





# The Nordic Region in an International Perspective

Nordic co-operation in a European framework 2006

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## **The Nordic Region in an International Perspective**

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## **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.

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# Preface

Nordic cooperation has three major perspectives, vis-à-vis the Nordic region in its own identity, the Nordic region as part of the Baltic Sea region – or perhaps more aptly Northern Europe – and the Nordic region as a participant in broad European cooperation, primarily within the EU. These perspectives also characterise the activities of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The Nordic region in Northern Europe and the Nordic region in the broader European community have gained importance in recent years. This natural development is, however, not occurring at the expense of strictly Nordic tasks, but rather in addition to them.

Close cooperation with other countries and regional organisations in Northern Europe can make the region more attractive and competitive. Similarly, Nordic and Northern European cooperation can be put to various uses aimed at strengthening the position of the countries and the region in a European context. In its endeavours to promote democracy in Belarus, the Nordic Council of Ministers has launched new and urgent activities in close cooperation with the European Commission.

Every year, the Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers publishes the report *The Nordic Region in an International Perspective – Nordic Cooperation in a European Framework*. The report formally addresses the Nordic Council, but is formulated in a manner making it useful in general contexts. Like previous years' reports, it focuses on the activities for which the Nordic Council of Ministers is directly responsible. The report covers the period from 1 August 2005 until today and, to some extent, even looks ahead at future activities.

The staff members of the Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat have prepared this report, under the management of Dorthe Elise Svinth, International Senior Counsellor.

Copenhagen, 1 August 2006

*Per Unckel*

Secretary General

# 1. The International Nordic Region – Nordic Cooperation in a European Framework

## 1.1 Introduction

Nordic cooperation continually evolves in the light of changes and new development trends in the world surrounding the Nordic region – both on a European and a global scale.

Nordic cooperation is age-old. It is regionally based and rests on its own geographical, historical and cultural cohesion. The cooperation comprises Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden as well as the autonomous territories the Faroe Islands, Greenland and the Aland Islands.

Nordic cooperation exists on a formal and informal basis. Formal cooperation has been institutionalised in two cooperation bodies: The Nordic Council of 1952, which is the forum for Nordic parliamentary cooperation, and the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM), the forum for governmental cooperation<sup>1</sup>.

The NCM was established in 1971. It is a classic example of inter-governmental cooperation where the member countries make decisions unanimously. The presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers rotates between the five Nordic countries for one year at a time and is assisted by the Secretary General and a secretariat located in Copenhagen<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Helsinki Treaty, which entered into force on 1 July 1962 and has been amended on several occasions, constitutes the legal basis for cooperation. The convention is available at [www.norden.org/avtal/helsingfors/sk/3-2-2-hfors.asp?lang=1](http://www.norden.org/avtal/helsingfors/sk/3-2-2-hfors.asp?lang=1)

<sup>2</sup> Reference is made to appendix 2 with factual information about the NCM's organisation, budgets, etc., and to the Nordic Council of Ministers' website at [www.norden.org](http://www.norden.org).

The prime ministers hold overall responsibility for cooperation in the Nordic Council of Ministers. In practice, however, this responsibility and the day-to-day management have been delegated to a minister from each Nordic government who is responsible for Nordic cooperation (the minister for Nordic cooperation).

Informal cooperation takes place outside the Nordic institutions and is often more ad hoc. This cooperation mainly concerns the areas of foreign policy, defence policy, development aid policy and foreign trade policy.

## 1.2 Ministers for Nordic cooperation's general guidelines for the international activities of the Nordic Council of Ministers

In the autumn of 2003, the ministers for Nordic cooperation adopted the general guidelines for developing the NCM's international activities<sup>3</sup>. All NCM specialist councils of ministers prepare their policies and planning in keeping with these general guidelines, and the NCM increasingly addresses European political issues and activities quite naturally in its work.

According to the guidelines, the joint Nordic cooperation should focus on bringing Nordic cooperation more in line with the EU agenda and planning the practical complements of the Nordic cooperation structure that suit European cooperation.

Moreover, the guidelines state that developing relations with the Baltic States and North-West Russia is high on the pan-Nordic agenda and that cooperation should be extended.

As regards Nordic cooperation with other international organisations, the challenge is to ensure the greatest possible Nordic use of the total commitment set by the Nordic national governments over time. Synergies must be ensured between the activities of the various regional organisations and any unnecessary overlaps and lack of coordination must be avoided.

The above objectives have been guiding NCM activities for the past year. Cooperation with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and North-West

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<sup>3</sup> The guidelines appear from *The International Nordic Region – Nordic Cooperation in a European Framework*, available at the NCM website at [www.norden.org/pub/sk/showpub.asp?pubnr=2005:770](http://www.norden.org/pub/sk/showpub.asp?pubnr=2005:770).

Russia has strengthened; cooperation projects with other regional organisations have continued and new ones been planned; new projects with EU participation have been developed and launched, and new ones seem to be in the offing.

### 1.3 Modernisation and efficiency enhancement of the Nordic Council of Ministers – a new international environment

In addition to the prime ministers and ministers for Nordic cooperation, the Nordic Council of Ministers consisted of ten different specialist councils of ministers<sup>4</sup> at 1 January 2006. This is the result of a structural reform reducing the number of councils of ministers to 11 from the former 18. The reform was adopted during Denmark's presidency in December 2005, its purpose being to give the Nordic cooperation renewed focus and clearer political relevance.

The reform was particularly motivated by the fact that the Nordic cooperation takes place in a very different international environment from the one existing when the NCM was established. The Nordic cooperation has so far produced many specific results that benefit Northerners. Coupled with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the structure of the EU and its enlargement to include, not least, the Baltic States have opened up new possibilities of cooperation in several areas – including areas that have long been central aspects of Nordic cooperation, such as sustainable development, gender equality and research. Furthermore, others, primarily the EU, have fully or partly taken over certain Nordic key issues, for example the absence of passport controls and standardisation in different trades and professions. This development naturally impacts on the agenda and structure of Nordic cooperation. In addition to the political structures,

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<sup>4</sup> A minister from each Nordic government acts as minister for Nordic co-operation. These ministers form a separate council of ministers. In addition, the Nordic Council of Ministers consists of ten specialist councils of ministers: Council of ministers for education and research; council of ministers for food, energy and regional policy; council of ministers for culture; council of ministers for the environment; council of ministers for fisheries and sea farming, agriculture, food and forestry; council of ministers for economy and fiscal policy; council of ministers for legislation; council of ministers for gender equality; council of ministers for social services and health policy; council of ministers for the labour market and health and safety at work.

growing economic globalisation also reinforces the international trends in Nordic cooperation.

This multifarious trend is forging new paths for Nordic cooperation, compelling a turn in a new direction tailored both to the political agenda in the Nordic region and to the new international environment of cooperation. Hence, cooperation in the NCM must be considered in the light of the broader international community and complement the other European and international forums of cooperation in which the Nordic countries participate – above all the EU/EEA.

New international conditions do not mean, however, that all Nordic cooperation springs from this perspective. A region like this, with its special Nordic characteristics, will always have cooperation motivated by the region itself.

## 1.4 Nordic region – a dynamic region in an enlarged EU

The world around the Nordic region has a decisive influence on Nordic cooperation. An enlarged EU with 25 member states offers new opportunities, but also boosts competition. The Nordic countries need to take advantage of their strong and efficient cooperation to stay the course in the competition on employment, investments and ‘bright minds’. The global economy also poses a challenge. China and India are no longer competing on price alone, but also increasingly on knowledge. This gives pause to consider what the ‘knowledge-intensive’ Nordic countries will subsist on in the future.

For this reason, the NCM Secretariat, in concert with the Danish think tank Monday Morning, published a discussion document entitled *The Nordic Region as a Global Winner Region – Tracing the Nordic Competitiveness Model*<sup>5</sup> in October 2005. In the discussion document, 27 leading Nordic opinion-makers from the corporate sector, the academic world, authorities and cultural life assess the Nordic countries’ vistas in the global economy, including whether any joint Nordic values exist, the extent to which Nordic business positions of strength and competences

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<sup>5</sup> Reference is made to the publication at [www.norden.org/pub/sk/showpub.asp?pubnr=2005:777](http://www.norden.org/pub/sk/showpub.asp?pubnr=2005:777), which also contains an English summary.

can be attributed to these, and, if so, how the Nordic governments can promote and benefit from them.

All responding opinion-makers point to the same four fundamental conditions and eight values that the Nordic countries share in the global economy:

Fundamental conditions:

- The Nordic countries have the same social system
- The Nordic countries understand each others' languages (more or less)
- The Nordic countries stand at the same level of self-realisation (population life style)
- The Nordic countries have been using each other as primary frames of reference for many years

Joint Nordic values:

- Equality
- Confidence
- Short power distance
- All-inclusive opinions
- Flexibility
- Respect for nature
- Common work ethics
- Aesthetics

Although there is no direct empirical evidence, the respondents find that a number of links exist between the above values and positions of strength. Moreover, they emphasise their belief that an untapped competitive potential exists. Also, they state a need for political leadership capable of communicating the positive opportunities globalisation offers the Nordic countries.

The joint Nordic cooperation attains a further boost by pooling interests and resources with the neighbouring Baltic countries with which the Nordic countries enjoy a natural community of interest. For instance, new cooperative relations were established with the Baltic States and Poland during the past year. Cooperation with North-West Russia also increased

and development in the Baltic Sea region as such moved to the top of the pan-Nordic agenda (see section 2).

## 2. Baltic Sea region – the top of Europe

### 2.1 Introduction

In recent years, the Nordic countries have strongly desired cooperation around the Baltic Sea, believing in the motto that countries in a region with a community of interest stand stronger together than alone. So the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) has bolstered its activities focusing on the Baltic Sea region and cooperation with the countries bordering the Baltic Sea. The cooperation with Poland took a giant step forward during the Polish presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, and meetings still take place regularly between the NCM and representatives of the Polish government. The past year's cooperation has been further enhanced – not least in terms of innovation and the support of democracy in Belarus (see section 4.3.2). Cooperation with Poland also takes place within the NCM's consultations with the Visegrad Countries, where information is exchanged on an ad hoc basis. Cooperation with the Baltic States and North-West Russia continues to develop and deepen (see sections 3 and 4), and German partners are participating in various projects, including innovation projects.

The NCM believes the attractiveness of the Baltic Sea region must be enhanced, thereby raising the possibilities of stable economic growth to the benefit of citizens and businesses. The Baltic Sea region is a natural 'workplace' for joint Nordic interests and is given high priority in the Nordic cooperation. The Baltic Sea region could be 'the top of Europe' – not just geographically.

Efficient cooperation will pave the way for a Baltic Sea region extremely competitive in Europe and capable of attracting investments and businesses. Cooperation will be undertaken on a case-by-case basis in different areas. Joint interests include developing cross-border coopera-

tion in Northern Europe, facilitating regional investments in research and innovation, promoting culture, improving citizens' and businesses' possibilities of moving and trading across national borders in the region as well as protecting the Baltic Sea environment.

## 2.2 Baltic Sea Initiative (BSI)

Under the management of the Nordic Council of Ministers, in 2005 the Northern Dimension Working Group on Innovation (NDWGI) project provided a forum for mutual learning about innovation policy in the Baltic Sea region and the pivotal element of Nordic-Baltic cooperation on trade. Participants from all 11 countries in the region presented their experience in innovation policy, discussed specific political initiatives, evaluation methods and the possibilities of further cooperation and joint initiatives.

The project aimed at establishing a network and forum for exchanging experience and knowledge for players endeavouring to develop innovation policy in the 11 Baltic Sea countries, including for the purpose of raising awareness and competence in the area of innovation policy as well as bettering the chances of regional cooperation in the area. The results were presented at such venues as the summit meeting of the Baltic Development Forum in Stockholm in the autumn of 2005. The results now form part of the Baltic Sea Initiative.

The Baltic Sea Initiative (BSI) is a network of networks, working to promote competitiveness and sustainable growth in the Baltic Sea Region in accordance to BSI values.

The Baltic Sea Initiative was launched by VINNOVA and Baltic Development Forum in 2004 to create a bottom up process for stakeholders engaged in the development of the competitiveness and growth of the Baltic Sea Region. The Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers has accepted to take the lead of the BSI network for 2006.

The Baltic Sea region holds a vast unutilised potential. However, having a strong position today is not synonymous with being an enduring frontrunner. Political and corporate decision-makers therefore need to target their efforts if they are to exploit the potential inherent in the Baltic Sea region. The Baltic Sea Initiative aims precisely at promoting the competitiveness of and sustainable development in the Baltic Sea region.

The initiative is a bottom-up process for Baltic Sea region players actively working to enhance competitiveness and foster growth in the region. It intermeshes many independent networks more finely, so they reinforce one another and thus boost the impact of their efforts. The initiative also pools knowledge and experience from the region to produce forward-looking policy recommendations.

Under the auspices of the initiative, 2006 has given top priority to the following five areas:

- Developing framework conditions and competitiveness for business clusters in and across the region
- Strengthening competences and possibilities of user-driven innovation
- Enhancing research cooperation in the Baltic Sea region
- Integrating financial markets
- Marketing and branding the Baltic Sea region

In recent years, the NCM has been managing working groups tasked with improving general innovation policy in the Baltic Sea region and innovation policy that specifically addresses user-driven innovation and strengthens business clusters. In fact, innovation and research are high on the NCM agenda. The goal is to help develop the entire Baltic Sea region and thus reinforce its position in a time of ever-intensifying international competition. This will also strengthen the Nordic countries' position. In continuation of this process, the NCM, together with VINNOVA in Sweden and FORA in Denmark, has entered into an agreement with the European Commission on a three-year innovation project, the purpose of which is to establish joint programmes and activities that strengthen business clusters and thus also development in and across the region (see section 8 for a more detailed description of the Baltic Sea Region Innovation Network).

## 2.3 Northern Dimension

### 2.3.1 Introduction

The Nordic Council of Ministers supports the EU concept of the Northern Dimension (ND). The ND is an important tool in engaging all Northern European countries in a constructive dialogue that benefits all involved. The NCM has made the dimension an integrated policy area of the joint Nordic cooperation. The NCM wants to contribute actively to the fulfilment of ND objectives.

During the past year, the NCM has given priority to implementing the EU's Second Action Plan for the Northern Dimension 2004-2006 and has given its input to the new framework to be agreed upon in the autumn 2006. Below follows an outline of some of the initiatives in which the NCM plays a key role. A detailed overview of the NCM's work on implementing the ND action plan is available in the report *The Nordic Council of Ministers' Implementation of the Second Northern Dimension Action Plan 2004-2006*<sup>6</sup>. The NCM reports are also referred to in the Northern Dimension Information System<sup>7</sup>. See section 4 on the NCM's cooperation with North-West Russia.

### 2.3.2 Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being

The Nordic Council of Ministers takes an active part in developing the EU's Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being<sup>8</sup> together with the eight international organisations and 12 countries that have adopted the document underlying the partnership, known as the Oslo Declaration (from October 2003). The NCM sits on the partnership's Committee for Senior Representatives (CSR) and participates in the individual expert groups' work.

The NCM actively participates in establishing the Social Inclusion, Healthy Lifestyles & Work Ability expert group. The expert group focuses on the problems of alcohol consumption, workplace, health and

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<sup>6</sup> The publication is available at [www.norden.org/pub/sk/showpub.asp?pubnr=2004:760](http://www.norden.org/pub/sk/showpub.asp?pubnr=2004:760)

<sup>7</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external\\_relations/north\\_dim/nis/index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/north_dim/nis/index.htm)

<sup>8</sup> [www.ndphs.org](http://www.ndphs.org)

safety issues as well as adolescent health. In 2006, for instance, a project will be launched within the frame of the partnership to prevent young people from taking drugs and drinking alcohol. The project is linked to the sustainable development strategy and is co-financed by NCM.

Another key action area is a three-year cooperation programme (adopted in April 2006) addressing children and young people with function impairment and their parents in the Baltic States and North-West Russia. An information project on the Nordic project "Design for All" is linked to this cooperation programme and addresses the Baltic States and North-West Russia, as well as aims at creating a society that is available to everyone, including functionally impaired people. The project addresses all senior officials and forms part of a bigger project in which the Council of Europe participates.

The Trafficking Human Beings network is coordinated by the NCM. The NCM has arranged a meeting for the chairmen of all task forces and international organisations working to combat human trafficking, aimed at discussing how to enhance efficiency and coordinate work in the northern region of Europe. All Northern European countries, task forces and international organisations attempting to make measures against human trafficking more effective are invited to take part in this cooperation and thus share work method know-how and the available facts collected with everyone involved. Within the NCM, the Council of Ministers for Gender Equality, Legislation and the Council of Ministers for Social Services and Health Policy cooperate and coordinate activities and measures to combat human trafficking.

Furthermore, activities focusing on the social and health aspects are being planned to fight human trafficking. Coordinated efforts include social, health and gender equality perspectives. A number of initiatives have been taken in the region covered by the Northern Dimension, all aimed at helping solve the problems of human trafficking at local, regional and national levels through bilateral and multilateral channels.

### *2.3.3 Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership*

The Nordic Council of Ministers plays an active role in the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership through the Nordic Environmental Finance Cooperation (NEFCO). Having worked 15 years on financing environmental projects in Eastern European countries, not least through a

considerable project portfolio in North-West Russia and the Baltic States, NEFCO is a recognised partner in the region.

In 2006, the NCM, through NEFCO, has committed itself to five projects concerning cooperation on environmental initiatives in North-West Russia with the international finance institutions through the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP). The projects comprise water supplies, wastewater systems, district heating and nuclear waste handling in Murmansk, Novgorod, St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad.

In addition to the projects mentioned above, NEFCO manages a large number of different foundations aimed at improving the environment in the region. In total, NEFCO has 29 foundations whose total capital amounts to some EUR 255 million. The funds are spent on favourable loans to environmental projects in Eastern European countries, and NEFCO makes a large contribution to environmental improvement in these countries through its considerable project portfolio.

### *2.3.4 Northern Dimension Partnership in ICT*

On 1 January 2005, the Nordic Council of Ministers entered into a partnership with the Council of the Baltic Sea States on managing the Northern eDimension Action Plan (NeDAP) within the framework of the Northern Dimension. The Council of the Baltic Sea States and the Nordic Council of Ministers share the managerial responsibility for implementation. The participating parties are responsible for each their share – one or more action lines – of the overall action plan.

Specifically, the NCM has shown a particular interest in two lines of action – indicators for developing a knowledge society and Internet research and development.

Together with the Nordic statistics offices, the NCM has set up cooperation to produce a number of statistical indicators showing how the information society is developing in the Baltic Sea region – *Indicators for the Information Society in the Baltic Region*<sup>9</sup>. According to the report, the Baltic States and the Nordic countries are far above the European average when it comes to the prevalence and use of a host of information and

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<sup>9</sup> Reference is made to the publication at [www.norden.org/pub/sk/showpub.asp?pubnr=2005:577](http://www.norden.org/pub/sk/showpub.asp?pubnr=2005:577).

communication technologies. It appears that the Baltic States are rapidly narrowing the Nordic countries' traditional lead in the IT area.

In terms of ICT infrastructure and Internet research, the NCM has enjoyed well-established cooperation for many years under the auspices of the NORDUnet cooperation<sup>10</sup>, and has tried most recently, together with the Council of the Baltic Sea States, to involve the Baltic States and Russia in the cooperation. The NCM has sent out invitations to participate in the NORDUnet3 research programme on Internet technologies. The Baltic States are likely to participate as early as late 2006, with equal funding from all parties.

## 2.4 Cooperation with the Council of the Baltic Sea States

### *2.4.1 Introduction*

The regional organisations of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)<sup>11</sup>, the Arctic Council (AC) and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) largely address the same geographical area and related activities as the Nordic Council of Ministers. So ongoing efforts are being made to develop interaction between these organisations. These efforts aim at ensuring mutual information about goals and actions and establishing specific cooperation on projects or other initiatives where interaction can underpin joint objectives. As regards cooperation with the Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, reference is made to sections 7.2 and 4.7, respectively.

Cooperation with the CBSS is developing constantly. Information is exchanged on an ongoing basis at secretariat level, and the secretariats and presidencies meet regularly. The possibilities of developing joint initiatives, including specific projects, are continually examined. These measures have been taken to avoid any unnecessary overlaps between the organisations' activities and pave the way for synergies between the activities of the various Baltic Sea region players. Below follow some examples of specific cooperation activities between the NCM and the CBSS.

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<sup>10</sup> The NORDUnet cooperation consists of an IT infrastructure element, [www.nordu.net](http://www.nordu.net), and an Internet research element, [www.nordunet3.org](http://www.nordunet3.org).

<sup>11</sup> [www.cbss.st](http://www.cbss.st)

*2.4.2. Examples of NCM - CBSS cooperation in practise*

Below follows a list of specific cooperation activities undertaken by the Nordic Council of Ministers in concert with the Council of the Baltic Sea States.

