7 Nordic Stories

The Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers annual report 2013

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Nordic co-operation

Nordic co-operation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland.

Nordic co-operation 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 co-operation 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.

www.norden.org

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Preface

These are exciting times to be involved in Nordic co-operation. One of us will attest to this with a certain degree of sadness, while the other thanks his lucky stars. Let us explain.

Our posts are both fixed term. It's time for me, Jan-Erik Enestam, to vacate the post of Secretary General of the Nordic Council, after a final year characterised by high visibility and enthusiastic political debate. This is precisely what I set out to achieve when I took up the challenge six years ago, and so I am, of course, very pleased. Having worked to promote it, I am also delighted that defence and security policy is now firmly on the Nordic agenda.

For Dagfinn, who only took up the post of Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers in March 2013, the progress made over the last year provides a platform on which to build new and important initiatives. Never before has the rest of the world shown such great interest in the Nordic Region and Nordic co-operation, and this can only strengthen us further.

The common thread in the seven stories chosen to exemplify 2013 is enhanced visibility – and the way in which it signals change. These days, no one would use the term “backwater”

about us. Our interaction with the rest of the world is widespread, digital, open and accessible. “Open Access”, for example, allows everybody to partake of the knowledge generated by Nordic co-operation – free of charge.

We also think that the outside world's growing interest in the Nordic countries' unique ability to work together is having knock-on effects at home. Self-deprecation has had its day. We have coped with the economic crisis better than others and continue to build a society that offers sustenance for both body and soul. We have every right to be proud of the reception that greeted the “Nordic Cool” cultural festival in the USA, and are pleased that the annual awards ceremony for the Nordic prizes is now broadcast to a huge audience via public-service channels across the Region.

As we see it, greater visibility will only inspire greater faith in what we do. In these seven stories we encounter nine individuals who have experienced the impact of Nordic co-operation in their day-to-day lives, have been commended for their input or strengthened in their political conviction.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' followed by 'E. Enestam' and a horizontal line.

Jan-Erik Enestam

Secretary General
The Nordic Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, written in a cursive style.

Dagfinn Høybråten

Secretary General
The Nordic Council of Ministers

OPENING A WINDOW TO THE WORLD

The Nordic Council of Ministers' new Open Access initiative represents a major step towards greater transparency and visibility. In future, the Council of Ministers will provide open and free access to all of its publications, to the delight of everyone – including students at University College Sealand.

BY NIELS STERN

Nordic Nutrition Recommendations is a new Nordic classic. At over 500 pages, this is one of the most comprehensive and well-documented books about nutritional science published anywhere in the world.

The Nordic Council of Ministers funds the major research project that generates data for the book. As well as its tremendous research value, *Nordic Nutrition Recommendations* is also of great practical value to consumers, as it forms the

basis for the “Keyhole”, the well-known Nordic nutrition label on food products.

The last edition sold some 11,000 copies and was particularly popular with students. For Caroline Zeuthen at University College Sealand, it’s “a bit of a Bible”.

“I use it for reference. It’s extremely well presented. The language is concise and precise and it’s full of useful tables and graphs. I find it absolutely invaluable for writing essays,” she says.

“Students don’t have much money and have to buy a lot of expensive books, even though we don’t use some of them all that often. The digital version will be a great help. E-books are so much easier than carting around a heavy rucksack full of textbooks!”
– Caroline Zeuthen

Caroline and her fellow students will no doubt be delighted to hear not only that *Nordic Nutrition Recommendations 2012* is now available but also that it is now a free download for the first time, thanks to the Council of Ministers’ new Open Access publishing policy, under which all of its publications will be free and accessible to everyone from June 2014. It’s good news for Caroline.

“Students don’t have much money and have to buy a lot of expensive books, even though we don’t use some of them all that often. The digital version will be a great help. E-books are so much easier than carting around a heavy rucksack full of textbooks!” concludes Caroline, who still has one-and-a-half years to go on the Nutrition and Health programme at University College Sealand.

