



Nordic Council of Ministers' Cooperation Programme for the Arctic 2006-08

1. Introduction

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Cooperation Programme for the Arctic 2006-08 follows up the decision taken by the Nordic Cooperation Ministers to make the Nordic Region an active part of regional cooperation in Northern Europe. The Arctic Cooperation Programme is one of several cooperation programmes established by the Nordic Council of Ministers to facilitate regional cooperation with neighbouring countries and organizations. The Nordic Council of Ministers is a suitable platform for the Nordic countries to influence and position themselves favourable in relation to the political agenda for regional cooperation,

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Cooperation Programme for the Arctic dates back to 1996, and was most recently revised in 2002. The present revision is motivated by the fact that the programming period is coming to an end, but also by:

- Experience gained in the past years in connection with activities within the Arctic Council.
- Changes in the activities in the Adjacent Areas Programme having led to the establishment of a programme for Russia, and a geographically all inclusive policy for cooperation with the neighbours of the Nordic Region.
- The revised Nordic Strategy for Sustainable Development which is one of the pillars of modern Nordic Council of Ministers cooperation and a basis for joint Nordic initiatives in the field of sustainable development.

The present cooperation programme will be the Nordic Council of Ministers' platform for cooperation on Arctic Issues with the member states of the Arctic Council, with the EU on the development of the Arctic Window in the EU Northern Dimension, and with the Nordic countries' Arctic neighbours in the West Nordic Area during the period 2006-08.

The Cooperation Programme for the Arctic will, among other things, supplement the Russia Programme; this programme will include Arctic issues pertaining to the geographical area falling under this programme; equally the overall principles will be applied to activities under the auspices of the Barents Council and the Barents Regional Council.

The Cooperation Programme for the Arctic for 2006-2008 is aimed at complementing the actions of the Nordic countries in the Arctic Council and joint Nordic initiatives under the auspices of the International Polar Year (IPY) 2007-2008, thus forming the point of departure for cooperation between the Council of Ministers and the Arctic Council. Normally, initiatives and activities must be initiated by or within the Arctic Council. However, other initiatives may become relevant. Any activity in which the Nordic Council of Ministers participates must be in keeping with the overall strategies of the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic countries.

The Cooperation Programme for the Arctic includes all the Nordic Council of Ministers' activities in the Arctic. It is partly financed by the respective Councils of Ministers within the Nordic Council of Ministers, partly by a special overall budget line under the Council of Ministers for Cooperation. The purpose of the latter is to carry out activities in the Arctic, e.g. through co-financing with the individual Councils of Ministers or other actors.

2. The Nordic Council of Ministers political objectives in the Arctic Cooperation

The overall objective for Nordic cooperation concerning Arctic issues is to be used as guidance with regard to planning and implementation of the cooperation activities carried out by the Nordic Council of Ministers in the Arctic area. Special importance is attached to the following aspects:

- Developing and improving the quality of life for the population and the ecological and economic preconditions for continued habitation in the Arctic area with a special responsibility vis-à-vis the situation of the Saami and Inuit population.
- Contributing towards and supporting the social and cultural development of the Arctic population taking into consideration the challenges posed by increasing globalisation, and fostering a better understanding of multilateral and international processes.
- Contributing towards the protection the Arctic nature, the quality aspects of nature and biological diversity and ensuring sustainable use of the region's resources in terms of renewable and non-renewable resources.
- Following up on the basis of existing knowledge of environmental poisons, heavy metals and climate change and their consequences for human and animal life.

In policy terms, importance is attached to the continuing development of rational methods and forums for cooperation between the Arctic states with at view to mutual and communal responsibility for implementing the projects necessary for realising the overall objectives of the cooperation.

3. The Council of Ministers Activities concerning Arctic Issues 2006-08

Within the overall framework described above, particular focus will be directed at three main areas during the period 2006-08, namely:

- Promoting the living conditions of indigenous peoples and their opportunity to improve their economic and cultural conditions, inter alia, by following up on the Arctic Council's Arctic Human Development Report.
- Improving the conditions for Nordic research with a special view to the International Polar Year 2007-2008.
- Improving the conditions for Nordic cooperation on climate change in the Arctic, including following up the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment of the Arctic Council, and pursuing initiatives aimed at preventing the proliferation of environmental poisons and heavy metals in the Arctic.

4. The Council of Ministers' Specific Activities concerning Arctic Issues

The present Cooperation Programme for the Arctic applies to all aspects of the Nordic Council of Ministers activities in the Arctic. The overall framework is expected to be complemented and supported through work and activities in the individual Council of Ministers within the Nordic Council of Ministers, and may encompass the following:

- **Sustainable use of resources.** Because of the vulnerable environmental conditions in the Arctic, sustainable use of resources plays a central role in the Arctic cooperation. The Council of Ministers will continue to give priority to activities which promote sustainable development within the auspices of the Arctic Council.