*Baltic Euroregional Network – BEN*

No.	BEN project partners	Country
1	Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Lithuania	Lithuania/Nordic countries
2	Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat	Sweden
3	Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Estonia	Estonia/Nordic countries
4	Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Latvia	Latvia/Nordic countries
5	Hiiumaa County Government	Estonia
6	Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation	Estonia
7	Helsinki-Tallinn Euregio	Estonia
8	Euregio Pskov – Livonia, LV	Latvia
9	Euroregion Bartava	Latvia
10	Euroregion Country of Lakes Office in Latvia	Latvia
11	Euroregion Country of Lithuanian Directorate	Lithuania
12	Valga County Government	Estonia
13	Zemgale Development Agency	Latvia
14	Tauragė County Government	Lithuania
15	Šiauliai Region Development Agency	Lithuania
16	Nemunas Euroregion Marijampole Bureau	Lithuania
17	Lappeenranta Municipality	Finland
18	Šešupe Euroregion Šakiai Office	Lithuania
19	Öresund Committee	Denmark
20	Association of Local Authorities Fyrbodol / CBC Gränskommittén	Sweden
21	Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania	Lithuania
22	North Calotte Council	Finland
23	Association of Polish Municipalities in the Pomerania Euroregion	Poland
24	Kvarken Council	Finland
25	ARKO	Sweden
26	Nordic Council of Ministers Office in St. Petersburg	Russia/Nordic countries
27	Tchudskoj project	Russia
28	Vyborg Municipality	Russia
29	Euroregion Country of Lakes Office of Belarusian Directorate	Belarus
30	Euroregio Pskov – Livonia, Pskov Section	Russia
31	Association of Municipalities of the Republic of Karelia	Russia
32	Sovietsk Municipality	Russia
33	Russian Secretariat of Euroregion Sesupe	Russia
34	Kaliningrad Regional Duma	Russia
35	NGO Nadruva	Russia

The Baltic Euroregional Network (BEN) is a project financed by the EU Baltic Sea Region Interreg III B Neighbourhood Programme, the NCM

and the CBSS. The main goal of the project is to promote spatial development and territorial integration in the region by setting up networks in the euro regions/border regions of the Baltic Sea region. The NCM, the CBSS and other partners, including partners from the Nordic and Baltic countries, Russia and Belarus, will complete the project. The fact box below lists the countries and regional organisations participating in the project.

The NCM office in Vilnius is the lead project partner. The project is likely to run from July 2005 to December 2007. Since its inception until today (August 2006), ten arrangements<sup>12</sup> have been held. A conference entitled Lake-Management in Euroregion Country of Lakes will be held in the autumn of 2006 in Braslav, Belarus.

#### *Sustainable development*

The NCM is a participant in the Baltic 21<sup>13</sup> cooperation on sustainable development in the Baltic Sea region. Other participants are the CBSS countries, the EU, HELCOM<sup>14</sup>, VASAB<sup>15</sup>, a number of international financing institutions and NGOs linked to the Baltic Sea region. The NCM is a member of the Senior Officials Group (SOG) and hosted the 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the senior officials' group in November 2005.

#### *Baltic Sea Region Energy Cooperation*

The Baltic Sea Region Energy Cooperation (BASREC) is an energy cooperation process between the governments of the 11 Baltic Sea countries and the European Commission. BASREC was established at the 1999 ministerial conference in Helsinki, and the secretariat was placed in Stockholm together with the Council of the Baltic Sea States. The Group of Senior Energy Officials (GSEO) manages the process, which is run for three-year periods through regular ministerial conferences, a number of working groups and project activities. The latest meeting was held on 28 October 2005 in Reykjavik. The conference was chaired by the Iceland minister Valgerður Sverrisdóttir and attended by EU commissioner Andris Piebalgs.

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<sup>12</sup> A website, [www.benproject.org](http://www.benproject.org), related to the project contains English and Russian information sheets and two newsletters.

<sup>13</sup> [www.baltic21.org](http://www.baltic21.org)

<sup>14</sup> [www.helcom.fi](http://www.helcom.fi)

<sup>15</sup> [www.vasab.org.pl](http://www.vasab.org.pl)

From 2003 up to and including 2005, BASREC had five working groups, covering the electricity markets, bio energy, gas markets, energy efficiency and climate change. The general issues addressed included reliable energy supplies, sustainable development and energy efficiency. BASREC is in the process of further enhancing the efficiency of its activities and better targeting them.

The NCM has contributed to the activities by supporting the BASREC secretariat function in project form between 2003 and 2005, specifically through the Nordic working groups' activities within the regional groups, Nordic projects completed jointly with BASREC at regional level and direct support or cooperation on individual projects and activities.

### *Northern Dimension*

On 1 January 2005, the Nordic Council of Ministers entered into an ICT partnership with the Council of the Baltic Sea States, under the auspices of the Northern eDimension Action Plan (NeDAP) within the framework of the Northern Dimension (see section 2.3.4). Moreover, the NCM and the CBSS also cooperate in the partnership on public health and social well-being under the Northern Dimension. This cooperation focuses on intensifying efforts to combat human trafficking (see section 2.3.2).

### *Youth work*

The Nordic Children and Youth Committee (NORDBUK) has taken the initiative to launch a process that will better coordinate the joint Nordic cooperation regarding children and young people with the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. The work was initiated in 2003 and most recently followed up in August 2006 by a meeting in Rovaniemi between the chairmanships and the secretariats of the three organisations.

### *ArsBaltica – cultural cooperation*

ArsBaltica is a forum within which the cultural authorities in the Baltic Sea countries can cooperate, and is aimed at supporting multi-national cultural projects in the Baltic Sea region that are designed to set up networks for continued cultural cooperation between the region's countries. It also aims at highlighting the cultural identity and diversity of the Baltic Sea region.

# 3. Cooperation with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

## 3.1 Introduction

Cooperation between the Nordic Council of Ministers and the three Baltic States has been growing broader and deeper since the early 1990s. As early as 1991, the NCM opened offices in the three countries' capitals as part of the joint Nordic political support in the Baltic States' bid to achieve national independence.

The memberships of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania of the European Union put an end to an era and marked the beginning of a new phase in the cooperation with the Baltic States. It has been – and still is – an NCM top priority to deepen cooperation with the Baltic States in areas of common interest and on an equal basis. This cooperation is also known as the NB8 cooperation, which will also serve to strengthen the entire Baltic Sea region.

In 2006, the NCM and the Baltic State governments have discussed how the countries could participate in various activities on an equal footing and with their own financing. In the context of research and education, attempts have been made to allow Baltic participation in a number of Nordic programmes. As a result, international agreements are likely to be entered into with the Baltic States during 2006/2007, at first in two specific areas based on co-financing according to the Nordic GNP model<sup>16</sup>. The areas of participation are the Nordic mobility and network pro-

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<sup>16</sup> Economic distribution scale based on the countries' gross national product

gramme known as Nordplus<sup>17</sup> and the research programme known as NORDUnet3<sup>18</sup>.

The NCM offices in the three Baltic capitals are important players in the development of deeper Nordic-Baltic cooperation<sup>19</sup>. The offices could celebrate their 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the spring of 2006, holding various events. Riga held a conference under the theme of “Welfare and Growth in Northern Europe – Foundation for Global Competitiveness of the Region”. Tallinn also organised in May a well-attended conference under the theme of “Top of Europe: Welfare and Economic Growth”. The round of celebration ended in Vilnius on 23 May, when a large conference focused on the question of the Baltic Sea identity – “Integration and Identity in the Baltic Sea Region: Fifteen Years of Nordic-Lithuanian Cooperation”. The conclusions drawn from the conferences confirmed that a natural bridge exists across the Baltic Sea and that there is considerable interest in boosting and developing the Nordic-Baltic cooperation in selected areas.

### 3.2 Nordic Council of Ministers guidelines for cooperation with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

The development of the NB8 cooperation should be seen as an integral part of the interest the Nordic countries have shown in fostering cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, thereby providing a breeding ground for mutual growth and stability in the northern part of Europe.

The development of the cooperation over the past year was based on the Guidelines for the Nordic Council of Ministers’ Cooperation with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania 2006–2008 adopted by the Nordic ministers for cooperation in December 2004<sup>20</sup>. The guidelines should be regarded as the NCM’s contribution to keeping cooperation high on the agenda in a new political environment. For instance, the guidelines describe the NCM’s main priorities in the cooperation and how it can be developed. At their meeting in December 2005, the ministers for Nordic cooperation

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<sup>17</sup> [www.norden.org/uddannelse/stoetteordninger/sk/](http://www.norden.org/uddannelse/stoetteordninger/sk/)

<sup>18</sup> [www.nordunet3.org/](http://www.nordunet3.org/)

<sup>19</sup> Reference is made to the office websites at [www.norden.lt](http://www.norden.lt), [www.norden.lv](http://www.norden.lv), [www.norden.ee](http://www.norden.ee)

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.norden.org/pub/sk/showpub.asp?pubnr=2004:448>

confirmed that the Nordic countries still give high priority to developing the Nordic-Baltic cooperation and that the guidelines are an important tool in that respect.

The underlying intent of the guidelines is to identify areas of common interest to the Nordic countries and the Baltic States and thus the primary fields for enhancing cooperation. The guidelines are not to be considered a final product, but an element in an ongoing process. They serve as a tool and should be seen as the foundation for developing the joint ambitions of eight countries.

The guidelines highlight the following main areas where the Nordic Council of Ministers has a special interest in developing Nordic-Baltic cooperation:

- *Cross-border work* along the new EU border can be developed on the basis of useful Nordic experience. Several councils of ministers will be able to contribute in this area.
- *Research and innovation work and cooperation in the field of education* would be a natural continuation of the cooperation already initiated and are vital to the attractiveness of the entire region.
- *ICT cooperation* can be enhanced in terms of content and technology. The Baltic Sea area represents a large area of use – and has a great need – for broad ICT solutions.
- *Public health and social well-being issues*, including the fight against drugs and safeguarding the interests and needs of children and young people, particularly within the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being.
- *The environment and sustainable development* must still be further developed and strengthened.

The cooperation with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will be assessed periodically with an eye on ensuring that it continues to develop in keeping with common Nordic-Baltic interests.

### 3.3 Examples of Nordic-Baltic cooperation in practice

The Nordic-Baltic cooperation continues to grow stronger. It is an ongoing process taking place within the relevant ministerial areas.

The cooperation takes place between eight countries. The NCM Secretariat is available to the NB8 cooperation if requested by the countries concerned. Today, the Secretariat acts as secretariat to specific NB8 cooperation in, among others, the areas environment, education, research and ICT.

The NB8 cooperation is manifested through a number of joint meeting activities, for instance, at senior official and minister levels. For example, joint meetings are held in the contexts of legislation, education, gender equality, the environment and energy. Moreover, Nordic-Baltic cooperation takes place within the framework of EU partnerships under the auspices of the Northern Dimension, especially in the area of *public health and social well-being* (see section 2.3.2). Various projects are also being completed in *business and innovation policy* within a multilateral framework in the area covered by the Northern Dimension. The establishment of a forum for mutual learning about innovation policy in the Baltic Sea region is highlighted, this has been the cornerstone of the Nordic-Baltic cooperation on trade (see section 2.2). In some areas, the Nordic institutions have been the primary parties cooperating with Baltic partners.

In addition, the Nordic-Baltic cooperation is currently strengthened through the enhanced cooperation between the NCM and the Council of the Baltic Sea States, which includes cooperation on cross-border matters, the environment and ICT (Northern eDimension Action Plan) (see section 2.3.4).

It should be pointed out that Nordic-Baltic cooperation is also undertaken outside the framework of the NCM, e.g. in matters of foreign affairs and defence.

NB8 cooperation has been developed in virtually all areas. Some areas, such as the environment, energy and education, however, have been particularly developed. Below follows a description of cooperation in various areas besides those mentioned above to illustrate the development of NB8 cooperation in areas where the NCM contributes.

#### *Education, research and ICT*

As regards *education and research*, a Nordic-Baltic coordination group has been appointed on the basis of the agreed minutes of the Nordic-Baltic meeting of ministers for education and research in Copenhagen in March 2004. The group has been named “BN8 Education and Research” and will be responsible for managing and implementing cooperation in

terms of education and research. At a number of meetings in 2005 and 2006, the BN8 Group has laid down statutes for its own activities and prepared an action plan covering the period from 2005 to 2007. The statutes and the action plan have subsequently been approved by the Nordic and Baltic ministers.

The action plan points out three areas for enhanced Nordic-Baltic cooperation:

- I. *Extension of the NCM mobility and network programmes in the area of education (Nordplus programmes).* Concurrently with the NCM's preparation in 2005 and 2006 of a new programme period for Nordplus as from 2007, BN8 Education and Research conducted an ongoing and active dialogue on how the programmes could be opened to Baltic participation on an equal footing with the Nordic countries. The NCM's assessment of the Nordplus programmes in the spring of 2006 specifically examined the possibilities of Baltic participation. The Nordic ministers for education are set to determine the next programme period for Nordplus in the autumn of 2006, subject to dialogue with the Baltic States. Next, joint Nordic-Baltic processes can be launched at senior official and administrative levels for the purpose of extending the Nordplus programmes from 2008.
- II. *Baltic involvement in joint Nordic research cooperation.* The Baltic States have a joint observer on the NordForsk (Nordic Research Board)<sup>21</sup> board, the idea being that it must be possible for the Baltic States to participate in NordForsk's initiatives. This is because the NCM's cooperation on research has now been concentrated and needs to be coordinated in NordForsk. This being the case, any research cooperation between the Baltic States and the NCM must relate to NordForsk.
- III. *The Baltic States' participation in the NORDUnet3 research programme on Internet technologies.* The NCM is cooperating with the Council of the Baltic Sea States within the framework of the Northern eDimension Action Plan 2005-2006 (NeDAP) (see section 2.3.4). As part of the cooperation, the possibilities of Baltic State participation in the NORDUnet3 research programme on

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.nordforsk.org/meny.cfm?m=140>

Internet technologies have been examined. This is an explicit prioritisation in the NB8 cooperation and must function as a pilot case for future Nordic-Baltic research cooperation. The Baltic representatives in the working group have helped to recommend a payment model where the countries participate on an equal footing with the Nordic countries, and all parties contribute funds to a joint budget without knowing whether the programme committee will select their researchers for financing.

### *Environment, energy and regional cooperation*

Against the backdrop of the guidelines for the NCM's cooperation with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, Nordic-Baltic environmental meetings were held at both minister and senior official levels in the spring of 2006. The meetings discussed matters such as the EU marine strategy, protection of the Baltic Sea, oil pollution and extended cooperation on the exchange of senior officials with a view to building capacity and exchanging experience at ministerial, agency and local levels. Furthermore, the meetings examined possible areas of future cooperation. There is also a great deal of cooperation at project level, amounting to some DKK 17 million for 2005-2006 for current and planned projects (approx. 20). To this should be added Baltic projects financed through the NEFCO investment fund, which has an annual budget allocation from NCM of DKK 10.3 million. The cooperation with the Baltic States comprises almost all the Nordic council of ministers for the environment's permanent and cross-sectional working groups and covers climate and Kyoto follow-up, bio energy and chemicals.

The energy cooperation is based on the agreed minutes of 2000. The wish to strengthen cooperation was confirmed in 2005 at an informal NB8 meeting of ministers and at a meeting of senior officials where new agreed minutes were adopted for the energy cooperation between the NCM and the Baltic Council of Ministers (BCoM). The new agreed minutes target cooperation at the following elements, for instance: a) substantial questions, visibility and added value b) EU issues, directives and joint opinions, if any, and c) organisation with dual presidency, joint and voluntary project financing and tools for completion.

In May 2006, a workshop was held at senior official level under the heading of "Workshop on Policies and Programmes to Promote Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. The Nordic and Baltic Policy Re-

sponses in an International Context.” The objective of the workshop was to discuss the joint energy challenges facing the Nordic and Baltic countries. The challenges particularly deal with investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency enhancement projects and the potential use of the Kyoto mechanisms, contributions from the energy charter process for energy efficiency enhancement and the prospects of energy efficiency enhancement and renewable energy in a global and regional context.

In the regional context, a working programme for 2005-2008 has been laid down for cross-border cooperation with the Baltic States and Russia. It will be implemented through the BEN project, which is partly financed by INTEREG means and conducted in cooperation with the Council of the Baltic Sea States (see section 2.4.2). The Nordic institution Nordregio<sup>22</sup> has also undertaken activities with Baltic partners.

### *Legislation*

The Nordic-Baltic cooperation on legislation at minister level continued to develop during the period. The cooperation within the framework of the EU/EEA focuses on holding meetings prior to negotiations and implementing of legal instruments.

The 2005 meeting between the Nordic and Baltic ministers for justice – held in Lithuania – discussed the future cooperation, what the seeming power shift from parliament to the courts means, criminal liability for legal persons and cooperation with Russia. Finally, a special network for international legal aid was established.

A special contact group consisting of senior officials coordinates the cooperation, exchanges information on an ongoing basis and organises seminars. In early 2006, a seminar was held on the relationship between the European and national courts. A seminar on the criminal liability of legal persons will be held in the autumn. At the same time, preparations will begin to set up an individual Nordic-Baltic group of senior officials, judges and others for civil crisis management.

The Nordic ministers for justice allocate around 8% of their budgets to the cooperation with their neighbours. The activities mainly take place within the framework of the Northern Dimension.

Moreover, bilateral and multilateral cooperation occurs outside the NCM structure, including cooperation in the Baltic Sea Task Force on

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<sup>22</sup> [www.nordregio.se](http://www.nordregio.se)

Organised Crime, aimed at fighting human trafficking, and senior official meetings in Brussels focusing on specific EU legal instruments.

### *Gender equality*

The Nordic and Baltic ministers for gender equality adopted a cooperation programme for Nordic-Baltic gender equality cooperation for the years 2007 and 2008 on 10 May 2006. The cooperation will focus on gender and power, gender and youth, gender perspectives in budget work, men and gender equality, human trafficking and violence against women. Nordic and Baltic ministers for gender equality meet every two years. The Nordic Committee of Senior Officials and representatives from the Baltic States' gender equality units meet once a year. The objective is to organise annual activities that produce a joint added value.

At their meeting in May 2006, the Nordic and Baltic ministers for gender equality discussed what measures need to be taken to fight prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes. Human trafficking is a growing international problem. The ministers emphasised the importance of broad cooperation between the various fields and countries. They decided to invite the ministers for social affairs and health to aid in the fight against human trafficking, since social problems should be a focal point of this work (see section 2.3.2).

Several projects were completed during the year, e.g. by the Nordic Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Research (NIKK)<sup>23</sup>.

### *Fisheries and sea farming, agriculture, food and forestry*

The council of ministers for fisheries and sea farming, agriculture, food and forestry has extended its cooperation with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to include all levels from ministers to working groups and formalised the cooperation with four central committees of senior officials, covering the council of ministers' four policy areas. This has established a more result-oriented cooperation at a higher level in the areas of food safety, genetic resources and forestry. Many of the Nordic Council of Ministers' specialist areas have also been included in the EU action plan for the Northern Dimension 2004-2006.

Over the past ten years, the Nordic countries have been working closely with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in a large number of agricul-

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<sup>23</sup> [www.nikk.uio.no](http://www.nikk.uio.no)

tural issues. The majority of the cooperation has occurred at project level. A meeting between Nordic and Baltic ministers for fisheries and sea farming, agriculture, forestry and food in November 2003 resulted in a decision to formalise the cooperation at senior official level in all four sectors. The Nordic-Baltic Committee of Senior Officials meets regularly, and has decided to continue its cooperation on current areas within genetic resources, rural district policy, ecology, gene technology and research and education.

With regards to forestry, the NCM has been cooperating closely with the Baltic States for a number of years – especially when it comes to forest research and forest management. At ministerial level it has also been decided to formalise cooperation in this sector at senior official level, and the high-level B8 CSO Forestry group meets on a regular basis. The coming years' work is likely to concentrate on forestry research, the implementation of international conventions, genetic resources and biodiversity, bio-energy and rural development.

The NCM also works closely with the Baltic States in the food sector. Since 2004, this cooperation was formalised at senior official level with regular meetings in the Nordic-Baltic Committee of Senior Officials. Two new Nordic-Baltic workings groups related to the food chain (food safety and animal health) and health and nutrition were established in 2006. All Nordic and Baltic ministers responsible for the entire food chain and forests will meet in November 2006.

The food cooperation has increased the importance of implementing the joint declaration of ministers to strengthen Nordic-Baltic cooperation on food safety of November 2003. During the period 2004-2006, the ministers have focused on the following: traceability – zoonoses – dioxin – effective food control. Moreover, a new area of great immediate interest is the recently established cooperation on a veterinary service to handle exotic animal diseases like the bird flu as well as general animal health/welfare.

In terms of research, the work has succeed to enable the Baltic States to participate in the broad European ERANET on food safety research, SAFEFOODERA (see section 8.3).