The Open Access version also serves a wider democratic purpose, according to Susann Regber, a nurse and PhD student at the Nordic School of Public Health.

“Overweight and obese children and adults have become a global

problem for public health, and the Nordic countries are no exception. This makes *Nordic Nutrition Recommendations* an important source of information that should be as accessible as possible to everybody in the Region. Open Access allows us all to share knowledge and information quickly and easily, which is only right and proper from a democratic and equality perspective.”

A new platform for Nordic publications

To support the new Open Access policy, the Council of Ministers’ Secretariat and (in the first instance) seven of its institutions have come together in a unique project to set up a new, modern platform that provides access to all publications funded and published by the Council of Ministers. The platform is based

FACTS

The Open Access initiative is being managed by the Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat along with NordForsk, Nordic Energy Research, Nordic Innovation, NORDICOM, the Nordic School of Public Health, the Nordic Centre for Spatial Development (NordRegio) and the Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues.

The new publications platform is being launched in spring 2014.

For further information about the Nordic Council of Ministers' Open Access initiative, please refer to www.norden.org/openaccess.

“Overweight and obese children and adults have become a global problem for public health, and the Nordic countries are no exception. This makes Nordic Nutrition Recommendations an important source of information that should be as accessible as possible to everybody in the Region.”

– Susann Regber

on open-source technology and operated by Uppsala University Library.

As well as books like Nordic Nutrition Recommendations 2012, reports and journals will be published on topics such as health and welfare, climate and the environment, research and education, etc. – all available to download for free. Some publications will also be available for sale in hard copy or as e-books from other outlets.

At the moment, the Council of Ministers' publications are available from a range of websites run by its institutions. In future, they will all be in one place, which will make it easier to search all publications

at once, improve distribution and enhance visibility.

Modernisation

The essence and design of the Open Access initiative, which was launched in March 2013, reflect the Council of Ministers' ongoing commitment to modernisation.

“When I took over as Secretary General, I was tasked with modernising the Council of Ministers and making what we do even more useful. It's my job to make sure that the Nordic countries benefit from the considerable resources and political energy that they invest in Nordic co-operation. Open Access is a natural

part of this modernisation process,” Dagfinn Høybråten told NordForsk magazine 2013.

Background

Open Access traces its roots back to the 1990s, and started out as a movement in the international academic community. Academics, librarians and politicians were unhappy with the major publishers of the day, who kept raising the prices of academic journals and enjoyed monopolistic status. They found it particularly galling that the content and quality assurance was frequently provided by academics and researchers funded by the public purse. Publishers were raking in money at the taxpayer's expense, and library budgets were unable to keep up. Clearly, something had to change.

The emergence of the Internet in the mid-1990s handed the Open Access movement a powerful new tool. Suddenly, it wasn't just possible, but relatively inexpensive, to share research papers with colleagues – and to do so digitally, bypassing the publishers. Needless to say, this triggered a series of major disputes.

Open Access today

The disputes rage on but Open Access is less of a movement now, more of a fact of life, and one that publishers have been forced to acknowledge. Nowadays, the big challenges are more practical in nature. How much should publishers be paid for the services they provide? Is there actually any need for publishers, when content can be distributed via other channels? How can academics, whose main concerns are impact and quality, be encouraged to support Open

Access? In general, how can a new Open Access model be made to work well?

Its new Open Access policy commits the Council of Ministers to addressing these issues. But much more could be done. Since the practical challenges associated with Open Access are much the same in all of the Nordic countries, it is only natural to seek out opportunities to work together, and this is where the Council of Ministers has an important role to play, e.g. recording what is published at public expense; fol-

lowing up and studying the effects of the various research councils' Open Access policies; looking at questions related to copyright and to small journals and monographs in the national languages; and mapping the far more complex field of research data.

A human right

While these ideas for new ways of working together are still on the drawing board, the Nordic Council of Ministers has now opened a new window to the world with the launch of its new publications platform. And it's not only Caroline and her fellow students at University College Sealand who will benefit. This initiative is of universal value to anyone who wants to know more about the Nordic Region. Everybody – anywhere in the world, and completely free of charge – will be able to access the research behind *Nordic Nutrition Recommendations*. The Council of Ministers sees this as a means of complying with Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): "Everyone has the right to [...] share in scientific advancement and its benefits."