- **Strengthening networks and competences with regard to participation in international democratic processes.** The Council of Ministers will give priority to competence development of indigenous peoples in connection with local and regional administration as well as participation in international processes. In particular, priority will be given to establishing networks between women's organizations, and to women's situation and revenue potential in the Arctic area.
- **Health and welfare.** The Council of Ministers will continue cooperating on promoting health issues, including in particular the combating of communicable diseases. Long term development activities aimed at defining indicators for the living conditions of the Arctic populations own terms will be pursued.
- **Protection of nature and combating pollution.** The Strategy for Sustainable Development 2005-08 and the Nordic Environmental Action Plan 2005-08, including the strategy for the Arctic focusing on environment poisons, heavy metals, and climate change, form the framework for the Council of Ministers' environmental protection activities in the Arctic.
- **Follow-up on climate change in political and practical terms.** Priority will be given to following up on the 'ACIA Policy Document' of the Arctic Council including the emission limits, adaptation, research and the dissemination of information. The climate study ACIA should be elaborated by means of new scenarios, sub-regional studies as well as by an identification of the most vulnerable social sectors, ecosystems, and health situations.
- **Cooperation on business development in sparsely populated areas,** including the development of the service and the culture sectors as well as local production and processing. The Council of Ministers will give priority to activities which increases the economic development in sparsely populated areas and continue the cooperation on competence building. This relates partly to processing products originating from the primary sector, partly to modern products which can be developed on the basis of existing economic activities, including sustainable tourism.
- **Alternative energy supply in the Arctic.** Special attention will be paid to decentralized solutions that can be connected to supply systems outside the central supply grid, including decentralised renewable energy systems and storage technologies, which potential can be of significant impact.
- **Research.** The Council of Ministers considers it important to maintain the existing research focus in the Arctic area, in particular those originating from Arctic universities. The Nordic Research Board is called upon to pay special attention to the interest of the Nordic countries in joint Nordic research projects within the framework of IPY 2007-2008. The Council of Ministers will give priority to assisting networks between Arctic education, training, and research institutions.
- **Culture.** Cultural cross-border interaction has long traditions in the Arctic areas of the Nordic Region. These are traditions will be continued, strengthened and taken in consideration in connection with cultural activists taking place under the auspices of the Barents cooperation.
- **Education and ICT.** The Council of Ministry possesses special insight into the field of cooperation between institutions of higher education in the Nordic Region. Nordic university cooperation can be used as a model for developing cooperation and for virtual types of education under the auspices of the University of the Arctic, a network of institutions of higher education in the Arctic area. Activities under the Information and Communication Technology of the Arctic Council will be given priority, including Internet-based distance learning and telemedicine.

5. Cooperation Instruments

Specific projects under the Cooperation Programme for the Arctic will be implemented, partly as individual projects on the basis of applications made by countries and organisations or institutions in the Nordic Region, and partly as initiatives reflecting the need of the individual sectors for supporting existing political processes, for example through the Arctic Council.

- **Cooperation projects.** The Council of Ministers will give priority to projects of joint Nordic interest and in cases where cooperation will reinforce the Nordic political profile and where Nordic views will create added value, in particular within the framework of the Circumpolar Cooperation of the Arctic Council.
- **Co-financing.** The co-financing of projects will be possible, and will include financing of Nordic participation in cooperation projects in the Arctic. Special importance is attached to developing new ideas for Arctic cooperation projects. The Council of Ministers may contribute financially to activities in the standing working groups, ad hoc groups and instruments of the Arctic Council, including the Arctic Council's 'Action Plan to Eliminate Pollution of the Arctic' (ACAP).
- **Mobility Programme.** In the Arctic area, grant schemes are supported which enable students and researchers to participate in university cooperation in the Arctic area. The grant scheme takes advantage of experiences obtained through other grant schemes and mobility programmes in the Council of Ministers. Special importance will be attached to the existing exchange programmes of the Nordic Council of Ministers, and should amongst others include government officials, parliamentarians, journalists, business people, artists, craftsmen and women, schools, etc.
- **Dissemination of results, information and contact activities and establishing networks.** The Council of Ministers participates in the activities of the Arctic Council in the capacity of permanent observer and disseminates information via the website. To the highest possible degree, the existing Nordic institutional structure will be used for contact activities.

6. Organization of Cooperation

A review of the Cooperation Programme for the Arctic 2006-2008 is envisaged for 2008. All aspects of the Nordic Council of Ministers' activities will be reviewed.

The Arctic Advisory Board will continue to act as the Expert Committee, and the committee consists of the Senior Arctic Officials and representatives of the Faeroe Isles and Greenland. The Arctic Advisory Board has an advisory role with regard to the design, implementation and follow-up of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic activities. The Arctic Advisory Board may invite ICC Greenland and the Saami Council to participate in the work in correspondence with the Council of Ministers' guidelines for cooperation with NGOs.

The Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat manages the secretarial functions of the Arctic Advisory Board.