### *Culture*

Joint cultural projects are conducted regularly. Many joint projects are initiated during the year, including activities under the auspices of the

NCM offices in Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius. In addition, the “Sleipnir travel grant” for mobility and networking has helped many artists from the Nordic countries and Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania obtain travelling scholarships. The “Closer Culture Neighbours Subsidy Programme” is also working to promote the exchange and mobility of cultural contributors from the Baltic States in 2006.

Cooperation is yet to commence at the political level. In 2005, the NCM conducted a study on cultural policy in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and on the future possibilities of strengthening Nordic-Baltic cultural cooperation. The study formed the basis for a Nordic-Baltic dialogue, opened at a seminar in Riga on 2-3 November 2005. However, an action plan for developing Nordic-Baltic cultural cooperation from 2006 is set to be approved in early 2007.

In 2006, the cultural cooperation structure that has constituted the Nordic-Baltic and Nordic-Russian cultural cooperation, e.g. through projects and subsidy schemes, will be dismantled. So 2006 will be a year of transition for cultural cooperation. A new structure and new programmes for Nordic cultural cooperation will be established on the basis of the new structure entering into force in 2007, which will also comprise cultural cooperation between the Nordic countries and Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and North-West Russia. The cultural ministers from the Nordic countries decided in the spring of 2006 to start working on an action plan for further Nordic-Baltic cultural cooperation. The specifics of the action plan will be determined in 2006-2007 in dialogue with the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian authorities and on the basis of the study work and input from the Riga seminar mentioned above.

#### *Finance, consumers, transport and labour market*

In the area of finance, a project is underway to implement a coordinated Nordic strategy that will streamline multilateral support to the relevant countries in the Baltic Sea region. The strategy is to develop forms of greater cooperation between the multilateral institutions (financial and other, e.g. the European Investment Bank and the World Bank) of which the Nordic countries are members. The objective is to increase the pay-off from the resources the Nordic countries contribute to the multilateral organisations. The overall results will be published in 2007 with discussions in relevant joint Nordic decision-making bodies. Furthermore, considerable financial cooperation takes place outside the auspices of the NCM.

In 1998, the NCM appointed a working group regarding cooperation on the securities market, the purpose being to identify border obstacles between the Nordic securities markets. However, the working group is also engaged in implementing EU directives as well as attempts to promote the Nordic and Nordic-Baltic cooperation between the authorities in the stock-exchange rea.

As regards consumers and transport, significant cooperation has been taking place with the Baltic States. This cooperation will now continue outside the NCM organisation, as the areas of Nordic cooperation shifted from formal to informal at 1 January 2006 (see section 1.3).

Cooperation on labour market issues occurs particularly through the Nordic Institute for Advanced Training in Occupational Health and Safety (NIVA)<sup>24</sup> and is on a smaller scale. Meetings are not held at minister level under the auspices of the NCM. However, a Nordic-Baltic EU information group has been appointed, its latest meeting having been held in Brussels, where the group met with the two sides of the labour-market and the European Parliament, among others.

### 3.4 Nordic institutions' cooperation with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have been invited to participate in the work of the joint Nordic institutions, with the guidelines<sup>25</sup> mentioned above as the basis for cooperation. The participation is expected to develop over time as joint areas of interest appear and are specified. However, the Nordic institutions have already undertaken several different projects in the Baltic States together with Baltic partners.

The Baltic States have been true members of the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB)<sup>26</sup> since 1 January 2005. On the NordForsk<sup>27</sup> board, the Baltic States have a joint observer from their respective national bodies for research financing in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The representation rotates between the three Baltic States.

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<sup>24</sup> [www.niva.org](http://www.niva.org)

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.norden.org/pub/sk/showpub.asp?pubnr=2004:448>

<sup>26</sup> [www.nib.int](http://www.nib.int)

<sup>27</sup> [www.nordforsk.org](http://www.nordforsk.org)

Launching projects between the joint Nordic institutions and the Baltic States is another way of deepening the cooperation between the Nordic and Baltic countries. Cooperation can become even closer if made more strategic and designed with a more long-term perspective, even relatively permanent. The possibility of developing joint Nordic-Baltic ownership along the lines of the NIB model is being kept open and may come to pass when the cooperation within the institutions' framework has rendered such a development natural. Baltic participation in the Nordic institutions can thus be developed in the course of time and may start out with strategic partnerships, for instance, rather than actual ownership.

The activities undertaken by the institutions in the Baltic States are multifarious. Some examples are projects to improve health and safety at Baltic companies, gender equality projects<sup>28</sup>, cooperation on plant-genetic resources<sup>29</sup>, research projects on media and communication<sup>30</sup>, environmental projects<sup>31</sup>, projects to promote regional innovation systems and contributions to increase industrial research at international level in the region<sup>32</sup> as well as a cooperation programme aimed at functionally impaired children and young people<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> [www.nikk.uio.no](http://www.nikk.uio.no)

<sup>29</sup> [www.ngb.se](http://www.ngb.se)

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.nordicom.gu.se/eng.php?portal=&main=>

<sup>31</sup> Nordic Environmental Finance Cooperation (NEFCO), see section 2.3.3.

<sup>32</sup> Nordic Innovation Centre (NICE), see section 8.3.

<sup>33</sup> [www.nsh.se](http://www.nsh.se)

# 4. Cooperation with North-West Russia

## 4.1 Introduction

The Nordic Council of Ministers considers close cooperation with Russia to be of great importance, particularly with the federal districts bordering the Nordic countries and the Baltic States. The overriding aim of the cooperation is to contribute to a democratic societal development, a regulated market economy and to establish pluralistic contacts across the Nordic-Russian borders.

The past year has been a year of evaluation and adjustment of the NCM cooperation with North-West Russia. Resources have been increased and are now allocated to fewer but more focused areas where the Nordic governments believe the NCM can make a difference. The NCM also opened an office in Kaliningrad in September 2006, thereby creating new possibilities for cooperation.

## 4.2 Nordic Council of Ministers guidelines for cooperation with North-West Russia

To specify the NCM guidelines for cooperation with North-West Russia for the period 2006 - 2008, the ministers for Nordic cooperation adopted a new Russia Programme<sup>34</sup> on 28 October 2005. The programme emphasises more focused initiatives in fewer areas. The programme concen-

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<sup>34</sup> See appendix IV for more information about the Russia Programme. See also guidelines [http://www.norden.org/russland/uk/Riktlinjer\\_NV\\_Ry\\_ENGELSK.pdf](http://www.norden.org/russland/uk/Riktlinjer_NV_Ry_ENGELSK.pdf) and the Russia Programme <http://www.norden.org/pub/sk/showpub.asp?pubnr=2005:452>

trates on knowledge building and networking. Thus far, the NCM's activities in this area have been particularly successful. Other areas highlighted in the guidelines include participation in the Northern Dimension partnerships, cooperation with non-governmental organisations in North-West Russia, cooperation in the Barents region, cross-border cooperation and initiatives through the Nordic Project Export Fund (NOPEF).

### 4.3 Knowledge building and networking

As mentioned above, the Nordic Council of Ministers regards knowledge building and networking as a crucial part of the cooperation with North-West Russia. Thus, the NCM, with the support of a Nordic ad hoc working group, has developed a new Knowledge Transfer and Networking Programme to be introduced in 2007. The programme targets four groups for its activities: 1. public administration, 2. education and research, 3. business and 4. civil society. The programme will enable these target groups to acquire more knowledge and set up networks between the countries.

Structure of Knowledge Transfer and Network Programme and its target groups

- Public administration: senior officials
- Education/research: education and research people
- Business: private sector people
- Civil society: parliamentarians, NGOs, artists, young politicians and journalists

The Knowledge Transfer and Networking Programme pools the four main target groups into four programme areas. These areas contain thematic priority areas to be established as required. They enable greater flexibility while the structure helps sharpen the focus on targets for the programme in general.

The activities aim at promoting long-term competency enhancement and stronger economic development and competitiveness in the Nordic

countries and their neighbours as well as at fostering strong states governed by the rule of law and democratic values.

Certain programme areas must also encompass Belarusian citizens and organisations as part of the process of contributing to a democratic Belarus.

The objective is to increase the number of exchanges with North-West Russia in 2006 and 2007 from the current 300 a year to around 900. Initially, the NCM will realise this increase by restructuring activities into bigger group exchanges instead of the individual exchanges essentially occurring today.

#### 4.4 Support programme for NGOs in the Baltic Sea region

The NCM has developed an NGO programme in 2006 with a view to strengthening civil society in the Nordic countries and their neighbours. The programme supports Nordic NGOs in partnership with NGOs in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as well as Poland in developing a strong civil society in Russia and Belarus, thus helping to create stronger democracies.

The NCM programme to support NGOs in the Baltic Sea region is conceived as a means of encouraging NGOs to exchange information through tripartite cooperation involving the participation of at least one organisation from the Nordic countries, one from Poland or the Baltic States and one from North-West Russia or Belarus. The NGOs from the above-mentioned countries can apply for support for the partnership projects from the Nordic Council of Ministers, which can also take the initiative to establish new cooperations. The support will be earmarked for specific project activities and not for administration of the NGOs.<sup>35</sup>

#### 4.5 Examples of specific activities in North-West Russia

Several specialist councils of ministers perform extensive project-oriented cooperation with North-West Russia. For instance, the environmental ministers injected about DKK 16.9 million into projects in 2005 (DKK

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<sup>35</sup> [http://www.norden.org/rusland/uk/samarb\\_fri.asp?lang=6](http://www.norden.org/rusland/uk/samarb_fri.asp?lang=6)

10.3 million through NEFCO and DKK 6.6 million through the NCM environmental working groups). The ministers for social affairs contributed financially to a large number of projects in 2005 through the so-called action plans (for children and young people and for counter-narcotics cooperation).

#### *WoMen & Democracy Conference in St. Petersburg*

The WoMen and Democracy Conference was held on 6–8 October 2005 in St. Petersburg, focusing on three themes: WoMen and Power, WoMen and Economy and Labour Market and Alternative to Violence. Seven hundred people from 14 countries attended the conference, including decision-makers, senior officials, researchers and NGOs. The conference was co-organised by St. Petersburg and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

#### *Culture*

Nordic cultural cooperation has been subject to a structural reform during 2005-2006, which will lead to new and more open work methods. Instead of being based on sectors, the cultural and art cooperation will be based on fixed-term thematic programmes. The reform will also establish a mobility programme for artists of all kinds, producers and culture providers, for networking and residency activities. The reform will also influence cultural cooperation with North-West Russia.

The NCM Secretariat and the NCM information office in St. Petersburg arranged two seminars in September 2005, one being held in Murmansk and focusing on cultural cooperation in the Barents region and the situation of its indigenous population and the other being held in St. Petersburg. Based on these seminars, an action plan will be devised for the continued cultural cooperation with North-West Russia.

Jointly undertaken with the European Cultural Foundation, a project entitled Innovative Strategies for Local Development – Capacity Building for Cultural Institutions in the Kaliningrad Region saw the light of day in February 2005. The project has since received financial support from the EU TACIS programme. The project will continue with eight education modules in 2006 and 2007. Transit – NGO Agency for Cultural Initiatives - is the organisation implementing the programme in Kaliningrad.

*Network against human trafficking*

In 2005, the chairmen of task forces and international organisations working to fight human trafficking in the EU Northern Dimension region met. The meeting discussed how to communicate information and cooperate more efficiently and thus avoid duplicating efforts.

*Innovation*

The Russian ministers for education and economic affairs participate in the Northern Dimension Working Group on Innovation project, undertaken by the Nordic ministers for industry and employment. The ministers for energy's cooperation is another example of cooperation at political level, and the cooperation, in addition to a number of projects and programmes, has resulted in agreed minutes with the Russian ministry of energy and industry on the area of cooperation and its forms.

#### 4.6 Nordic institutions' cooperation with North-West Russia

The Nordic institutions and North-West Russia undertake extensive cooperation in certain policy areas. For instance, NEFCO allocates 33% of its total investments to Russia (see below). Below follow some examples of the institutions' cooperation.

*Nordic Gene Bank (NGB)*

The Nordic Gene Bank has been conducting activities with the Vavilov Institute (VIR) in St. Petersburg, Russia, since 1997. At the beginning, support came in the form of emergency relief, but today work is more formalised and takes place within an agreed framework. The NGB has received support for exchanging staff, building capacity at VIR by way of educating and training staff, repatriating the Nordic material on VIR and developing cooperation between VIR, the NGB and Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, etc.

*Nordic Environmental Finance Cooperation (NEFCO)*

NEFCO continues to increase its activities in Russia. By June 2006, the NEFCO Investment Fund had 28 approved projects in Russia, of which

NEFCO had committed itself to five of these. NEFCO's share of these investments amounts to approx. EUR 71 million, and the total project investments amount to approx. EUR 680 million. In Russia, a project with a NEFCO commitment of DKK 3.8 million has been completed. The south-west water treatment plant in St. Petersburg is the biggest and most visible project, and NEFCO is a part of the company that financed and completed the investment and in the operating company.

#### *Nordic Environmental Development Fund*

The Nordic Environmental Development fund's main areas of activity are in Russia and Ukraine. Approved, agreed and completed projects in Russia number 67, including specific projects within different programmes established by the fund. Some DKK 312.8 million of the total amount of DKK 350.6 million has been utilised. The credit schemes for cleaner technology, energy savings and environmental investments in agriculture have attracted a lot of attention.

#### *Nordic Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Research*

The institute is running a research project entitled Russian Women as Immigrants in the Nordic Countries. The project focuses on Russian women's experience in immigrating to the northern parts of Finland, Norway and Sweden.

#### *Other Nordic institutions*

The Nordic Forest Research Co-operation Committee held a number of meetings in 2005 with the North-West Russian forestry institute PROCES and is planning further cooperation. In the social area, the Nordic Cooperation on Disability has prepared a proposal for a cooperation programme aimed at functionally impaired children and their families in North-West Russia. The Nordic School for Public Health is planning cooperation with a medical university in Arkhangelsk. The Nordic Institute for Advanced Training in Occupational Health and Safety conducts scholarship and course activities regarding occupational health and safety.

## 4.7 Kaliningrad – new office

On 22 December 2005, the Nordic Council of Ministers signed an agreement with the Russian government on establishing an NCM office in Kaliningrad. The tasks of the office will resemble those of the St. Petersburg office, and the office will help ensure compliance with the NCM guidelines and completion of the Russia Programme in Kaliningrad. Moreover, separate initiatives will be taken with the authorities and organisations in Kaliningrad. In September 2006, the NCM joined with the local government of Kaliningrad in holding a major opening seminar presenting the NCM and its activities as well as a range of Nordic institutions and their activities.

## 4.8 Cooperation with the Barents Euro-Arctic Council

The activities of the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC)<sup>36</sup> overlap geographically. This calls for an expedient distribution of work between BEAC and the Barents Regional Council according to which the NCM limits its own initiatives in the geopolitical area covered by the Barents region, but, in return, participates as a partner in the cooperation launched by BEAC and the Barents Regional Council. The cooperation was discussed in 2005 and 2006, particular subjects being the indigenous peoples, climate change and economic development. Attention has been focused on pilot project activities in which the NCM and BEAC develop useful forms of cooperation and learn more about the relevant organisations.

### *Connection Barents*

In 2005/2006, the NCM art institutions, specifically the Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art (NIFCA)<sup>37</sup>, the Nordic Centre for the Performing Arts<sup>38</sup>, the Nordic Music Committee<sup>39</sup>, the Nordic Literature and Library Committee<sup>40</sup> and the cultural organisation *Pikene på Broen*, organised the

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<sup>36</sup> [www.beac.st](http://www.beac.st)

<sup>37</sup> [www.nifca.org](http://www.nifca.org)

<sup>38</sup> [www.nordscen.org](http://www.nordscen.org)

<sup>39</sup> [www.nomus.org](http://www.nomus.org)

<sup>40</sup> [www.nordbok.org](http://www.nordbok.org)

Connection Barents<sup>41</sup> art experiment in Kirkenes, involving performing artists, graphic artists, sound artists and writers from all five Nordic countries, Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The participants in Connection Barents explore both the physical and the mental borderlands of the Barents region.

The encounter between international, Nordic and local artists and their dialogue on everyday life in the region represent the core of Connection Barents. Four areas need to be studied: border culture, nature and ecology, marginal characters and the region's new economic conditions. Connection Barents will help strengthen future Nordic art cooperation and cultural life in the Barents region.

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<sup>41</sup> [www.connectionbarents.org](http://www.connectionbarents.org)

## 5. Neighbourhood policy with Belarus

The Nordic Council of Ministers' (NCM) guidelines for cooperation with North-West Russia for the years 2006–2008 extends the framework for its eastward work to include cross-border work with Belarus and also activities to meet the political challenges in Belarus<sup>42</sup>.

The objective of the NCM's cooperation in Belarus is to foster democratic development of its society and open pluralist relations across borders.<sup>43</sup>

During Denmark's presidency of NCM, a conference on the situation in Belarus was held in Copenhagen on 31 October 2005. The conference was meant to help build a foundation for preparing joint Nordic initiatives in Belarus. The conference was organised by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

NCM initiated the regional border cooperation called Baltic Euroregional Network (BEN) in 2005. The project represents cooperation with the Council of the Baltic Sea States and has a total of 35 partners from nine countries, including Belarus<sup>44</sup> (see section 2.4.2).

The new NCM support programme for NGOs in the Baltic Sea region will be opened to participation by Belarus and aims directly at strengthening Belarusian civil society and stimulating cross-border cooperation in the region.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> See page 4 for the guidelines for the NCM's cooperation with North-West Russia. See page 8 for the 2006-2008 Russia Programme.

<sup>43</sup> [http://www.norden.org/hviterussland/uk/vitryssland\\_sam.asp?lang=6](http://www.norden.org/hviterussland/uk/vitryssland_sam.asp?lang=6)

<sup>44</sup> The other countries are Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden. More information about BEN is available at [www.benproject.org](http://www.benproject.org).

<sup>45</sup> [http://www.norden.org/russland/uk/samarb\\_fri.asp?lang=6](http://www.norden.org/russland/uk/samarb_fri.asp?lang=6)

## 5.1. Support to higher education for young Belarusians

In 2005, the NCM and the European Commission developed a large support scheme for the European Humanities University (EHU) in Vilnius – a Belarusian exile university. The project support totals EUR 2.78 million to be spent on educating of 350 Belarusian students in the course of three years and within the framework of 11 university programmes, six graduate programmes and five masters programmes. The EU contributes 80% of the support, while the NCM, Sweden and Finland collectively contribute the remaining 20%.

Until 2004, EHU was situated in Minsk, but it was closed by the Belarusian authorities. The closure sparked off huge protests in Belarus and other countries. The university management decided to look for partners abroad and open the university in neighbouring Lithuania as an exile university. The university continues to grow and is today the biggest single university for Belarusian students outside Belarus.

In 2006, the NCM and the European Commission have been discussing increasing support for educating young Belarusians. The idea is to provide support to more students at EHU, but perhaps also to young Belarusians wanting to study in Belarus' neighbouring countries.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.ehu.lt/>

## 6. Cooperation with the Balkans – culture as a bridge builder

Norden Balkan Culture Switch<sup>47</sup> was a cultural project for networking and exchanging culture between the Nordic countries and the Western Balkans. From 2003 to 2005, about 60 similar projects were implemented in both regions. All projects were multilateral. In March 2005, the above project helped nine Balkan countries establish a cooperation organisation for the ministries of cultural affairs in the region, officially known as the Council of Ministers of Culture in South East Europe. The organisation promotes cultural cooperation and has so far held two meetings.

The Nordic ministers for cultural affairs decided to sponsor cooperation initiatives among their Balkan colleagues, granting DKK 500,000 in the spring of 2005 to support mobility within the region. This amount underpins a mobility programme for artists, launched in May 2006. Three centres are implementing the mobility programme: New Media Center Kuda in Novi Sad, Serbia, Vector Association in Iasi Romania and Platform Garanti in Istanbul.

At the beginning of 2005, the Nordic Council of Ministers announced a project to present the Nordic model of cooperation between home and school in the local community. In cooperation with the Center for Quality Education in Serbia and in Bosnia, a large number of courses were held for parents and teachers, focusing on children traumatised by internment in refugee camps or physical disability. Using cultural activities as a tool, the project aimed to unite schools, teachers, parents and children in the context offered by the local community.

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<sup>47</sup> [www.balkankult.org/nb](http://www.balkankult.org/nb)

In 2007, the Scandinavian Design Beyond the Myth<sup>48</sup> exhibition will tour the region according to the following schedule: Sofia from March to May 2007, Belgrade from June to August 2007 and Zagreb from September to November 2007.

The exhibition will showcase Scandinavian design during the past 50 years from the concept's introduction in the 1950s to today's industrial design. The exhibition will present the development of Nordic design as part of the Nordic countries' general development in society, training and education, and innovation. The Scandinavian Design Beyond the Myth exhibition has been touring Europe since the autumn of 2003, hosting a great many seminars and conferences on the interaction between society and design. In 2007, on its visit to the Balkans, the exhibition will be supplemented by seminars and conferences on Nordic regional cooperation from an international perspective, covering design, training and education, and innovation, for example.