"When I took over as Secretary General, I was tasked with modernising the Council of Ministers and making what we do even more useful. It's my job to make sure that the Nordic countries benefit from the considerable resources and political energy that they invest in Nordic co-operation. Open Access is a natural part of this modernisation process."

– Dagfinn Høybråten

THE SPIRIT, THE FLESH AND THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

Nordic Cool a smash hit in Washington DC

A few months ago, the Northern Lights shone brightly on downtown Washington DC and the high ceilings of the Kennedy Center reverberated to the sounds of Nordic music and voices. The taste of new Nordic food is still fresh in the memories of the Washington cognoscenti. Nordic Cool 2013 – a major event staged by the Council of Ministers to promote Nordic culture and values – took the US capital by storm for four weeks, and it looks as if it was more than just a Nordic blip in the local consciousness.

BY JESPER SCHOU-KNUDSEN

The actual festival drew to a close on 17 March, when the Northern Lights were switched off and the artists made their way back across the Atlantic, but *Nordic Cool* still resonates, including in media that don't usually bother with matters Nordic.

“The reviews I submitted, and Jakob Nielsen’s articles on *Nordic Cool* in Washington, drove *Politiken* to publish a whole *Nordic Cool* series, in which critics of architecture, the visual arts, theatre, film, and classical and contemporary music entered into dialogue with colleagues from

The Kennedy Center was literally bathed in the Northern Lights, which illuminated the entire marble-clad building by the Potomac River in downtown DC. The light constantly changed colour and could be seen from afar in the dark.

elsewhere in the Nordic Region, examining the idea of the Nordic dimension in their different areas from every conceivable angle,” explains Monna Dithmer, theatre editor and critic for the Danish newspaper *Politiken*.

And it wasn’t just art – values were included too. The Nordic spirit, flesh and social model were

all starkly exposed to critics and the public in the Kennedy Center, Washington DC – the USA’s cultural heart – to an extent that left you bursting with pride and joy, without it ringing hollow.

“I’ve never felt quite so Nordic. I was touched to suddenly feel that little old Danish me actually has roots in something bigger – Nordic

culture, and especially nature. And clear commonalities and connecting lines did emerge as I walked around. Of course, it was all staged deliberately to generate a sense of *Nordic Cool* but what surprised me was that it resonated more than any speech about Nordic affinity has ever done,” continues Dithmer, who followed the event at close quarters.

Danish bricks, Finnish shirts and Nordic meat

Nordic Cool offered everything from the familiar to the innovative, with plenty of surprises along the way. It encompassed the flesh and the spirit; the unexpected, the obvious and the self-evident; pathos and ethos; from tiny parts to the big picture. To put just some of it into figures:

387,072 Lego bricks, 56 Faroese glass birds, 1,270 Finnish shirts, 30 Nordic authors, 100 concerts, 3,000 members of the public unable to get their hands on tickets, and more than 150 hours of core values and Northern Lights at full beam.

“It was also the wooden elk outside, ready to invade the US cultural citadel, the large glass birds that had penetrated its walls, the giant boat made of shirts, the designer dresses among the birch trees, along with ice music, cooking sessions, theatre and the Northern Lights installation that bathed everything in its glow.”

– Monna Dithmer

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Sixteen Nordic ministers may have voiced their pride in the multitude of artistic excellence that filled the Kennedy Center’s impressive stages, but it was the response of American senators, donors, and commentators that really brought a lump to the throat. And the art opened doors for policies and values too.

Via art, clever curating brought Nordic values, culture and politics to the Kennedy Center’s audience, resulting in an encounter that opened the eyes of even a very demanding theatre editor.

