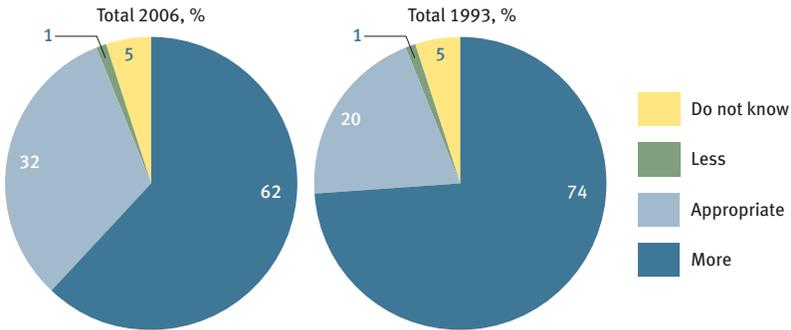
QUESTION 5

Do you believe that cooperation among the Nordic countries will be more or less important in the years to come than it has been so far?



Slightly over half of the interviewees expect that cooperation among the Nordic countries will be more important in the future. The percentage has fallen significantly since 1993. In particular, the residents of the EU countries – Denmark, Finland, and Sweden – accord less importance to cooperation in the years to come.

QUESTION 6
Do you want more or less cooperation among the Nordic countries, or is the current level appropriate?



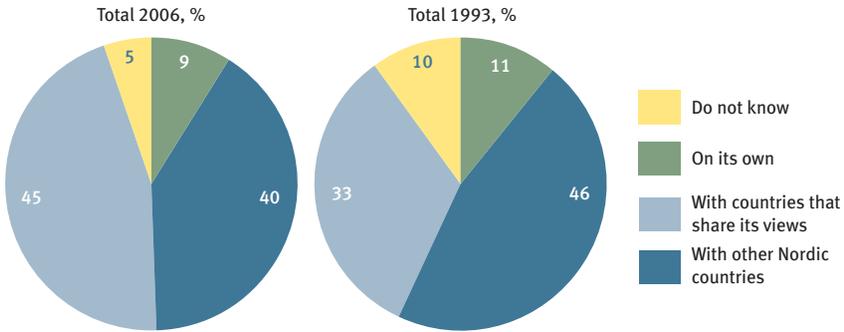
Fewer Nordic citizens than in 1993 want more intensive cross-border cooperation in the Nordic countries, with the exception of those in Sweden. At the same time, the proportion of those who consider the current level of cooperation to be appropriate has grown since 1993.

Cooperation among the Nordic countries is thus expected to have less importance as the countries' involvement in other international and global organizations increases. There is, however, an emphatic wish for this cooperation, and only a negligible fraction wants it to decrease.



QUESTION 7

[Your country] is represented in a large number of international organizations, such as the EU the UN, NATO, and WTO. Should [your country] act first and foremost...



45% of Nordic citizens believe that the Nordic countries should first and foremost act together with other countries that share their views in international organizations. This is a significant rise in comparison with 1993, when there was a clear majority for cooperation with the other Nordic countries.

Two out of three citizens, however, still view the other Nordic countries as their own country’s most important partner in cooperation in the long run:

QUESTION 8

Are there any countries with which you consider it especially important to have long-range cooperation?

2006, %	F	DK	IS	N	S	Total
Nordic countries (F, DK, IS, N, and S)	56	74	69	71	50	64
EU countries	49	80	52	60	43	57
USA	17	44	23	36	10	26
Baltic States	28	31	13	26	16	23
China	16	34	22	26	10	22
Russia	26	27	9	33	7	21
None	10	2	5	5	12	6
Do not know	16	2	6	5	13	8

Cooperation with the other EU countries seems to be of great importance.

There is little agreement among residents of the Nordic countries on which of the other partners in cooperation are preferred: the USA, the Baltic States, China, or Russia. The USA and China have the highest priority in Denmark, while Russia is also considered an important partner in cooperation in Norway. In general, Russia and the Baltic States are of greater importance for the Finns.

The Swedes are generally the Nordic group that is least interested in cross-border cooperation.



Nordic Cooperation
Nordic citizens on Nordic cooperation
ANP 2006:782
© Nordic Council, Copenhagen 2006
ISBN 92-893-1434-3
Print: Salogruppen A/S, Copenhagen 2007
Design: Kjell Olsson
Translation: Martha Gaber Abrahamsen
Copies: 500
Printed on environmentally friendly paper.
This publication can be ordered on-line at
www.norden.org/order. Other Nordic publications
are available at www.norden.org/publications

Printed in Denmark

Nordic Council of Ministers

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

Nordic Council

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

www.norden.org

The poll was taken by
Research International Denmark
Hauser Plads 20
DK-1127 Copenhagen K.
www.research-int.com

Nordic cooperation

Nordic cooperation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and three autonomous areas: the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland.

Nordic cooperation 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 cooperation 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.



norden

Nordic Council

Store Strandstræde 18
DK-1255 Copenhagen K
www.norden.org