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<sup>48</sup> [www.scandesign.org](http://www.scandesign.org)

## 7. Arctic region/West Nordic region and its neighbours

### 7.1 Cooperation Programme for the Arctic

The Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) has its own Arctic Cooperation Programme, forming the general framework for Nordic initiatives in the Arctic region. This cooperation programme has an annual budget of approx. DKK 7 million. To ensure that funds granted under the programme best match Nordic initiatives launched through the Arctic Council, the NCM has chosen to set up an Arctic Expert Committee to coordinate and provide advisory services on project activities under the programme. The Nordic members of the Arctic Council's Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) sit on the NCM Arctic Expert Committee, as well as representatives from the autonomous territories.

The latest three-year Arctic Cooperation Programme, covering the period from 2006 to 2008<sup>49</sup>, which was adopted in November 2005, will focus on a) promoting the living conditions of the indigenous peoples and their opportunities to improve their economic and cultural conditions, b) increasing the conditions for Nordic research with a special view to the International Polar Year 2007-2008 and c) improving the conditions for Nordic cooperation on climate change in the Arctic region.

In addition to the general arctic cooperation programme, the various councils of ministers develop and implement their own Arctic action plans and strategies, thus supporting the general cooperation programme. In late 2006, the NCM will conduct an evaluation its overall arctic cooperation activities during the three-year period from 2003-2005.

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<sup>49</sup> The Cooperation Programme for the Arctic is included in Appendix III.

## 7.2 Cooperation with the Arctic Council

As an Arctic Council<sup>50</sup> observer, the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) participates in the SAO meetings (see above) and the biannual ministerial meetings. Meetings between the four regional organisations (the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Council of the Baltic Sea States) are held annually, to coordinate regional activities and discuss the possibilities of joint projects, and the NCM participated in the regional meeting that the Arctic Council convened on 18 August 2006 in Moscow

The ministers for education and research and other representatives of Arctic Council member states have adopted a declaration to strengthen cooperation on education and research. The ministers have in particular expressed a wish to increase student, teacher and research staff mobility in the Arctic region. To follow up the declaration and coordinate the priorities made by the Nordic countries in this respect, an Arctic ad hoc working group has been set up to propose specific follow-up action that can lead to permanent cooperation initiatives and networking in the fields of training, education and research in the Arctic Council member states. In 2006, the NCM secretariat will be responsible for the secretariat functions of the ad hoc working group. As part of its efforts to develop Nordic-Arctic cooperation in training, education and research, the ad hoc working group is planning a conference to be held in Tromsø in November/December 2006.

## 7.3 West Nordic region and its neighbours

The cooperation themes for Nordic cooperation in the West Nordic region and with its neighbours relate to the use of natural resources – not least those of the sea – research, training and education, health, sustenance – including transport, tourism, communication and labour market issues, and consumer protection – culture as well as networking in all respects.

Below follow a number of examples of cooperation with the West Nordic region's neighbours.

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<sup>50</sup> [www.arctic-council.org](http://www.arctic-council.org)

*Regional development*

In 2005, the Nordic ministers for regional affairs launched an analysis of the West Nordic region's economic relations with the other Nordic countries and how these relations impact on business sector development in the West Nordic region, particularly

1. the mechanisms that can boost West Nordic economies and develop cooperation in the West Nordic region and between the region and the other Nordic countries;
2. West Nordic business sector development lessons learnt that can be applied to other West Nordic areas;
3. the impact of the other Nordic countries on business sector specialisation; and
4. an analysis of the economic relations between the West Nordic and other Nordic countries.

Since 1994, the NCM has been engaged in regional policy cooperation with Scotland. Such cooperation has been vital to establishing a development programme for the Northern Periphery region: first as a pilot action programme and then as an EU Interreg III B programme – the Northern Periphery Programme – with the participation of the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Scotland, the Shetland Islands, the Orkney Islands and Canada.

Cooperation centres on the so-called Nordic-Scottish action plan for 2001-2005. At senior official level, a conference will be held this autumn on the long-standing Nordic-Scottish cooperation activities, its purpose being to sum up experience gained by the individual countries in this region. In this connection, representatives of Ireland, Northern Ireland and the Baltic States will be invited to participate in the conference.

To underpin the action plan for Nordic energy cooperation in 2006-2009, a working group for sparsely populated areas has been set up to map sustainable energy sources. At their meeting in Narsarsuaq in Greenland in August 2005, the energy ministers adopted a resolution to examine the conditions for expanding cooperation on energy supplies in sparsely populated areas to include neighbouring countries such as Canada and the Shetland Islands. Follow-up action includes looking into the

possibilities of holding a symposium in 2007 between the West Nordic areas, the Shetland Islands and Canada.

### *Nordic houses*

The Nordic houses of the Faroe Islands (NHFØ)<sup>51</sup> and Iceland (NOREY)<sup>52</sup> as well as the Nordic Institute of Greenland (NAPA)<sup>53</sup> are key players in the field of cultural cooperation in the West Nordic region. Enjoying well-developed cooperative relations, the three organisations have concurrently focused on establishing networks in and around the West Nordic region. This has given the houses a solid basis, in the coming years, for assuming generally adequate and active, coordinating roles within the field of culture and possibly extending such work to other areas.

### *Nordic Atlantic Co-operation*

Nordic Atlantic Co-operation (NORA)<sup>54</sup> is an important partner in realising the North Atlantic region's potential for developing and supporting business sector networks and cooperation projects between Iceland, Norway, the Faroe Islands and Greenland. Co-funding is allocated annually for 15–20 cooperation projects. The North Atlantic countries' overriding dependence on natural resources and the vulnerable small communities also make maintaining a sustainable society a natural and crucial part of NORA's work.

During the past three years, the NCM has been setting the stage for closer cooperation with the North Atlantic neighbouring countries in the Nordic region. NORA has established cooperative relations with these neighbouring countries, through its own projects and networking initiatives as well as by participating in the Interreg IIIB Northern Periphery Programme, where Scotland, the Shetland Islands, the Orkney Islands and Canada take part in cooperation projects. Northern Ireland and western Ireland will also be included in the coming years.

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<sup>51</sup> [www.nlh.fo](http://www.nlh.fo)

<sup>52</sup> [www.nordice.is](http://www.nordice.is)

<sup>53</sup> [www.napa.gl](http://www.napa.gl)

<sup>54</sup> [www.nora.fo](http://www.nora.fo)

*Culture – Rethinking Nordic Colonialism*

In 2006, the Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art (NIFCA) is managing an art project, *Rethinking Nordic Colonialism: A Postcolonial Exhibition Project in Five Acts*, to shed light on Nordic colonial history. The project intends to strengthen artistic diversity and cultural cooperation in the Nordic region. The project combines exhibitions with workshops, conferences, hearings and happenings in the region's autonomous territories Greenland and the Faroe Islands as well as in Iceland and the Sami area of Finland. A total of 56 established artists, theorists, politicians and grass-roots activists from around the world are participating in the project.

The art project also aims to show that the region's postcolonial status offers fertile ground for new qualities and values engendered by a historical chain of cultural clashes. These qualities and values are ignored by the general public, but are fruitful alternatives to existing values and views of life. Moreover, using exploratory methods and models for contemporary visual culture, the project intends to create a basis for mutual learning in the Nordic region that not only stimulates local communities, but also sets up permanent networks (on a Nordic and international scale) for the many partners operating in the sphere of culture and museums. The art project addresses populations in both peripheral areas and centres of the Nordic region and is believed to have a substantial diversification effect and a certain international reach thanks to the great number of foreign participants.



## 8. Other joint Nordic activities seen in an EU/international context

### 8.1 Introduction

The changes taking place in the international community surrounding the Nordic countries have a natural impact on joint Nordic cooperation initiatives. This goes for both political and economic changes. The international agenda has a much larger influence on Nordic cooperation today than previously. The EU's structure and enlargement have generated new cooperation possibilities and added new themes to the agenda.

This is reflected in the activities of the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM). All specialist councils of ministers are engaged in activities that are relevant from a European perspective. The activities vary, ranging from cooperation with other international regional organisations and projects funded by the EU or with EU involvement to the exchange of viewpoints on specific draft EU legislation, international relevant basic research and coordination of EU legislative act implementation. This section contains an extract of NCM activities with an EU/international perspective.

### 8.2 Lisbon process

To follow up the Lisbon strategy at Nordic level, the NCM has contributed to the Lisbon strategy on partnership for growth and jobs. For 2006, action must be taken to

- prepare an introduction and publish the agreed proposal for follow-up
- assess the further coordination work in terms of follow-up
- draw up a status report in terms of follow-up.

Furthermore, the Lisbon strategy will continually be evaluated in relation to the challenges posed by globalisation – see the publication entitled *The Nordic Region as a Global Winner Region – Tracing the Nordic Competitiveness Model*<sup>55</sup> – and initiatives taken in the fields of research and innovation will also be assessed. For example, the publication mentions NICE (the Nordic Innovation Centre) as an active participant in implementing the goals set in these two EU programmes: the Seventh Framework Programme for Research (FP7) and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP).

The Nordic countries participate – together with the other OECD countries as well as some non-OECD countries – in the OECD programme known as PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment. This programme is intended to measure how well equipped 15-16-year-olds are to tackle the challenges of the information society when it comes to skills and qualifications in reading, mathematics and natural science as well as personal and social competences. Under the auspices of the NCM, an independent so-called PISA report, *Northern Lights II*, has been completed. This report is a continuation of previous activities and a detailed analysis of the Nordic countries' results in, say, the new PISA assessments. The objective is to better understand the pan-Nordic characteristics in training and education issues.

In the environmental field, the Nordic ministers for the environment have also made a pan-Nordic contribution to the Lisbon process in 2006, highlighting Nordic examples of environmental technology that dissociate economic growth from environmental degradation and help improve general health through fewer harmful emissions. Moreover, environmental technology can help boost economic growth and so increase employment, which is a goal of the Lisbon strategy up to 2010. The Nordic examples of innovative environmental technology included in the publication and circulated to all EU and Nordic players are marine engineering, environmentally efficient buildings and biologically based growth. It is hoped that the Nordic contribution will enhance European and international

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<sup>55</sup> See section 1.4.

activities to advance environmental technology and innovation in ways that benefit industry, employment and not least the environment, but also that the Nordic examples will help fuel a political process that realises measures to promote technology in general.

### 8.3 Training and education, research and innovation

#### *Nordic initiatives in relation to the EU agenda on training, education and research*

As part of the formal action to follow up the Bologna process ministerial meeting in Bergen in 2005, it was decided that Norway would organise an international seminar in September 2006 to help establish a strategy for the External Dimension of the Bologna Process up to the ministerial meeting in London in 2007<sup>56</sup>. The strategy must assess the possibilities of opening up the Bologna process to countries and regions outside Europe. In this way, the Nordic region and the Nordic countries will help build a platform for the strategy document and gain opportunities for influencing and finding adequate patterns of cooperation with countries and regions outside Europe. Spearheading the Bologna work in this respect, the Nordic region will also help strengthen the basis for – and allow a better understanding of – the high level of Nordic training and education.

In 2005, the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) set up a new organisation in the field of research, NordForsk (Nordic Research Board)<sup>57</sup>, which has become fully operational in 2006. NordForsk's strategy is to develop new Nordic research initiatives founded on the strengths of the Nordic countries and national priorities. Dialogue, better Nordic and international cooperation interfaces as well as international operationalisation are the keys that will enable NordForsk to develop its role as a Nordic cooperation body. Flexible interaction with, say, the new EU framework programme for research and development represents an important opportunity and a major challenge for NordForsk. Investment in research and innovation is a pivotal factor in developing dynamic knowledge societies, creating new and better jobs and securing economic growth.

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<sup>56</sup> [www.bolognaoslo.com/expose/sites/bolognaoslo/?s=1](http://www.bolognaoslo.com/expose/sites/bolognaoslo/?s=1)

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.nordforsk.org/meny.cfm?m=140>

The activities aimed at uniting and coordinating Nordic research work and thus ensuring international penetration (particularly in Europe) include a conference planned jointly with the European Commission. This conference, Investing in Research and Innovation – Exchanging European Experiences in a Nordic Context, will be held in Copenhagen from 16 to 18 October 2006.

Investment in research and innovation will be an excellent aid in meeting the challenges posed by an ageing labour force and globalisation, but what key questions need answering for such investment to be productive? How can we proceed with large-scale initiatives that coordinate Nordic national and regional research and innovation efforts and thus increase the chances of success? What lessons can we learn when it comes to cooperation and integration between research programmes under the ERA-NET scheme<sup>58</sup> and the establishment of innovative technology platforms in key areas like energy? How can we use the EU's coming seventh framework programme for research to implement breakthrough activities? How do we increase the chances of commercial success – and how do we succeed in terms of incubation and finance? How can a dynamic labour market for researchers encourage effective research and innovation? What are the lessons to be learnt from the Nordic region? What other lessons can boost regional growth?

This is why the Nordic region, in concert with the European Commission, is taking the initiative to hold this conference. Inspired by the European partnership for growth and new and better jobs (the Lisbon strategy), the initiative focuses on research and innovation for growth. Concurrently with the conference, the Baltic Sea Initiative will hold a seminar to promote creativity and knowledge-based growth in the Baltic Sea region (see section 2.2).

### *Nordic Region and Asia – Globalisation and Partnership*

In January 2006, together with the Nordic Institute for Asian Studies (NIAS), the NCM invited 20 Nordic participants with strong Asian competences and different backgrounds (higher education, research, business sector and public innovation and investment support) to a workshop in

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<sup>58</sup> The ERA-NET scheme must contribute to reaching the European Research Area (ERA) goal. The ERA-NET scheme must be used for cooperation between research-funded institutions for the purpose of coordinating nationally financed research and development initiatives: [www.nordforsk.org/ennyhets.cfm?id=490](http://www.nordforsk.org/ennyhets.cfm?id=490), <http://cordis.europa.eu/coordination/era-net.htm>

Copenhagen under this title: Nordic Region and Asia – Globalisation and Partnership.

The NCM decided to hold the workshop because, over the past few years, several parties had approached the NCM, seeking possible support for and NCM participation in activities in Asia. So far, NIAS has been the NCM's most important activity in relation to Asia.

NIAS has set up a pan-Nordic school of research on 'the Asian century'. This research school, the Asian Century Research School Network (ACRSN), focuses on more than just the rapid pace of economic and social development in Asia. It attempts, through Nordic cooperation, to offer the Nordic region's highly qualified research programmes in the Asian field across many disciplines and in close contact with networks in Asia. Many PhD students and senior research staff are already benefiting from the initiative, which will serve the interests of university students throughout the region in the long run. The students will be able to take part in and set up new innovative fields of research and, in doing so, help ensure that the Nordic countries are well prepared for the Asian century.

Furthermore, the NCM was also involved in EXPO 2005 in Japan, organising and coordinating a Nordic pavilion.

### *Nordic Energy Research*

Nordic Energy Research<sup>59</sup> is a Nordic institution that aims to be an effective instrument in reaching the political goals for research and business sector development in the Nordic energy market. Its tools include initiatives contributing to efficient and environment-friendly energy production, distribution and use in the Nordic region via research and technological advancement. At the same time, Nordic business sector development in the field of energy needs boosting. Another goal is to share more knowledge in this field between the Nordic countries and its neighbours in the Baltic Sea region.

Nordic Energy Research is also a contributor in the field of energy in relation to the EU. An important programme is the European Technology Platform for Hydrogen and Fuel Cells, which is helping to expand the scope of European research in fields that research and innovate such technologies. The tools used in this process are effective coordination of European, national, regional and local research and development pro-

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<sup>59</sup> [www.nordicenergy.net](http://www.nordicenergy.net)

grammes and initiatives as well as action taken to ensure active participation of key players from industry, the research community, public authorities, users and civil society. But the platform also helps raise awareness of the market potentials of these technologies and promote future cooperation, both inside the EU and globally. Industry manages the platform in cooperation with the European Commission. The member countries are represented in the so-called mirror group. The managing director of Nordic Energy Research acts as the vice-chairman of this group.<sup>60</sup>

#### *Nordic Innovation Centre and EU-related activities*

The Nordic Innovation Centre (NICe)<sup>61</sup>, an institution under the NCM, must assist the Nordic countries, as a region, in taking an active part in wider European cooperation, interacting with the leading international communities in relation to technologies, instruments or policy formulation. A condition in this respect is the establishment of networks outside the Nordic region, for example within EU framework programmes (conformity assessment) and similar activities. This is important – not least for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Specifically, it means that NICe gives priority to participating in and funding projects that qualify Nordic environments for European integrated projects and makes Nordic contributions to new directives and Nordic representation in the ERA-NET scheme<sup>62</sup>, etc.

NICe is taking an active part in reaching the goals set in the Lisbon strategy for European growth and strategy objectives for innovation in both the Seventh Framework Programme for Research (FP7) and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP). Below follow examples of projects in which NICe is actively involved.

#### *SAFEFOODERA ERA-NET consortium*

During the past year, all Nordic countries have witnessed cases involving food-borne infections, and consumer focus on food has generally intensified. The increasing globalisation of food production and distribution, combined with the introduction of new cross-border trading areas, such as the internal market in the EU, is a risk factor in spreading infections pre-

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<sup>60</sup> [www.hfpeurope.org](http://www.hfpeurope.org)

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.nordicinnovation.net/>

<sup>62</sup> ERA-NET scheme: <http://cordis.europa.eu/coordination/era-net.htm>

viously often limited to local outbreaks. Globalisation means that new instruments must be used and that cross-border institutions will replace national bodies. SAFEFODDERA, which is a research-coordinating initiative, serves as an excellent example of such cooperation.

The SAFEFODDERA consortium originates in Nordic cooperation activities in the fields of research and innovation regarding food safety. These activities were upgraded in 2004, becoming this European network of research funders. Operated by NICE and having the Nordic Council of Ministers as its partner, the consortium comprises a total of 21 organisations in 18 countries representing the interests of nearly 500 million Europeans. Four of SAFEFODDERA's five priority areas have been defined by Nordic cooperation in the Nordic Council of Ministers and NICE in the Food Safety focus area.

The consortium is progressing as planned, meaning that processes have been launched to

- involve more European countries in the network
- locate cooperation countries in typical food supplier countries outside the EU (such as South East Asia, South America and South Africa)
- establish proper joint research programmes
- map the members' research programmes.

The joint development programme will be one of the first European programmes to be based on the principle of a 'common pot with no guarantee of a fair return'<sup>63</sup> to countries funding the programme. Eleven countries will participate in the programme, including NICE and the council of ministers for fisheries and sea farming, agriculture, food and forestry. NICE will actively profile itself on this basis in the coming EU programmes, including submitting an ERA-NET application.

#### *Baltic Sea Region Innovation Network*

In continuation of its efforts to develop innovation policy in the Baltic Sea region, the NCM has negotiated, together with Swedish-based VIN-

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<sup>63</sup> Funds contributed by the Nordic countries based on the Nordic scale (GNI model), where the countries have no guarantee that research funds will be channelled back to the respective countries.

NOVA<sup>64</sup> and Danish-based FORA<sup>65</sup>, with the European Commission to conclude an agreement on a three-year innovation project to introduce joint programmes and activities capable of strengthening business clusters and thus regional development within and across the Baltic Sea region. NICE will coordinate the Baltic Sea Region Innovation Network project under the EU's PRO INNO NET.

The main goal of the project is to develop and strengthen existing innovation programmes in the Baltic Sea region. The project has three strategic objectives:

- establishing a joint conceptual framework for policy development in relation to business clusters, evaluation and operational activities across national borders in the Baltic Sea region
- setting up one or more joint innovation programmes (focusing on cluster development) for participant countries in the Baltic Sea region
- being an important European example of cross-national innovation development aimed at meeting the re-launched Lisbon agenda.

At the same time, the project forms part of a full EU-funded package to help formulate a clusters policy at European level.

#### *Nordic Forest Research Co-operation Committee*

The Nordic Forest Research Co-operation Committee<sup>66</sup> provides financial and professional support for preparing project applications to be submitted under the sixth EU framework programme. Focusing the Nordic applications has resulted in a number of very large projects in forestry research receiving or will receive financial support from the EU. The Nordic Forest Research Co-operation Committee is also an EU ERA-NET partner in the field of wood material science. The WoodWisdom-Net networking activities obtained support from the EU, commenced operations on 1 January 2004 and will run for four years. Twelve partners are participating in the project, and the activities are managed from Finland, with the Nordic Forest Research Co-operation Committee as one of the

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<sup>64</sup> VINNOVA is a Swedish government body aiming to promote growth and prosperity in Sweden: [www.vinnova.se](http://www.vinnova.se)

<sup>65</sup> FORA is a research and analysis division under the Danish Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs. For more information, go to [www.foranet.dk](http://www.foranet.dk)

<sup>66</sup> [www.nordiskskogforskning.org](http://www.nordiskskogforskning.org)

partners. The main goal of the project is to set up and implement co-funded activities in the field of wood material science in 2007.