“It was really quite overwhelming to be bombarded with art from the Nordic countries on all fronts. And it was the scale of this massive input that triggered the effect. It wasn’t just in the theatre performances that I was able to trace common strands and themes: the family and society in flux, our relationship to nature, a sense of materials, of light and dark, our design ethos.”

“It was also the wooden elk outside, ready to invade the US cultural citadel, the large glass birds that had penetrated its walls, the giant boat made of shirts, the designer dresses among the birch trees, along with ice music, cooking sessions, theatre and the Northern Lights installation that bathed everything in its glow. And elsewhere the whole effect was topped off by Anna Ancher’s exhibition – her study of light, small interiors and the people

that occupy them really hit the bull's eye in terms of Nordic tone," Dithmer explains.

Nordic fathers on paternity leave

A new partnership also emerged out of *Nordic Cool*. The Council of Ministers worked closely with the embassies in Washington and art bodies from the Region in an impressive effort to make tangible the specific content of Nordic core values in the middle of Washington.

Buses featured posters of Nordic fathers on paternity leave, feminist and LGBT intellectuals discussed Nordic equality versus American, Nordic organic ingredients mingled with American maize and corn in the canteens at both the Kennedy Center and the National Museum for Women in the Arts. This, along with the series of workshops and seminars, and the Nordic emotions exposed by Bergman's *Fanny and Alexander*, helped open the eyes of the media and the populace, not only in Washington but back home in the Nordic Region.

"It's interesting that so many Americans accepted the invitation to meet the Nordic Region, that there were long queues for the shows and several of the panel discussions. Yes, Bjarke Ingels and BIG are obviously names in the USA, but the benefit of such a joint promotion is that it also profiles a lighting designer like Jesper Kongshaug. Most of the people I talked to said that his *Northern Lights* was the biggest hit," Dithmer reports.

Indeed, many did consider Kongshaug's light installation to be the most spectacular feature of all at *Nordic Cool*. The Kennedy Center was literally bathed in the *Northern*

Lights, which illuminated the entire marble-clad building by the Potomac River in downtown DC. The light constantly changed colour and could be seen from afar in the dark. The day after the festival opened, the installation even made it onto the front page of the *Washington Post*. As she looks back on the big Nordic push on the USA's main stage, *Politiken's* veteran journalist and critic also comes to some thoughtful conclusions.

"The recurring impression was that the specifically Nordic element is probably a difficult phenomenon with which to operate in an increasingly globalised culture, but that common characteristics are discernible nevertheless. What was left was clearly a paradox: while people at home in the Region often don't give a fig about Nordic affinity, the Region is seen as a unit by the rest of the world. Why not use – and enhance – the Nordic element as a joint platform?" ●

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– Monna Dithmer

FACTS

Nordic Cool 2013 was a festival of art and culture in Washington DC. A collaborative venture, it involved the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Nordic embassies in Washington and the national agencies responsible for art and cultural exchanges in the Nordic countries, Greenland, Åland and the Faroe Islands. The festival was the biggest Nordic initiative to date in the USA

and attracted considerable attention from politicians and media in the Nordic Region and beyond. The majority of the funding for the total budget of approximately DKK 45 million came from the Kennedy Center and its donors. The Nordic Council of Ministers contributed DKK 4.5 million, the Nordic Culture Fund DKK 600,000 and the Nordic countries approx. DKK 1.2 million each.

One hot summer day in mid-June, 25-year-old Nathalie Anteskog from Bollnäs in Sweden was standing in a tent on Circus Square in Allinge, talking about her journey – not to the Danish island of Bornholm – but her “job journey” to Oslo. She also discussed youth unemployment with the Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers, researchers from the Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues, and project managers from *Nordjobb* and *Jobbresan*,

who were all gathered in the Nordic tent at the Danish political festival “Folkemøde”, the People Meeting.

“I’d never taken part in a public debate before and I’m not actually very comfortable speaking in front of large groups of people, but everyone was very relaxed and kind, so it wasn’t as bad as I feared,” she says.

Anteskog, who has a BA in Interaction Design from Malmö University, explained how she had been unemployed for one-and-a-half years when she signed up with *Jobbresan*,

FESTIVALS OF POLITICS

Nordic debates in Allinge, Almedalen and Arendal

BY LOUISE HAGEMANN

a *Nordjobb* project that helps young Swedes travel to Oslo and find work. A month after she arrived in Oslo in December 2012, she landed a job as a logistics assistant at Kuehne + Nagel. Three months later, she moved to Telenor, where she still works in technical support.

“I got the feeling that a lot of the young people in the audience were a bit surprised that I thought *Jobbresan* was a really good project. It was as if lots of them thought I’d been sent to Norway by the government

to save it doing anything to help young unemployed Swedes, as if I’d almost been forced into work, but that’s really not how it is at all,” she stresses.

Focus on youth

Youth unemployment was high on the agenda of the 2013 Swedish Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers. A few weeks before the People Meeting, the Nordic prime ministers hosted a summit about the situation faced by young peo-

ple. Dagfinn Høybråten, Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers, told the summit about the many initiatives that have already been launched.

In the marquee in Allinge, very specific policy challenges and visions were outlined, and a lively discussion ensued about how best to help young people like Anteskog.

“For me, personally, it’s very important to talk about my positive experience with *Jobbresan*, and how much it helped me to get on with my

The third People Meeting was held on Bornholm in 2013 – and for the first time, the Nordic Council of Ministers and Nordic Council had a tent on Circus Square in the town centre. The event was attended by ministers, politicians, experts and ordinary people like Nathalie Anteskog, who took part in debates and events that incorporated a Nordic perspective.

life after a long period of unemployment and living off benefits,” she adds.

Jobbresan is a prime example of how a small amount of financial support for travel and accommodation in the new country and a bit of help with job hunting is enough to help some of the many unemployed young people in the Nordic Region. Unlike Nathalie, however, not everyone is prepared to view the entire Region as a single labour market and relocate to another country.

Debate all over the Region

Youth unemployment was also one of the themes of “Nordic Day” during Almedal Week on Gotland, Sweden,

which saw all of the ministers for Nordic co-operation taking part in a debate. The annual Almedal Week has been held since 1968, when Olof Palme gave a speech from the back of a truck, and is the model for the People Meeting in Denmark, Arendal Week in Norway and Suomi Areena in Finland, all of which have emulated its success in recent years.

Arendal Week took place for the second time in 2013. Despite being overshadowed somewhat by the start of the Norwegian election campaign, it provided an opportunity for the Prime Minister of Iceland, the President of the Nordic Council and a number of top politi-

cians from all over the Region to discuss “the Nordic Region’s place in Europe”.

The third People Meeting was held on Bornholm in 2013 – and for the first time, the Nordic Council of Ministers and Nordic Council had a tent on Circus Square in the town centre. The event was attended by ministers, politicians, experts and ordinary people like Nathalie Anteskog, who took part in debates and events that incorporated a Nordic perspective.

Reinvigorated democratic dialogue

The increase in the number of events and participants in political festivals around the Region reflects a widespread desire to see political debate break out of its customary parameters.

“At a time when membership of – and support for – political parties is falling significantly, we need to find ways to revitalise democracy. Social media play a big role but can’t meet the need to meet for live, face-to-face debate the way Allinge does,” says the Speaker of the Danish Parliament, Mogens Lykketoft, explaining the huge success of the People Meeting.

Lykketoft, like many other politicians, appreciates the more informal tone of the People Meeting, the more relaxed atmosphere and direct contact with other politicians

and with the audience, who are just as keen to join in the debates. The audience includes everybody from professional lobbyists and commentators to ordinary voters, who bring a very different and refreshing dynamic to the debates.

Take, for example, the debate when a young local Christian wearing a crucifix launched into a passionate discussion with Manu Sareen, who is the Danish Minister for Nordic Co-operation, Gender Equality and Ecclesiastical Affairs, as well as a children's author, about Oscar K. and Dorte Karrebæk's controversial *Biblia Pauperum Nova* (New Pauper's Bible), which was nominated for the Nordic Council's new Children and Young People's Literature Prize.