#### *Nordic Centre for Spatial Development*

The Nordic Centre for Spatial Development (NORDREGIO)<sup>67</sup> is a Nordic Council of Ministers research institute engaged in regional development, planning and sustainable development. The institute's mission is to promote the understanding of specific Nordic development conditions. NORDREGIO participates in a large number of international projects on the future of the Nordic region and Europe, including projects in the Baltic Sea Region and Northern Periphery regions.

One example is the EUROBALTIC programme on civil protection in the Baltic Sea region. The programme aims to improve the emergency preparedness and competences of the individual countries when it comes to protecting human life, the environment and cultural heritage against disaster – in this way generally promoting sustainable development in the region. EUROBALTIC is funded by INTERREG IIIB and is a four-year project running from 2003 to 2007. A large number of authorities and research institutes from the 11 Baltic Sea countries are participating in the project.

Another example relates to the development of new planning methods for the northern parts of the Nordic region and the neighbouring countries. To attract people to these areas, the project must coordinate a range of different policies and strategies in fields such as the use of natural resources, forestry, tourism, energy and public services at all administrative levels, and focus more on sustainable development. The project is supported by the EU Interreg IIIB programme and will be completed in 2007. A number of partners from Finland, Iceland, Norway, Scotland and Sweden are participating in the project.

## 8.4 Natural resources

### *Energy*

The action plan for Nordic energy cooperation in 2006-2009 proposes that the Nordic region be abreast of developments and use its strengths

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<sup>67</sup> [www.nordregio.se](http://www.nordregio.se)

and networks to make a greater mark on international organisations' work relating to important energy policy issues. In this context, Nordic-Baltic cooperation must help increase the influence exerted by the Nordic countries and the Baltic States on the EU energy policy agenda and Baltic Sea region cooperation. Specifically, this resulted in a Nordic-Baltic preliminary meeting held in connection with the EU Energy Council meeting in March 2006 in Brussels.

When the Nordic ministers for the environment meet with the group of Nordic ministers for economic and business affairs, for energy and for regional affairs at future meetings, they are expected also to focus on cooperation on sustainable energy and energy efficiency enhancement. Nordic cooperation on sustainable energy must be seen in the light of the EU work taking place in this field.

### *Environment*

The Nordic Environmental Action Plan 2005-2008 contains a number of focus areas, all of whose objectives should be seen in an international perspective. A large number of the environmental projects are already being implemented in cooperation with European partners, including the substantial Nordic-Baltic project activities, amounting to about DKK 17 million worth of current and planned projects in 2006. The Nordic ministers for the environment also regularly discuss European matters at their meetings, with discussions in 2006 focusing on EU marine strategy, arctic environmental problems and international climate issues. Environmental issues are often transboundary nature requiring international coordination, and such cooperation has been closely coordinated through the NCM.

The NCM is also an active partner in the Baltic States, North-West Russia and, most recently, in the Ukraine, having made substantial environmental investments through NEFCO (Nordic Environmental Finance Cooperation). The funds are earmarked for granting favourable loans to environmental projects, and NEFCO has a considerable project portfolio through the vast number of resources under their management (DKK 200 million).

### *Sustainable development*

Sustainable development remains a challenge and is an ever-changing process nationally, regionally and internationally. The revised version of "the Sustainable Development – New Bearings for the Nordic Countries

strategy” took effect on 1 January 2005. The strategy contains the Nordic countries’ long-term goals for sustainable development up to 2020 as well as measures and initiatives needed in the period from 2005 to 2008 to reach these long-term goals for a number of sector specialist councils of ministers and priority areas.<sup>68</sup>

The Nordic Strategy for Sustainable Development 2005-2008 must be a lever for influencing international initiatives on sustainable development. It also shows that the Nordic cooperation model can be applied to this cross-sectoral work. Focusing on economic and social dimensions, the revised Nordic strategy supports the EU’s Lisbon process. In her capacity as NCM president, the Danish minister for cooperation presented the strategy at the EU spring summit in March 2005 in Brussels as a contribution to the discussions on the Lisbon process and sustainable development. The Nordic strategy was also submitted as a contribution to the EU Economic and Social Committee’s Stakeholder Forum on the revision of the European strategy for sustainable development in April 2005.

As a top priority area in 2005, action to follow up and market the strategy for sustainable development was taken through continued contact with European Commission staff working on the revision of the EU sustainability strategy. The revised version of the European strategy for sustainable development was adopted at the European Council summer meeting in 2006. The Nordic strategy for sustainable development is larger in scale and takes a more holistic approach.

In June 2006, the Nordic ministers for Nordic cooperation agreed on a report containing a set of indicators related to the revised Nordic strategy for sustainable development. The Nordic set of indicators underpins the international efforts within the EU, OECD and UN to develop sustainable development benchmarks. The set of indicators has been distributed to the relevant international stakeholders.

Sustainable consumption and production are areas given high priority in Nordic cooperation. Measures and initiatives have been identified, both in the Nordic Strategy for Sustainable Development 2005-2008 and in the Nordic Environmental Action Plan 2005-2008. So, in this respect, the NCM is following up the action plan from the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002, the 10-year follow-up plan drawn up

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<sup>68</sup> The strategy and information about related initiatives are available at [www.norden.org/baeredygtig\\_udvikling/sk](http://www.norden.org/baeredygtig_udvikling/sk).

by the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and the EU initiatives. The NCM has set up a working group to coordinate the pan-Nordic contribution to the CSD. Thus far, the NCM has hosted two round table sessions on sustainable consumption and production (SCP): one in Oslo in 2005 and one in Stockholm in 2006. The topics discussed at these sessions included the role and function of the business sector as a role model in the discussions on the north-south divide in relation to SCP. NCM conducted side events to CSD 13 and 14 on Nordic cooperation and initiatives in respect of SCP. The outcome of the two round table conferences was disseminated at these events.

### *Food*

The above mentioned indicators report includes proposals for sustainability indicators in the fields of food safety and health – a novelty in an EU and international context. The Nordic region will thus be able to spearhead activities in this field.

EU food safety and labelling legislation is highly detailed and regulated, and because EEA countries must generally comply with such legislation, cooperation in this field forms a central part of Nordic food cooperation.

‘EU/EEA and international issues’ is a fixed item on the agenda of the committee of senior officials, where information is exchanged and countries can address specific issues for which a joint Nordic approach is called for. The committee also regularly identifies themes where the Nordic countries share the same views and are interested in exerting their influence in EU and other international forums. Nordic cooperation offers the greatest advantages at expert and senior official level early in the decision-making processes and during the implementation phase. The Nordic Cooperation also covers all of the established working groups and networks.

Specific areas of cooperation include the coming revision of EU rules for labelling – an area where the Nordic countries strongly advocate better consumer information and Nordic cooperation has previously produced good results. Another important area is the new hygiene and inspection rules, where the Nordic region wants to promote veterinary inspection changes that will modernise inspection and make it more risk oriented. The Nordic countries, as some of the first in the world, have teamed up to hold joint emergency exercises for infectious and cross-

border animal diseases; such action benefited the Nordic countries during the avian flu outbreak.

Better health and quality of life for all Nordic citizens through food and exercise are top priorities in the NCM. In July 2006, the council of ministers for fisheries and sea farming, agriculture, food and forestry as well as the council of ministers for social services and health policy adopted “Nordic Plan of Action for Better Health and Quality of Life through Diet and Physical Activity”. This area of work is of great international importance because overweight and obesity are becoming global problems. The action plan must therefore not only create Nordic synergies and added value in relation to the many good national initiatives, but also be used as a platform for the Nordic countries’ participation in the international and European debate.

### *Agriculture*

An overall objective of Nordic cooperation in the field of agriculture is to promote the development of a European agricultural pattern that is sustainable, multifunctional, competitive and put into practice throughout Europe – even in regions faced with special challenges.

Over the years, work undertaken in the fields of agriculture and forestry has significantly focused highly on EU cooperation on relevant projects and committees addressing agriculture and forestry issues. To underline this aspect, EU-relevant matters and other issues of international dimension are regular items on the agenda of the committee of senior officials of the council for fisheries and sea farming, agriculture, food and forestry. The three Nordic EU member states also have informal consultations before EU Council of Ministers for Agriculture meetings, in this way keeping each other posted on national viewpoints prior to the EU discussions. The Nordic Council of Ministers makes contributions in respect of EU issues and to the implementation of EU rules.

### *Forestry*

In an EU context, forestry discussions concentrate on topics such as forest tree seeds, environmental monitoring and initiatives, biodiversity, bio-energy and illegal trade in timber. Many of the EU research framework programmes and research programmes have given the Nordic Council of Ministers the opportunity to enter into partnerships and contribute to Nordic forestry research cooperation. The Nordic Council of Ministers

cooperates successfully in the field of EU pilot projects and participates in EU ERA-NET activities known as WoodWisdom.

### *Genetic resources*

Nordic cooperation in genetic resources is politically embedded and plays an important role in influencing the EU and other international processes. Most recently, Nordic cooperation has contributed valuable input on access and rights to genetic resources, and the NCM has stepped up its cooperation with both the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and the EU in this area. The EU and FAO have indicated a wish for closer cooperation with the NCM on present and coming themes of current political interest within areas such as livestock and forestry genetic resources. The Nordic Gene Bank, the Nordic Gene Bank Farm Animals, the Nordic Forestry Seeds and Plants Board as well as the Nordic Joint Committee for Agricultural Research also intend to join forces in submitting an EU research application regarding genetic resources and the cultural landscape.

### *Biodiversity*

The Nordic countries had a strong profile during the negotiations and implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and at the negotiations on a legal framework for food and agricultural genetic resources in the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation. The project on rights and access to genetic resources made the Nordic region one of the first to analyse different scenarios and – thanks to its innovative nature – this work may be of interest to other countries and regions.

The NCM set up an information stand at the Convention on Biological Diversity meeting of parties in Brazil in the summer of 2006. The stand presented work implemented so far in a Nordic context with regards to biodiversity, genetic resources and nature protection. A similar stand is planned for the meeting of the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in Italy in 2007.

### *Rural development policy*

Rural development issues are important elements of both national and EU agricultural policies. In August 2004, the council of ministers for fisheries and sea farming, agriculture, food and forestry set up a committee at senior official level on Nordic Future Agricultural and Cultural Landscape

(NORDFRAM) to address issues such as rural development, including the implementation of EU rural district policy and a decoupling from the EU agricultural support. In this context, it is necessary to clarify the potential of rural districts, not only as a production basis for agriculture and forestry, but, more generally, also for the purpose of assessing the possibilities of developing tourism and settlement, for example.

### *EU maritime policy*

In December 2005, the NCM set up a Nordic group for maritime policy to identify and implement activities where the Nordic countries can influence the development of EU maritime policy. The NCM also appointed an internal group of advisers to support this work.

The EU green book was published in June 2006, and the European Commission has sent the green book in public hearing and invited parties interested in submitting comments and presenting proposals for the future EU maritime policy before July 2007. The green book addresses several of the NCM policy areas regarding the future maritime policy, including environmental policy, fisheries policy, innovation, training and education, research, arctic policy, regional policy, cooperation with Russia and sustainable development. The Nordic region covers waters relevant to EU maritime policy. The Nordic countries boarder in the Baltic Sea and the North Sea and are also the key stakeholders in the vast north-eastern parts of the Atlantic Ocean. The Arctic region is a Nordic priority area and this aspect is also considered by the green book.

Using a coordinated and holistic approach, the NCM expects to offer a considerable contribution to the EU debate, and also influencing the global marine policy debate.

## 8.5 Border obstacles – internal market strengthening

### *Removing border obstacles*

As the EU expands with new member states and global competition sharpens, it becomes even more important for the Nordic countries to ensure mobility and a well-functioning internal market in the Nordic region. The goal is a gradual process of advanced Nordic integration. Both businesses and individuals often see the Nordic region as an internal mar-

ket freely accessible in respect of trade, business, studies and work. Despite this perception, a large number of barriers still need to be lifted before an accessible market can exist in full. Efforts to remove these barriers and make the Nordic region a pioneer in Europe continue.

During the period from 2003 to 2005, former Danish prime minister Poul Schlüter acted as a so-called special representative, responsible for driving the work of breaking down Nordic border obstacles. This mandate terminated at the end of 2005. The Norwegian presidency of the NCM in 2006 will instead develop a model where the individual councils of ministers, in priority fields such as trade, training and education, social security and taxation, appoint experts with sufficient political status, who will focus specifically on the removal of border obstacles within these fields.

#### *Information work and Hello Norden*

While efforts are being made to remove legal and administrative border obstacles, the NCM information service, Hello Norden<sup>69</sup>, continues to provide information to fellow citizens, authorities and businesses about current rules and regulations applicable to the Nordic region, the purpose being to facilitate mobility. Since 2003, the NCM has been financing – with Hello Norden as the implementing party on a national scale – a great number of training and education seminars targeted at relevant Nordic authority officials and intended to raise the level of general knowledge among persons normally charged with inter-Nordic matters. As from 2007, this new activity will become a permanent part of Hello Norden and border obstacle initiatives.

Since 2005, a virtual Nordic tax office<sup>70</sup> has been responsible for facilitating mobility in the Nordic region for individuals. In May 2006, work to develop an interactive Nordic social security portal commenced for the purpose of increasing mobility even further. Also in September a preliminary decision has been made on creating a Nordic education portal. These web portals are special because they allow citizens and businesses not only to consider national rules and regulations from all the relevant countries – in all Nordic languages – but also to pose personal questions to several national authorities simultaneously and to get coordinated answers from these authorities through a central contact point.

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<sup>69</sup> [www.hallonorden.org](http://www.hallonorden.org)

<sup>70</sup> [www.nordisketax.net](http://www.nordisketax.net)

These informative and interactive web portals are linked to the Hello Norden web portal, a natural hub for all mobility-relevant Nordic information.

## 8.6 Welfare programme

In the autumn of 2000, the Nordic Council of Ministers launched a welfare research programme with a budget of DKK 35 million over a five-year period. The main theme was the ‘Nordic model’ seen from different perspectives across borders and policy areas. This research programme marked its ending by hosting a conference on 11 May 2006 in Oslo.

First and foremost, the welfare research programme offers an approach to understanding the so called “Nordic welfare model”, just as it presents key challenges for the future Nordic welfare society. The consequences of increased economic globalisation, the demographic trends causing the number of older people to rise, a low birth rate and immigration are examples of current challenges. One important main conclusion is that the Nordic welfare model cannot *solely* be regarded as one homogenous entity. The Nordic welfare societies are diverse and more complex than they appear to the surrounding world. In particular, comparisons between the Nordic countries show that there is still inspiration to be found for innovation and learn lessons from each other. At the closing conference in Oslo, Joakim Palme, director of the Swedish Institute of Future Studies, concluded that the welfare society has developed in different directions during recent years. Still, more features unite the Nordic countries than separate them in relation to the remaining Western World.

Interest in the Nordic welfare model has grown outside the Nordic region, both in the other European countries and in the USA, because the Nordic countries are seen as representing other ways of tackling welfare policy challenges. However, national discussions of welfare policy do not always regard the Nordic region as one unit and see what distinguishes this region from, say, other parts of Europe. Especially, the welfare research programme points out that comparisons with countries outside the Nordic region underline the common features of the Nordic welfare societies, for which reason it makes sense to talk about one Nordic welfare model.

The research programme produced new information, just as the results provided a solid basis for debating the development of the Nordic welfare society. Many scholars participated in the programme throughout the period. The programme involved a total of 15 projects, six of which were knowledge overviews based on Nordic research. A summary of the 15 research projects and recommendations for follow-up initiatives are included in the programme committee's closing report entitled *NCM Welfare Research Programme – the Programme Committee's Closing Report* (Nordic Theme (2006:512), April 2006)<sup>71</sup>.

## 8.7 Other examples of specialist council of ministers work in an international setting

Below follow some other examples of different activities under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers that may be interesting from an international perspective.

### *Culture*

The Scandinavian Design Beyond the Myth<sup>72</sup> exhibition continued its tour in 2005, appearing in Glasgow during the summer of 2005 and moving on to Copenhagen and Gothenburg in the autumn of 2005.

In the autumn of 2006, the exhibition will visit two museums in Spain (Coruña and Vigo). For more information, see section 6.

### *Legislation and maritime law cooperation*

Cooperation in the field of EU/EEA issues about legislation is urgently required since an increasing portion of legislation work now relates to EU/EEA rules. In 2005, political agreement was reached on the so-called Nordic extradition scheme – a scheme based on and representing an updated version of the EU's scheme in this area. Implementation of the Nordic scheme has continued in 2006. In 2006, the Norwegian presidency of the NCM will host international seminars, for example in the field of grooming – where paedophiles attempt to contact children on the Internet – and alternative settlement of disputes.

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<sup>71</sup> To order NCM reports, go to [www.norden.org/publikationer](http://www.norden.org/publikationer)

<sup>72</sup> [www.scandesign.org](http://www.scandesign.org)

The 2006 ministers for justice meeting discussed several international issues. These included the future of Nordic legislation cooperation, effectiveness and legal protection in the process of combating crime, especially seen in the light of using national legal remedies (bugging, etc.), terrorism and human rights.

The Nordic Institute of Maritime Law is an important player, not only in terms of analysing basic research, but also in respect of drawing up new rules. In recent years, the institute's work has been followed up by international forums such as the EU, the UN and IMO – the International Maritime Organisation. Consequently, the Nordic solutions have made an important mark on the debate and in several fields. The work on increased passenger liability at sea, now being completed in the EU and the IMO, could not have taken place without the Nordic cooperation activities organised around the Nordic Institute of Maritime Law.

#### *Gender equality*

During the Norwegian presidency of the NCM, the council of ministers for gender equality organised a side event – under the theme: *Women Participants and Political Power* – at the UN's annual Women's Commission Meeting, held in New York in March 2006.

The Nordic Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Research cooperates with the Women and Science unit of the European Commission in research policy issues seen from a gender perspective. In November 2005, the institute organised a seminar for MEPs and European Commission officials in concert with the National Secretariat for Gender Research in Sweden and the Swedish EU/R&D Board. The seminar presented Nordic gender equality research and discussed the role of gender equality research in EU research policy.

## 8.8 Cooperation with the Council of Europe

Below follow examples of NCM cooperation with the Council of Europe.

#### *Social services and health policy*

Work undertaken by the council of ministers for social services and health policy in an EU context primarily relates to the EU's Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-Being, the focal

points being children and young people and human trafficking (for more information, see section 2.3.2).

But the Council of Europe is also an important partner in the social services and health policy field, especially as regards disability issues. The NCM secretariat and the Council of Europe have now begun more formal cooperation in the field of policies for people with impaired functional capacity.

### *Culture*

In November 2005, the Nordic Children and Youth Committee published a handbook on 'human libraries' in cooperation with the youth sector of the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe handled the different language versions, for example in English, French and Hungarian, whereas the NCM financed translations into Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish. The idea of human libraries was conceived on the initiative of young people in the Nordic region and tested for the first time in 2000 at the Roskilde Festival in Denmark. A human library is like any normal library – borrowers borrow books for a limited period of time. There is only one difference: the 'books' in the human library are people, and these people and the borrowers are involved in a personal dialogue. The human library resources are people representing groups regularly met with prejudice and frequently exposed to discrimination and/or social exclusion.

The Nordic Children and Youth Committee has also taken the initiative to be included a Council of Europe campaign, All Different – All Equal, to be launched in 2006-2007.

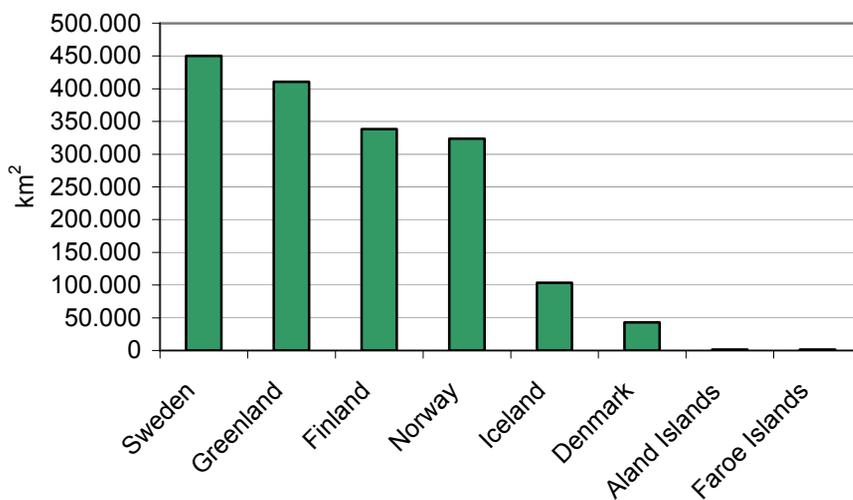
### *Environment*

In May 2006, the NCM became an observer to the Cultural Heritage Committee of the Council of Europe – at the request of the Secretary General of the NCM. This request originated from the substantial activities undertaken in the Nordic region to protect the Nordic cultural heritage of national monuments, cultural environments and nature conservation relevant to the culture and history of society at large, including the living conditions of indigenous people.

# Appendix I: Facts about the Nordic region

## General

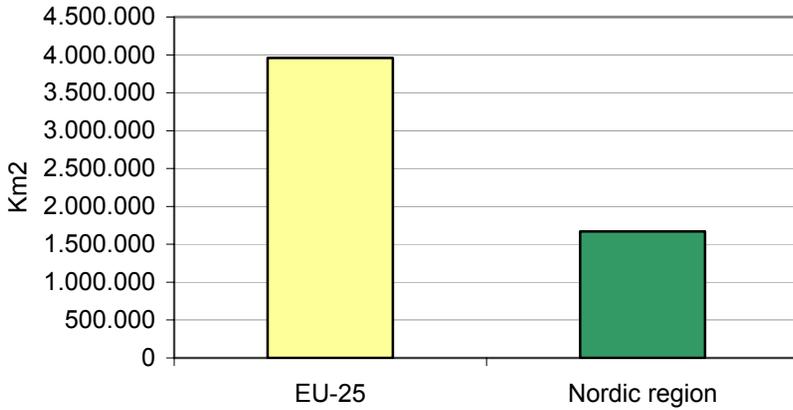
Figure 1a. Total land area, km<sup>2</sup> (2004)



Note: Norway excluding Svalbard (61,020 km<sup>2</sup>) and Jan Mayen (377 km<sup>2</sup>). The total area of Greenland refers to ice-free land area.

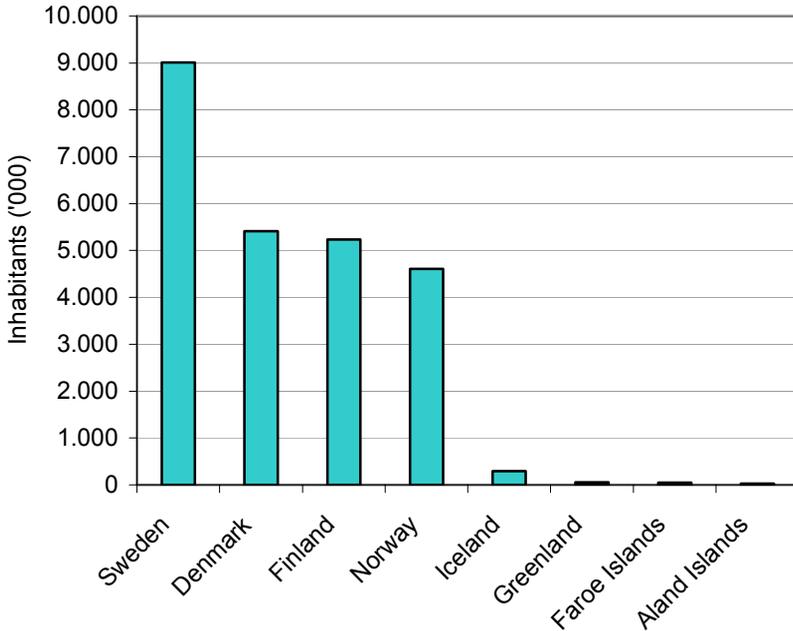
Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook

**Figure 1b. Total land area, km<sup>2</sup> (2004)**



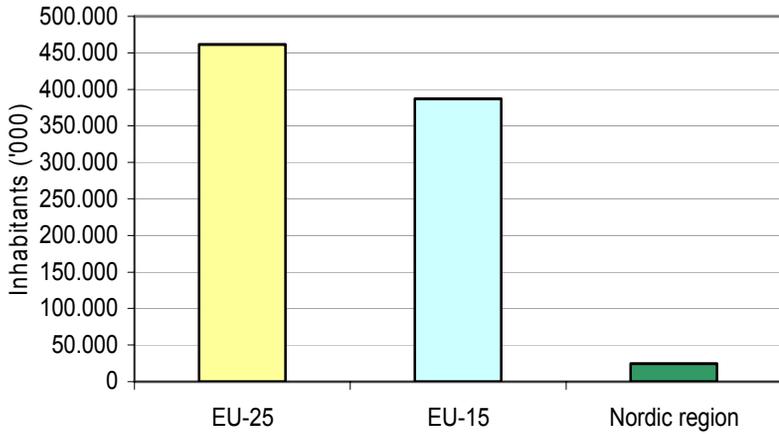
Note: The Nordic region including autonomous territories. The EU-25 figure relates to 2003. The total area of Greenland refers to ice-free land area.  
 Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook and Eurostat

**Figure 2a. Population figures (2005)**



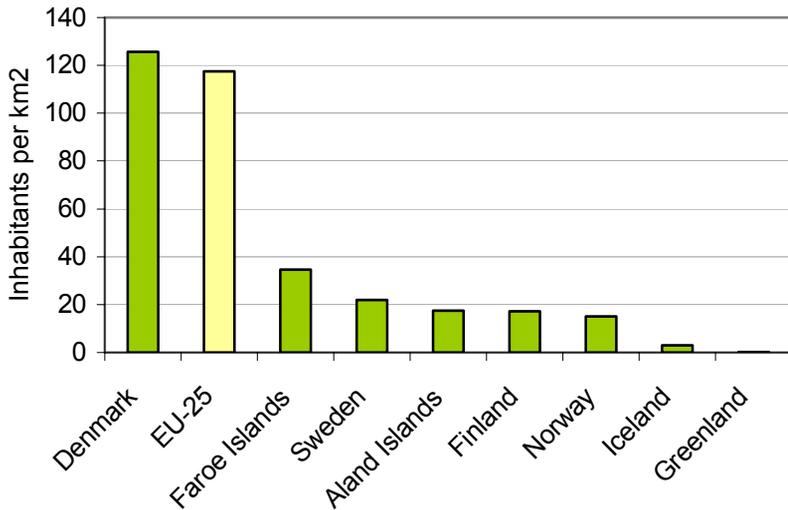
Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook

Figure 2b. Population figures (2005)



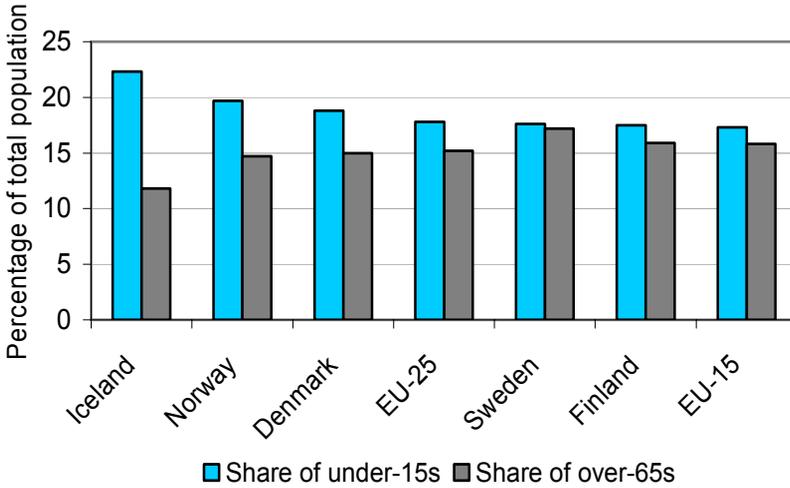
Note: Total population of the Nordic region including autonomous territories  
 Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook and Eurostat

Figure 3. Inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>



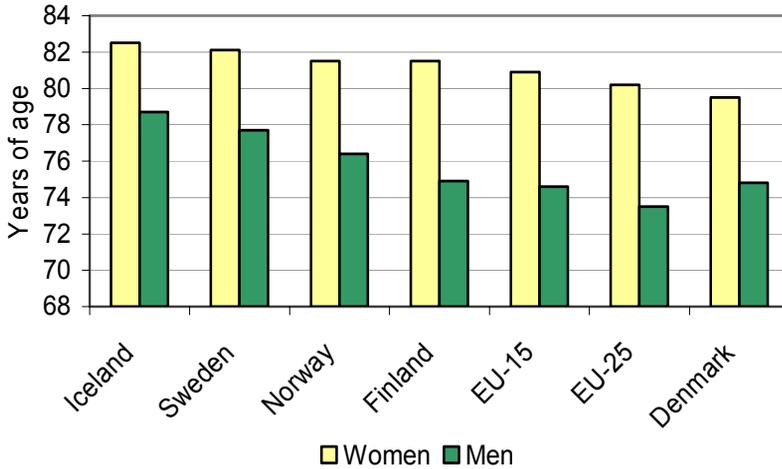
Note: The Nordic countries 2005 including autonomous territories as well as EU-25 2003. Per km<sup>2</sup> land area = total area including wetland areas. The total area of Greenland refers to ice-free land area. Denmark: Inhabitants broken down by total area. Norway: Inhabitants broken down by total mainland area.  
 Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook and Eurostat

**Figure 4. Share of under-15s and over-65s as a percentage of the total population (2005)**



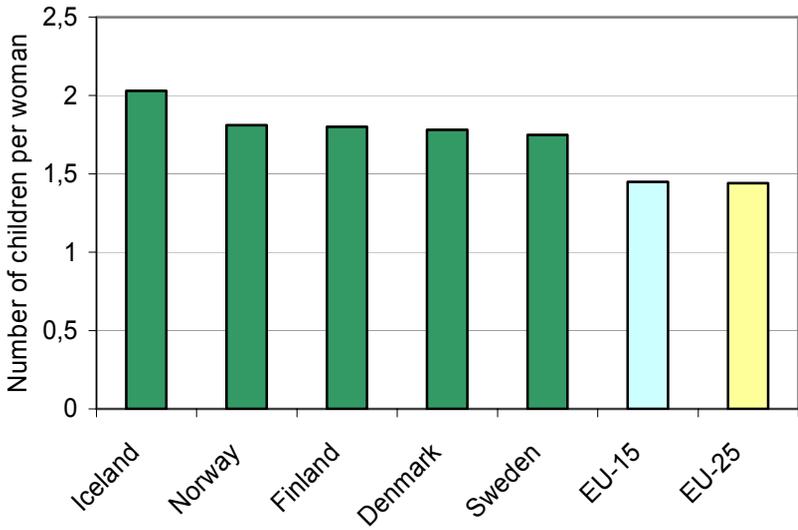
Data for EU-15 and EU-25 relate to 1997.  
Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook and Eurostat

**Figure 5. Average life expectancy, women and men (2004)**



Note: Life expectancy from birth. Data for EU-15 and EU-25 relate to 1999.  
Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook and Eurostat

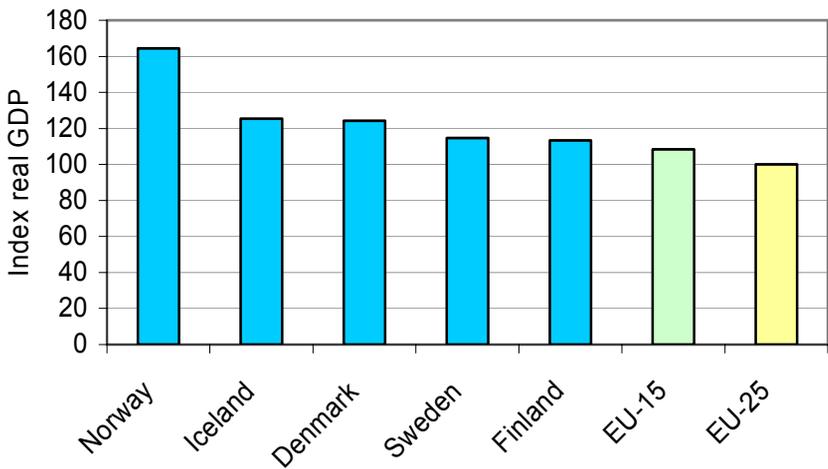
**Figure 6. Fertility. Average number of childbirths per woman (1997)**



Note: Data for EU-15 and EU-25 relate to 1997.  
 Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook and Eurostat

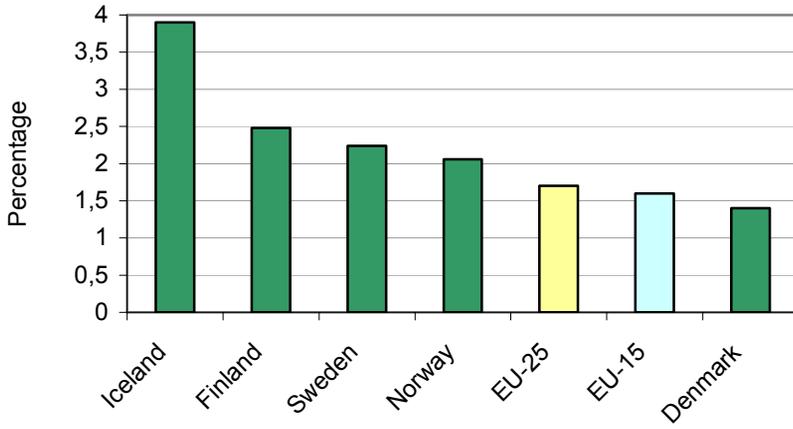
## Economy

**Figure 7. GDP per capita, purchasing power parity (PPP) adjusted, index: EU-25 = 100 (2005)**



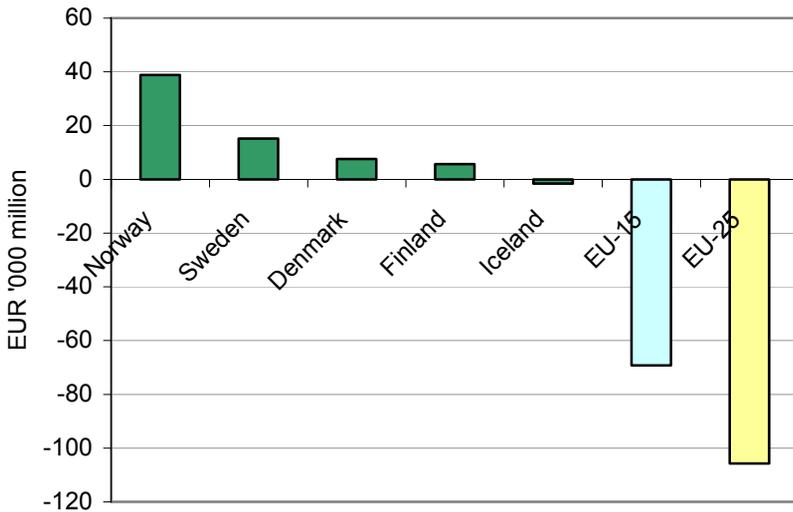
Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook and Eurostat

**Figure 8. Average GDP growth in real terms (2001–2005)**



Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook and Eurostat

**Figure 9. Total trade balance, EUR '000 million (2005)**



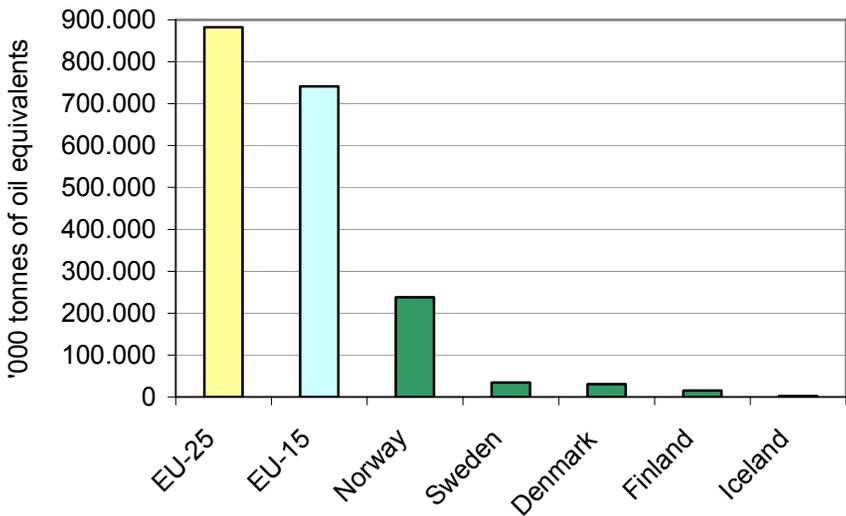
Source: Eurostat

**Figure 10. Net trade figures for different product groups, EUR '000 million (2005)**

	Food, drink and tobacco. (SITC 0+1)	Raw materials (SITC 2+4)	Mineral fuels lubricants and related materials. (SITC 3)	Chemicals and related products (SITC 5)	Other manufactured goods (SITC 6+8)	Machinery and transport equipment (SITC 7)
Norway	1.5	-2.7	54.7	-2.0	-4.8	-10.7
Sweden	-2.9	2.8	-4.9	2.3	6.0	11.7
Denmark	5.0	0.6	3.6	2.5	-1.7	-3.2
Finland	-1.5	-0.7	-3.6	-2.1	7.5	4.3
Iceland	1.1	-0.1	-0.3	-0.2	-0.5	-1.5
EU-15	-9.5	-28.2	-204.7	82.2	-23.1	106.1
EU-25	-9.7	-28.7	-220.6	70.1	-25.5	103.9

Source: Eurostat

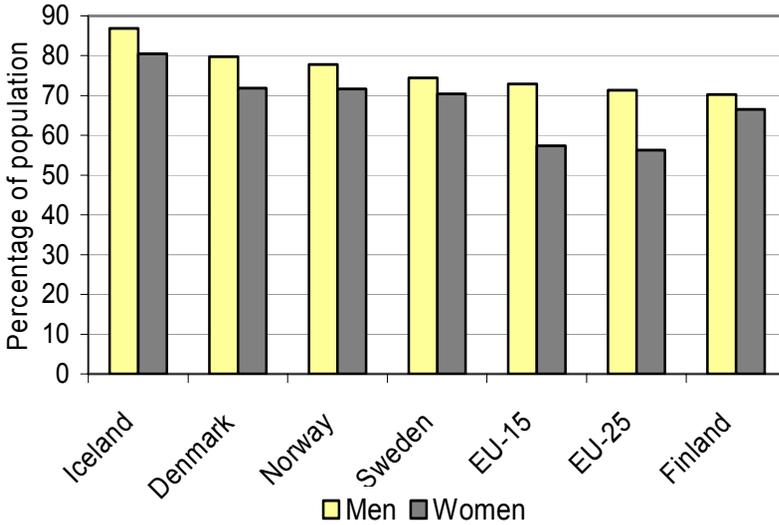
**Figure 11. Total production of primary energy 2004, '000 tonnes of oil equivalents**



Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook and Eurostat

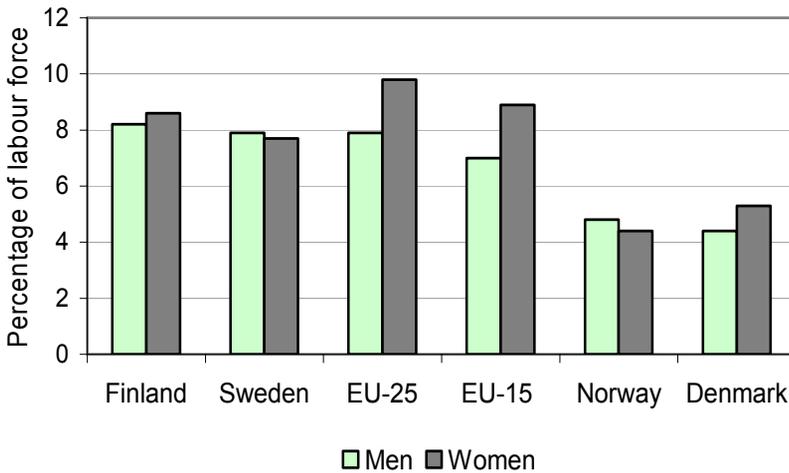
## Labour market and education

**Figure 12. Employment rate, persons of working age (aged 15-64)**



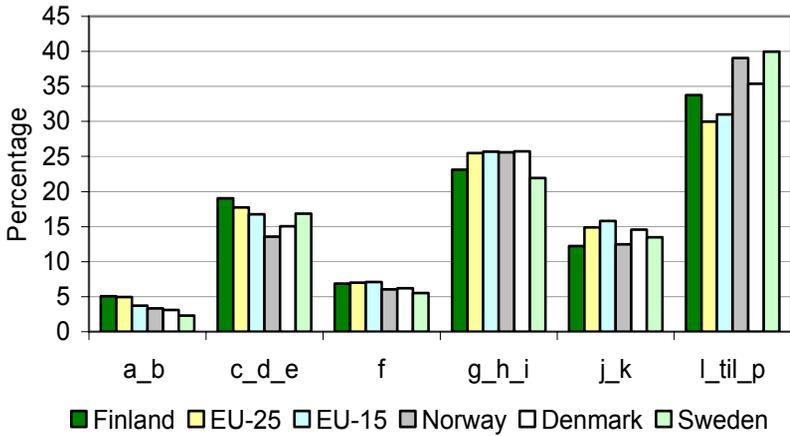
Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook and Eurostat

**Figure 13. Unemployment as a percentage of the labour force**



Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook and Eurostat

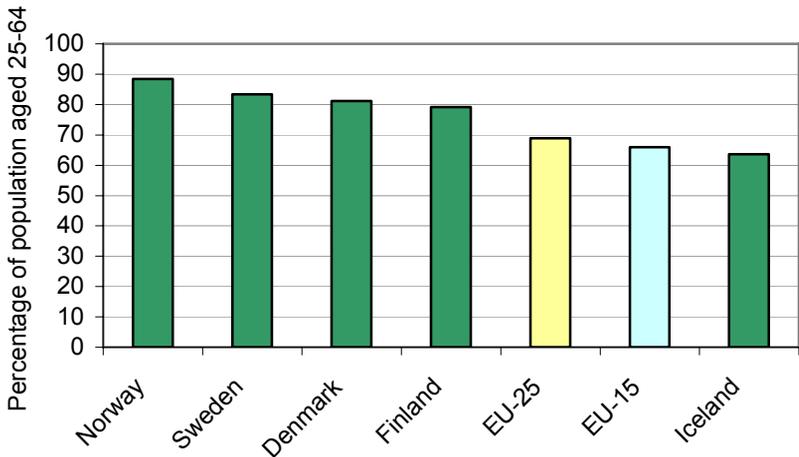
**Figure 14. Sector employment 2005 according to NACE 6 as a percentage of total employment**



Note: Sector breakdown according to NACE 6: a\_b: Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing; c\_d\_e: Total industry (excluding construction); f: Construction; g\_h\_i: Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods; hotels and restaurants; transport, storage and communication; j\_k: Financial intermediation; real estate, renting and business activities; l\_til\_p: Public administration and defence, compulsory social security; education; health and social work; other community, social and personal service activities; private households with employed persons.

Source: Eurostat

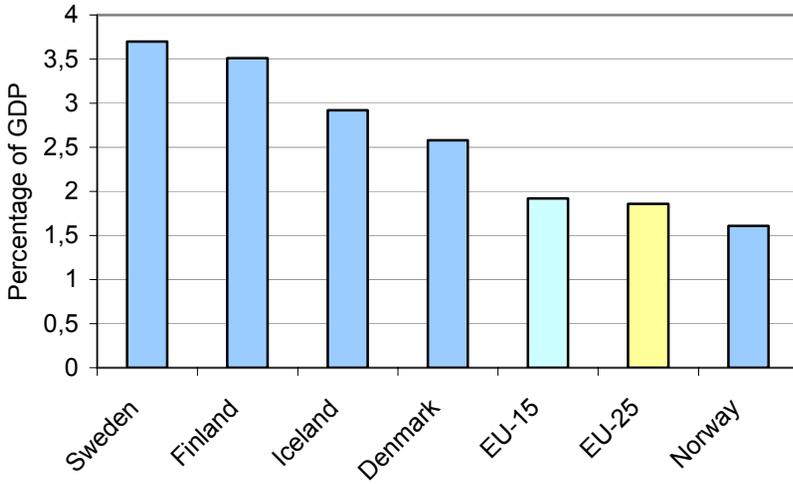
**Figure 15. Percentage of adult population (aged 25-64) having completed at least upper-secondary education (2005)**



Note: Provisional value for Iceland

Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook and Eurostat

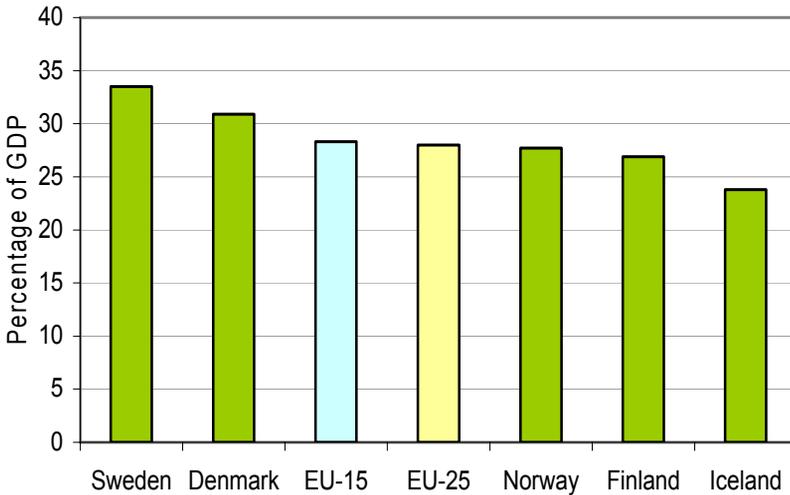
**Figure 16. R&D expenditure 2004 as a percentage of GDP**



Note: Provisional value for Denmark; forecast values for EU-15 and EU-25  
 Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook and Eurostat

## Social services

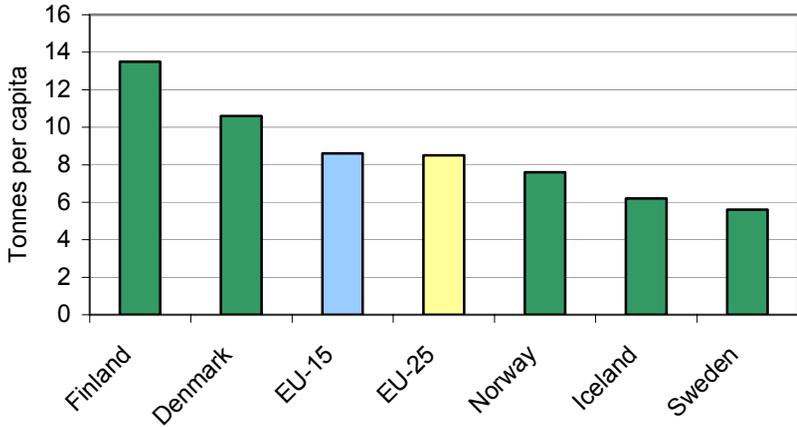
**Figure 17. Social expenditure 2003 as a percentage of GDP**



Note: Estimated values for EU-15 and EU-25; provisional value for Sweden  
 Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook and Eurostat

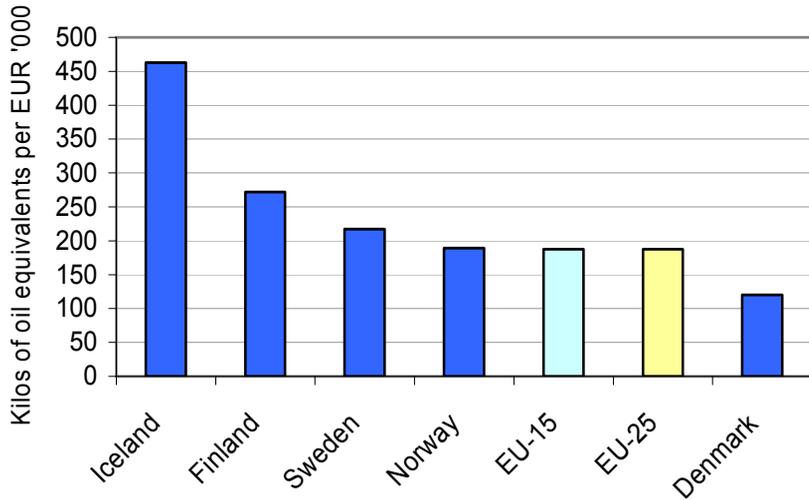
## Environment and energy

**Figure 18. Carbon dioxide emissions, tonnes per capita (2003)**



Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook and Eurostat

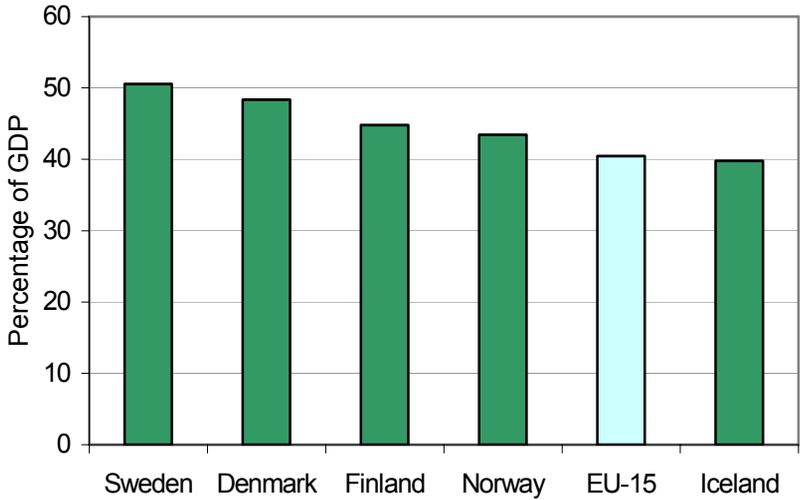
**Figure 19. Energy intensity in production 2004 in relation to real GDP, kilos of oil equivalents per EUR '000**



Source: Eurostat

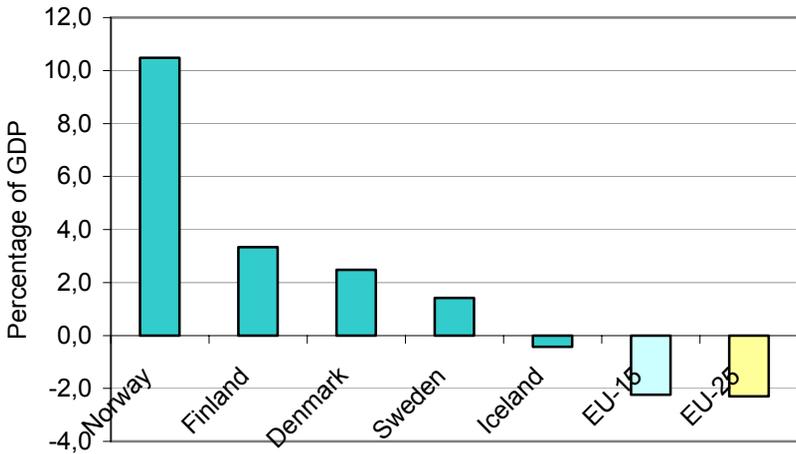
## Public finances

**Figure 20. Average tax burden 2003, total tax revenue as a percentage of GDP**



Source: OECD

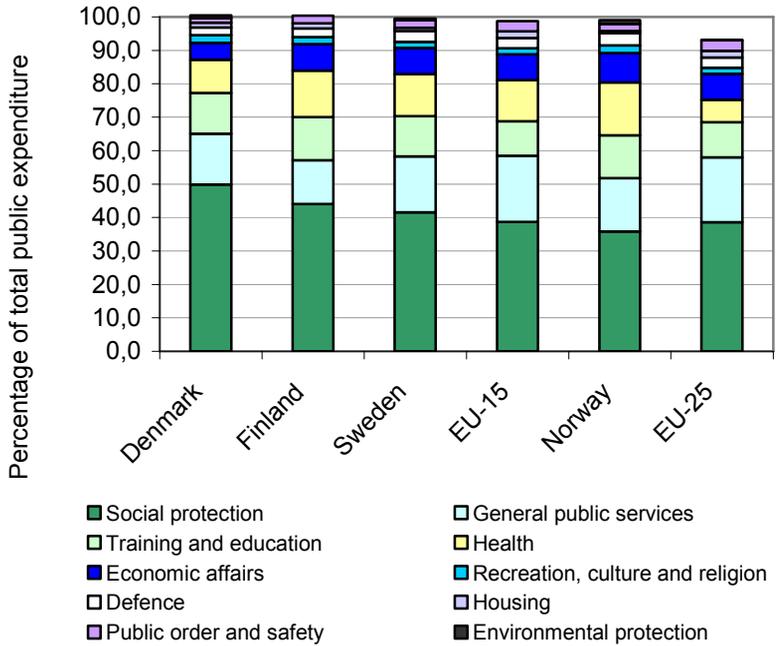
**Figure 21. Public finance budget balance as a percentage of GDP, average figures (2001-2005)**



Note: The period relates to 2001-2004 for Norway and Finland.

Source: Eurostat

Figure 22. Breakdown of public expenditure (2004)



Source: Eurostat



## Appendix II: Facts about the Nordic Council of Ministers

The Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) is the official cooperation body of the Nordic governments. The NCM thus comprises the governments of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The autonomous territories of the Faeroe Islands, Greenland and the Åland Islands participate in NCM work on specific terms.

The activities of the Nordic Council of Ministers, like those of the Nordic Council, are governed by the Helsinki Treaty from 1962 (amended most recently in 1995).

The Helsinki Treaty specifies the goals of Nordic cooperation in the following way:

“The High Contracting Parties shall endeavour to maintain and develop further cooperation between the Nordic countries in the legal, cultural, social and economic fields as well as in those of transport and communications, and environmental protection.

The High Contracting Parties should hold joint consultations on matters of common interest which are dealt with by European and other international organisations and conferences.”

The preamble stipulates that the countries “wishing further to renew and expand cooperation between the Nordic countries in the light of the greater participation by the Nordic countries in the process of European cooperation”.

### *Councils of ministers*

The Prime ministers are ultimately responsible for cooperation between the Nordic countries. A minister from each government acts as a Minister

for Nordic cooperation. These ministers form a separate council of ministers. In addition, the Nordic Council of Ministers consists of ten specialist councils of ministers:

- Council of Ministers for Education and Research
- Council of Ministers for Trade, Energy and Regional Policies
- Council of Ministers for Culture
- Council of Ministers for the Environment
- Council of Ministers for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Agriculture, Food and Forestry
- Council of Ministers for Finance
- Council of Ministers for Legislative Affairs
- Council of Ministers for Gender Equality
- Council of Ministers for Health and Social Affairs
- Council of Ministers for the Labour and Work Environment

Each council of ministers has a so-called committee of senior officials attached to it. Committees of senior officials act as deputies to the individual councils of ministers. Furthermore, the councils of ministers/committees of senior officials often appoint working groups to deal with special issues.

The councils of ministers meet from one to five times a year. The committees of senior officials may convene up to ten times a year.

The chairmanships of the councils of ministers and committees of senior officials rotate annually between the countries.

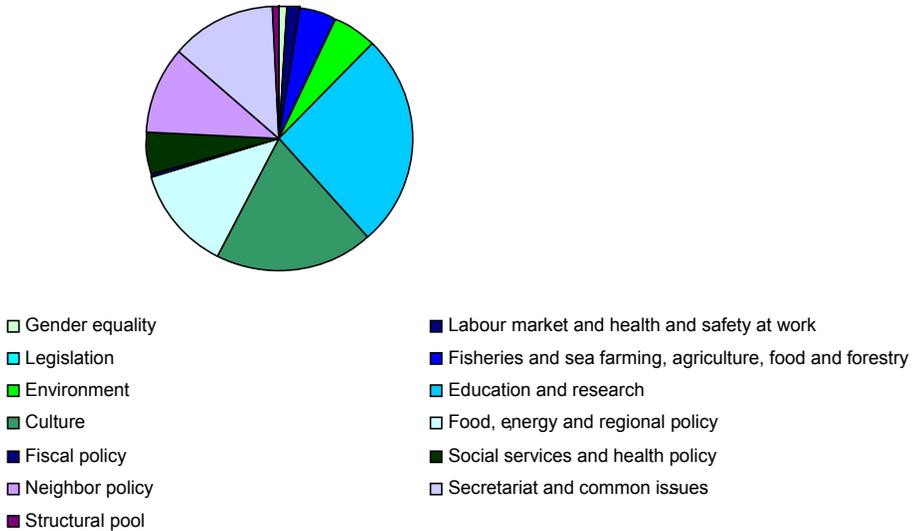
The Councils of ministers and the Committee of senior officials often follow multi-year strategies. These strategies are supplemented with one-year chairmanship programmes. The chairmanship has a special impact on work undertaken by the councils of ministers and the committees of senior officials and on issues put on the agenda.

#### *Council of ministers activities*

The activities of the ten councils of ministers depend on the nature of the individual field of cooperation. Typically, activities can be divided into the following categories:

- discussions and decisions on Nordic agreements (for example, the social convention and the convention on exemption from passport requirement)
- support to institutions or groups operating according to guidelines to be implemented by the individual councils of ministers
- responsibility for Nordic institutions such as NordForsk and NICE (research and innovation) and the Nordic Staff Training Centre for Deaf blind Services
- knowledge sharing, for example in the field of radio and television broadcast digitalisation

Each specialist council of ministers has a budget allocated by the Nordic ministers for Nordic cooperation. The overall budget for 2006 breaks down as follows:



Financial support to different Nordic projects may be obtained from certain councils of ministers.

The Nordic Council of Ministers cooperates extensively with the Baltic States and North-West Russia. About 20% of the budget is allocated

for such cooperation. The Council has offices in Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius, St Petersburg and Kaliningrad.

The Council has a separate service for preventing border obstacles – Hello Norden. For more information, see [www.hallonorden.org](http://www.hallonorden.org).

### *Nordic institutions*

The institutions of the Nordic Council of Ministers are responsible for a large share of the activities that the individual councils of ministers aim to implement. The Nordic institutions are as follows:

- The Nordic House in Reykjavik (NOREY) <http://www.nordice.is>
- The Nordic House on the Faroe Islands (NHFØ) <http://www.nih.fo>
- The Nordic Institute in Finland (NIFIN) <http://www.nifin.helsinki.fi>
- The Nordic Institute in Greenland (NAPA) <http://www.napa.gl>
- The Nordic Institute on the Aland Islands (NIPA) <http://www.nordinst.aland.fi/nordinst>
- Nordic Energy Research (NEF) <http://www.nordicenergy.net>
- The Nordic Centre for Spatial Development (NORDREGIO) <http://www.nordregio.se>
- NordForsk <http://www.nordforsk.org>
- The Nordic Innovation Centre (NICe) <http://www.nordicinnovation.net>
- The Nordic Institute of Dental Materials (NIOM) <http://www.niom.no>
- The Nordic Journalist Centre (NJC) (Administrated by Center for Professional Development in Journalism CFJE) <http://www.njc.dk>
- The Nordic Artists' Centre in Dale (NKD) (Will continue under national auspices as from 01.01.2007) <http://www.nkdale.no>
- The Nordic Staff Training Centre for Deafblind Services (NUD) <http://www.nud.dk>
- The Nordic Gene Bank (NGB) <http://www.nordgen.org/ngb>
- The Nordic School of Public Health (NHV) <http://www.nhv.se>
- The Nordic Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Research (NIKK) <http://www.nikk.uio.no>
- The Nordic Institute for Advanced Training in Occupational Health (NIVA) <http://www.niva.org>
- The Nordic Council for Alcohol and Drug Research (NAD) <http://www.nad.fi>
- The Nordic Project Fund (NOPEF) <http://www.nopef.com>
- Nordic Cooperation on Disability (NSH) <http://www.nsh.se>
- The Nordic Education Programme for Social Service Development (NOPUS) <http://www.nopus.org>
- The Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research (NORDICOM) <http://www.nordicom.gu.se>
- The Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art (NIFCA) (Will close as from 01.01.2007) <http://www.nifca.org>
- The Nordic Centre for the Performing Arts (NordScen) (Will close as from 01.01.2007) <http://www.nordscen.org>
- The Nordic Institute for Theoretical Physics (Nordita) <http://www.nordita.dk>

Each institution has concluded a results contract with the relevant council of ministers specifying the tasks to be undertaken. The institution's board, where all countries are represented, as well as its managers and employees are responsible for contract performance.

The chairmanships of the boards of the institutions rotate in line with the chairmanship of the relevant council of ministers.

In addition to the institutions, the Nordic Council of Ministers has a large number of cooperation organisations, for example in the field of research.

### *Secretariat*

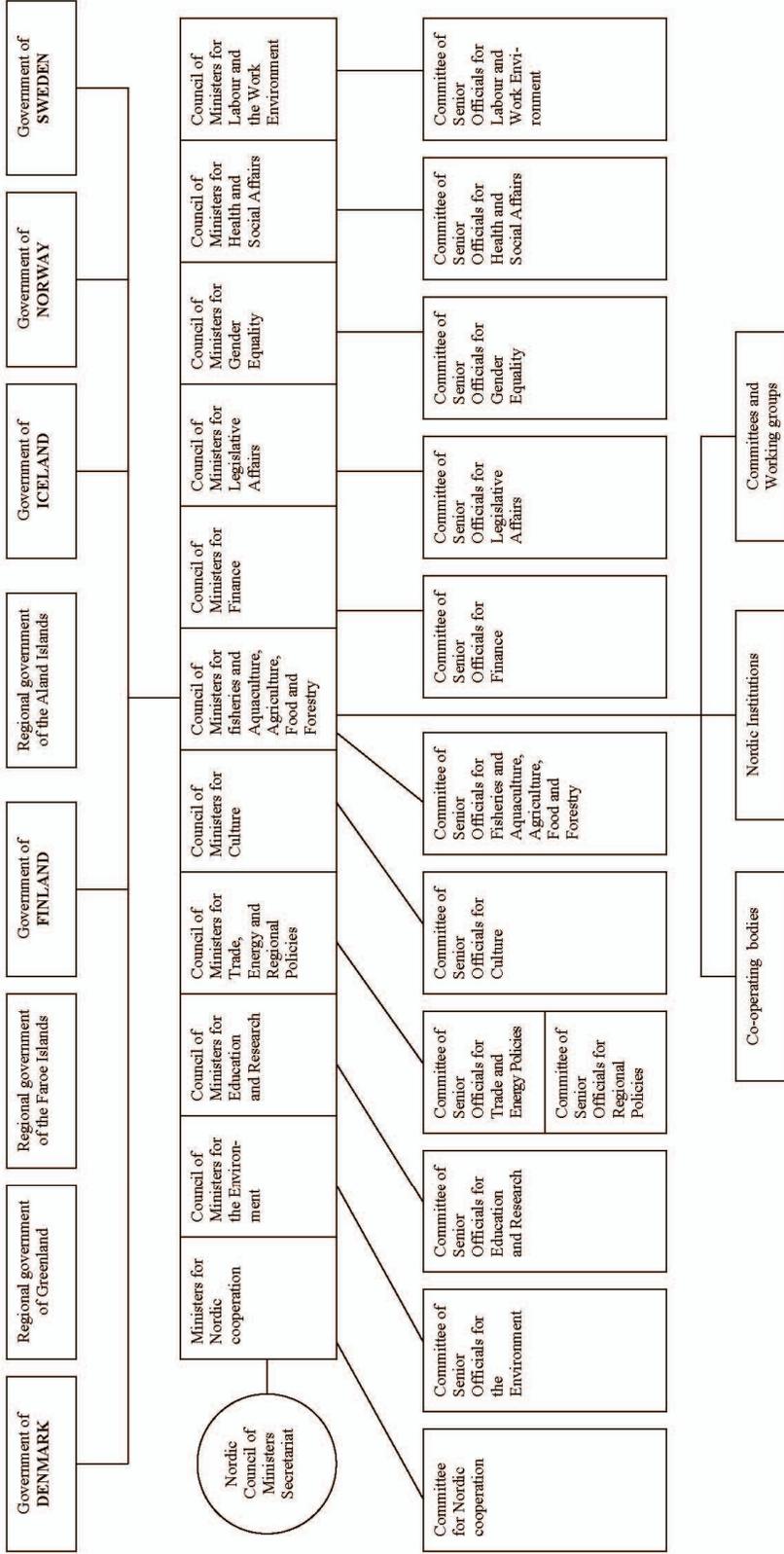
A secretariat supports the councils of ministers. This secretariat is organised into four specialist units, responsible for the ten councils of ministers. These four units are:

- Department for culture, legislation and gender equality
- Department for training and education, research and labour market issues
- Department for growth and welfare
- Department for environmental protection and resources

The Secretary General, supported by the Secretary General's Office, manages the secretariat. The Secretary General shall ensure that the work carried out by the councils of ministers is planned, implemented and followed up in a coordinated manner. The Secretary General is also tasked with promoting good Nordic initiatives.

The staff members of the secretariat are recruited from the Nordic countries and the autonomous areas and employed on a fixed-term basis.

# Nordic Council of Ministers



# Appendix III: 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.



# Appendix IV: Russia Programme 2006-2008

## Introduction

Conditions changed in the region adjoining the Nordic countries when ten new countries joined the European Union on 1 May 2004. Accelerated political and economic integration in Europe and economic progress in neighbouring countries are of great significance to the Nordic Region, particularly in terms of the potential for economic growth.

On 10 December 2004, the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation adopted new guidelines for co-operation with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as well as with North-West Russia for 2006-08. The guidelines govern all activities and are to be implemented by all ministerial councils.

The guidelines are not a definitive blueprint, but constitute a new phase in the ongoing process of developing co-operation, a phase during which all the countries involved (especially Russia, which needs to play an active part in implementing the programme) are seeking new ways forward.

Co-operation between the Nordic Council of Ministers and neighbouring countries should be regarded as complementary to bilateral co-operation between individual Nordic countries and their neighbours.

Extra funding will be available to increase the level of initiatives in North-West Russia in 2006. These initiatives, which should lead to greater visibility, will be targeted at sectors where the Nordic Council of Ministers has something special to offer. Co-operation with Russia will, therefore, include activities that are easier for the Nordic countries to organise jointly than individually, and activities that generate Nordic

synergy. The new guidelines constitute the framework for co-operation with North-West Russia.

The ministerial councils report annually on current and planned activities to the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation.

Co-operation with Russia focuses on sectors where added value is generated. The guidelines emphasise key subjects such as: democracy and the rule of law; cross-border co-operation; research and innovation; IT co-operation; social issues; health; and the environment and sustainable development. Co-operation projects with NGOs will be a part of the co-operation. Activities which promote the Nordic Region are in the interests of all the Nordic countries.

In accordance with the overall principles approved by the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation, a gender equality perspective must be integrated into all projects and activities under the Russia Programme.

Geographically, the aim is that activities in North-West Russia should take place close to the Nordic Region, without imposing any restrictions on the Russian concept of North-West Russia.

The Nordic countries can be active partners, either bilaterally or through the Nordic Council of Ministers, and can contribute to the implementation and development of the EU's Northern Dimension, the new European Neighbourhood Policy and the four 'common spaces' (common economic space; common space for freedom, security and justice; common space for co-operation in the field of external security; and common space for research, education and culture). The Nordic Council of Ministers contributes actively to the European Commission's new Northern Dimension Information System, which provides regular updates on activities in the areas covered by the Northern Dimension.

Regional co-operation provides new opportunities in a new Europe. The Council of Ministers is open to new political initiatives and is prepared to embrace multilateral cross-border co-operation between the Nordic Region, the Baltic States and their neighbours Russia and Belarus. Other organisations and the new EU Financial Instrument can also be incorporated into this co-operation. Current network-building between what are referred to as the 'Euroregions' will be followed up and built upon in co-operation with other regional organisations.

Co-operation with the Nordic Region's neighbours is evaluated annually, when the ministerial councils report back on their activities in the Baltic States and North-West Russia to the Ministers for Nordic Co-

operation. The work done by Nordic institutions in neighbouring countries is co-ordinated by the appropriate ministerial council, which describes the activities in its annual report. The institutions are required to follow the principles contained in the guidelines for co-operation.

Activities in Russia (the Russia Programme) cover a wide range of work carried out and financed by the various ministerial councils in accordance with the overall guidelines. In addition – and in collaboration with the ministerial councils – activities are also financed through the Council of Ministers’ special policy for the neighbouring countries. Reports are also submitted about the activities of the individual ministerial councils and their subordinate institutions. The major activities financed and conducted through the Neighbourhood Policy are:

- knowledge building and networking
- participation in the EU’s Northern Dimension
- co-operation with the non-governmental organisations in North-West Russia
- co-operation in the Barents Region.

Like the activities of the ministerial councils, this work is supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers’ Office in St Petersburg and will also be supported by the Kaliningrad office when it opens.

Other activities that apply to a large part of the region include:

- cross-border regional co-operation
- the Nordic Project Export Fund (NOPEF).

The focal point of neighbourhood activity consists of promoting knowledge building and networking, and the Nordic Council of Ministers has been particularly successful at both of these so far. Knowledge has been transferred from parts of the Nordic Region to promote democracy, the rule of law and economic growth.

Concentrating on knowledge transfer is also a way of assuring the quality of the Nordic Council of Ministers’ work in North-West Russia. The impact of knowledge investments lasts far longer than any specific activity.

Complementing knowledge-building activities with partnership work accords with the efforts of the Nordic Council of Ministers, as a regional

organisation, to work closely with the EU. Collaboration of this type promotes quality.

The Nordic countries also have something special to offer in the non-governmental sector, which is of major significance for the future of every society, including North-West Russia.

Finally, the new and closer form of co-operation with the Barents Euro-Arctic Council is a mark of the Nordic Council of Ministers' desire for more systematic co-operation with the other regional organisations in northern Europe.

These activities are described in greater depth below.

## Knowledge building and networking

Major efforts are being made to promote knowledge building in North-West Russia, for example, by means of scholarships and networks in crucial sectors where the Nordic countries have something special to offer as partners. The Nordic Council of Ministers co-ordinates scholarship programmes, exchange programmes and networks as part of its overall knowledge-building programme. New sub-programmes are set up according to need. The programme covers the Baltic States and North-West Russia, but with the emphasis on the latter.

The programme is designed to improve knowledge and develop competencies, to promote economic development and competitiveness in the Nordic Region and the Adjacent Areas and to strengthen democracy and the rule of law. It also aims to raise the level of awareness of Nordic values, methods of working and entrepreneurship, and includes general knowledge transfer about how co-operation works in the Nordic Region and in the EU/EEA. Knowledge-transfer activities of this type also provide the Nordic countries with useful information through their Russian and Baltic partners.

Knowledge transfer and networking are important for the dynamic development of the area in a democratic direction. The Mobility Programme and networks are at the heart of this form of co-operation, even though the content of the programme may vary from time to time and has to be guided by the needs of the current situation. The Council of Ministers co-operates with Nordic authorities on the joint implementation of specific sub-programmes.

Nordic organisations such as official bodies, universities, colleges, non-governmental organisations, local authority associations and business organisations are all invited to join new networks, including as providers of internships and organisers of seminars. The Nordic institutions are also invited to take part.

The current scholarship programme is based on the principle that participants have to find their own internships in ministries, local authorities or businesses, even though they enjoy the support of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in St Petersburg. Under the new arrangement, participants will be offered complete packages including internships and training.

The target group for the new programme should be as wide as possible, including opinion-makers such as journalists, MPs, other politicians, researchers, teachers, students, artists, authors, private entrepreneurs, local government officers and employees of small and medium-sized enterprises.

The Knowledge Development Programme includes all of the mobility and networking schemes run by the Nordic Council of Ministers, as well as new sub-programmes created as they are needed. The current mobility and networking arrangements are as follows:

- Nordplus Neighbour and NordForsk Neighbour promote long-term co-operation between institutions of higher education in the Nordic Region, North-West Russia and the Baltic States, as well as within the non-profit sector. The idea is to strengthen co-operation by building networks and organising exchange programmes for researchers, teachers and students. Part of the scholarship programme covers the non-governmental sector.
- The civil service exchange programme supports stable, foreseeable and democratic development in Russia by improving governance systems and administrative structures in public administration and by raising levels of competency about democracy and citizenship. This arrangement also covers the Baltic States.
- The scholarship programme for MPs aims to pass on experiences of Nordic parliamentary work and representative democracy.
- NordProLink offers scholarships in Nordic companies to young people from the Baltic States and North-West Russia, so they can gain

knowledge and experience of running modern enterprises under free market conditions.

- Sleipnir is a travel scholarship programme, which aims to increase mobility among young artists and encourage them to work in the Nordic Region. It has proven useful for forging contacts between the Nordic Region, the Baltic States and North-West Russia.
- Cultural exchange programmes for children and young people are among the longest standing Nordic activities in the Baltic States and North-West Russia. The exchanges are for participants up to and including the age of 18.
- The Journalist Exchange Programme consists of courses and scholarships aimed at providing journalists from North-West Russia with insights into general media traditions and methods.
- The Energy Dialogue aims to forge direct contacts between energy authorities in the different countries in order to promote sustainable energy supplies.
- The exchange programme for young politicians promotes wider youth exchange programmes between North-West Russia and the Nordic countries.

As mentioned previously, in addition to these current activities, new activities are developed to meet specific needs.

The Nordic Co-operation Committee (NSK) has set up a working group consisting of experts on mobility schemes from each of the Nordic countries and autonomous territories, to support knowledge-building and networking activities. The aim is to guarantee broad and varied competency for the knowledge-building programme in North-West Russia.

The working group will submit annual reports to the NSK containing general evaluations of the knowledge-building programme. The reports will also include evaluations by the various ministerial councils. It should be pointed out that under the guidelines for co-operation with North-West Russia, these ministerial councils must submit annual reports about all of their activities to the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation.

## Participation in EU partnerships within the framework of the Northern Dimension

The Nordic Council of Ministers and the EU are both committed to the Northern Dimension. The Nordic Council of Ministers bases its participation on the fact that the partnership adds value to that which individual countries are able to achieve on their own, and on the fact that its activities provide some form of Nordic synergy. All Northern Dimension activities are subject to continuous evaluation.

The Nordic countries participate in the EU's Northern Dimension and in the new European Neighbourhood Policy at national level and according to national priorities. They also take part in certain multilateral partnerships through the Council of Ministers, such as the environmental partnership, the partnership in health and social well-being and the partnership-style IT co-operation.

The Nordic Council of Ministers, particularly through its funding institutions, will continue to participate in the environmental partnership which concentrates on large-scale infrastructure projects. This form of co-operation is complemented by sectoral work on the environment, which is regarded as an important means of getting activities off the ground in North-West Russia.

The Nordic Council of Ministers participates in the Northern Dimension's partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being on an equal footing with the other members (a total of 13 countries and eight international organisations). Participation is based on identically worded resolutions passed by the ministerial councils for Health and Social Services (MR-S), Equality (MR-JAM) and Drug Abuse (MR-Narko). The main priorities of the partnership are to combat infectious diseases (particularly HIV/AIDS) and lifestyle-related illnesses, and to promote physical and social well-being through exercise, diet, lifestyle habits and social interaction. The Council of Ministers contributes by linking its programmes to partnership activities and providing co-ordination. It has also been providing full-time back-up (working in tandem with the partnership secretariat) from its St Petersburg office, for the last two years. Fundamental to the participation of the Nordic Council of Ministers is a cross-sectoral approach which prioritises perspectives affecting children, young people

and gender equality. The aim is to link social activities to this partnership more explicitly in the future.

The Nordic Council of Ministers, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and the EU have initiated collaboration on information technology (IT) and the knowledge society. On 1 January 2005, the Council of Ministers entered into a partnership agreement on information technology with the CBSS and the EU Commission, as part of the Northern eDimension Action Plan (NeDAP). Within the framework of the Northern Dimension, NeDAP directs attention to the special political opportunities and challenges in the Baltic Sea Region in relation to information technology in particular and the knowledge society in general. The collaboration is based on mutual political interests and involves rigid prioritisation and funding.

If it proves possible to increase the commitment of participants (particularly the EU) to NeDAP, the Nordic Council of Ministers will also consider increasing its commitment.

The Nordic Council of Ministers actively seeks out participation in other joint partnership projects. It may also be interested in future multi-lateral EU partnerships (for example, on research) that also involve Russia.

In future, the Nordic Council of Ministers will continue to provide input to the EU Commission's Northern Dimension Information System, which lists activities in the region. The input will involve describing specific projects and programmes as well as an overall picture of activities in northern Europe.

## Co-operation with non-governmental organisations in North-West Russia

The promotion of social structures that bolster constitutional democracy is an important element of the programme. Progress towards a democratic model of society requires constant awareness of human rights and the principles of constitutional democracy as a precondition for civic dialogue and participation in socio-political activity. Properly functioning, independent social structures are crucial to the free exchange of opinions and to ensure that responsibility lies with the citizens.

Priorities include support for non-governmental organisations that play an important part in popular participation. The development of, and support for, an NGO network is vital to the democratisation process. The aim is a documented and quantifiable increase in the activities and scope of NGO networks that play an important role in the process of democratisation. Nordic participation is based on the premise that the Region has special expertise in this field.

## Co-operation in the Barents Region

The regional co-operation organisations in northern Europe often have similar political objectives and working methods. Within the framework of its own budget and the decision on co-funding adopted by the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation, the Nordic Council of Ministers often decides to participate in activities initiated by other regional councils.

The work of the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Barents Euro Arctic Council overlaps in geographic terms. An appropriate allocation of responsibilities between the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Regional Council is desirable. It would allow the Nordic Council of Ministers to limit its own initiatives in the geopolitical area covered by the Barents Region but still to serve as a partner in joint projects initiated by the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Regional Council. The Nordic Council of Ministers' information centres in Murmansk and Archangel are to be co-ordinated with the corresponding office of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat as far as possible.

This co-operation has been facilitated by the fact that the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Regional Council have established working groups and programmes similar to those in which the Nordic Council of Ministers is involved. The Nordic Council of Ministers' activities in the Barents Region are being adapted in consultation with the relevant working groups. This work also involves Nordic institutions with relevant competencies. It is vital that specific forms of co-operation are documented and reports are submitted to the Nordic Co-operation Committee (NSK).

## Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in North-West Russia

The Baltic Sea Region possesses the potential to become a leading growth region in Europe. Within this Region, North-West Russia (particularly St Petersburg) is of the greatest importance. Kaliningrad, with its unique geographic location, is also of particular importance.

Above all, the strength of the Nordic Council of Ministers in future co-operation with North-West Russia lies in the fact that it has enjoyed a presence in the area for the last decade, with an office in St Petersburg and contact points in the Barents Region, Murmansk, Archangel and Petrozavodsk. This presence will be strengthened if the planned office in Kaliningrad can be opened in the near future.

The work of the offices is governed by the guidelines laid down by the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation for working with North-West Russia.

The office in St Petersburg plays a key role in identifying appropriate Russian participants for the various activities, and the new office in Kaliningrad will play a similar role.

The St Petersburg office often plays a part in implementing Nordic commitments to various activities. This is because the office:

- is the local contact point for the Nordic ministerial councils, their committees and working groups and is therefore capable, for example, of identifying appropriate Russian partners and facilitating co-operation
- builds networks with the national authorities, NGOs and other national and international stakeholders in the Russian regions
- is the local observer for the Nordic Council of Ministers, identifying trends and opportunities for joint Nordic-Russian co-operation
- is an exponent of everything 'Nordic', working to increase awareness of co-operation in the cultural sphere
- has a significant level of competence which is useful to ministries wishing to refine co-operation with Russian regions
- takes care of practical casework, quality assurance, etc., for activities such as exchange programmes, in a more efficient way than would otherwise be possible.

The office reports back on its work as part of the procedure for monitoring its performance-related contract.

## Cross-border regional co-operation

Following EU enlargement, cross-border regional co-operation along the EU's external borders has assumed new importance. The EU has decided that, as part of this co-operation, neighbourhood policy programmes and new financial instruments are to be introduced. The EU and Russia have also reached agreement on co-operation within the 'four common spaces' (common economic space; common space for freedom, security and justice; common space for co-operation in the field of external security; and common space for research, education and culture), giving new opportunities for cross-border regional co-operation. Its experience in cross-border projects enables the Nordic Council of Ministers to make a contribution to this process and help lay the foundations for the development of stable growth regions. It is vital that tangible results are documented and reported back to the NSK.

The Nordic Council of Ministers is developing a new cross-border project on the external borders of the EU, involving co-operation between the Nordic Council of Ministers, the CBSS, Nordic cross-border committees and border regions in the Baltic States, Russia and Belarus. The new project, the Baltic Euroregional Network (BEN), acts as the successor to the cross-border regional project run by the Nordic Council of Ministers from its Vilnius office in 2002-2004.

## The Nordic Project Export Fund (NOPEF)

NOPEF's objective is to improve the international competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by offering loans on favourable terms for feasibility studies in advance of internationalisation projects and project export in the Adjacent Areas and in Eastern Europe outside the EU and EFTA.

To these ends, NOPEF co-operates with the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) and the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO). NOPEF's resources are used for example to co-fund feasibility studies by offering loans on favourable terms to identify projects, loans for project export and loans for information work among Nordic companies.

NOPEF is involved in several countries but focuses in particular on North-West Russia. The volume of loans to Russia totals DKK6 million.

## Co-operation between ministerial councils, Nordic institutions and Russia

A number of ministerial councils co-operate with North-West Russia. Examples of work funded by the ministerial councils include:

- a manual for product safety and market research in North-West Russia
- a drug prevention support network for parents and professionals
- a high-level seminar on gender mainstreaming for vice-governors in North-West Russia.

It is difficult to state the financial contribution of the ministerial councils precisely, because many of the projects also involve the Baltic States. Projects are also co-funded by other ministerial councils, institutions and regional stakeholders.

The Nordic Investment Bank (which has been jointly owned by the Nordic and Baltic states since January 2005) funds activities over a wider area, including activities important to economic development in Russia.

Several Nordic institutions are active in Russia to a significant extent. NEFCO, for example, is involved in various projects in the area, through which the Council of Ministers contributes to environmental improvements. NEFCO is responsible for implementing much of the Nordic Council of Ministers' environmental policy and achieving its goals.

Other institutions include the Nordic Research Board, which runs the exchange and networking programmes known as Nordplus Neighbour and NordForsk Neighbour.

The Nordic institutions must follow the guidelines laid down by the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation for work in North-West Russia. The Council of Ministers Secretariat is also required to submit an annual report on the total extent of co-operation with North-West Russia by ministerial councils and Nordic institutions.

## Allocation of responsibilities with other regional organisations

The work of the Nordic Council of Ministers should be seen in the context of the work done by other regional organisations (CBSS, BEAC, AC). The Russia Programme provides for even closer co-operation between the various organisations and an even more reasonable allocation of responsibilities between them. In terms of collaboration with the CBSS, the programme provides support for the Northern eDimension and cross-border regional co-operation. Co-operation with the Barents Euro-Arctic Council is improved by refocusing the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers in the Barents Region. The Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Programme is an instrument for working along with the Arctic Council in the Arctic Region.