The audience in the tent in Allinge also had plenty of questions for Nathalie Anteskog, who dealt with them deftly.

"It was a great victory for me personally, daring to stand up there on the stage with so many important and talented people and answer questions that, as an extra challenge, were in Danish!" she recalls. ●

"It was a great victory for me personally, daring to stand up there on the stage with so many important and talented people and answer questions that, as an extra challenge, were in Danish!"

– Nathalie Anteskog

FACTS

Almedal Week in Visby on Gotland takes place in the first week of July and was first held in 1968. Over 20,000 people gather for 2,000 events, making it the biggest of the Nordic political festivals.
www.almedalsveckan.info

Suomi Areena began in 2006 and takes place in July in Pori, at the same time as the Pori Jazz Festival.
www.suomiareena.fi

Arendal Week takes place in August. It was held for the second time in 2013.
www.arendalsuka.no

The People Meeting in Allinge on Bornholm has been running for three years. In 2013, 15,000 visitors a day attended 1,500 events during the four-day event.
www.brk.dk/Folkemoedet

Jobbresan is a Nordjobb project that helps young Swedish unemployed people travel to Norway. It provides a package of free travel, accommodation for a month, language classes and help with job hunting. In 2012, it helped 71 young Swedes relocate to Norway to look for work. In 2013, the figure was 133. Of those who relocated in 2012, 79% ended up in work, education or work experience, the majority in jobs.
www.nordjobb.org

POLITICS IN 140 CHARACTERS

“Join the debate!” was the rallying cry as five young politicians took over the Nordic Region’s Facebook page for a week. They formed a panel that completely reinvigorated discussion of one of the key themes at the Session of the Nordic Council – living conditions for young people in the Nordic Region – by inviting open debate on their own home turf, i.e. on social media.

BY MARITA HOYDAL

“Dear Nordic friends, my name is *Silja Borgarsdóttir Sandelin*. I’m the President of the Nordic Youth Council and I’m really looking forward to a good debate over the next few weeks.”

This was the message from the Finnish-Icelandic (now former) President of the Youth Council on the Region’s official Facebook page on 21 October 2013. The familiar swan logo on the page was also replaced by five smiling and inviting faces under the heading “Our Nordic Region”.

“As host of the Facebook page I was able to chat with people all over the Nordic Region. Social media unite people across national borders, languages and cultures, and create spaces where people get to discuss what really interests them,” Sandelin explains. She started the ball rolling by posing a question to the 4,000 or so people who follow the page: “How can young people who choose higher education be sure that they’ll be able to find work in their field?”

“Dear Nordic friends, my name is Silja Borgarsdóttir Sandelin. I’m the President of the Nordic Youth Council and I’m really looking forward to a good debate over the next few weeks.”

and spread the messages through their own networks.”

Social media pioneer

The Nordic Region has long been a pioneer in the social media. In most of the countries, more than half of the population has a Facebook profile – almost three-quarters in Iceland. We are also well represented on Twitter, where Nordic issues are tweeted about and retweeted all the time. *Jakob Esmann*, current President of the Nordic Youth Council, also uses social media and was on the Facebook panel.

“Representing official Nordic co-operation was pretty cool. For example, I chatted about social dumping with a Finn, a Swede and an Icelander, and together we came up with new and different angles that you just don’t get in purely national debates.”

What about generating greater interest in Nordic affairs? “It takes hard work,” he admits, “but it will only grow if people step up to the plate and inject life into the debate. We need to ask questions and involve people, rather than just bombard them with information.

Likes and comments flowed in from Finland, Sweden and the Faroe Islands. According to Sandelin, these responses provided new knowledge and information about the problems and barriers faced by young people in other Nordic countries.

“The point of social media is to share knowledge rather than communicate political messages. You don’t just proclaim things, you listen as well. The more we open our ears and engage in dialogue, the more visible we become. Others ‘listen in’

“We can air suggestions, ideas and visions, and dare to show that reaching consensus is a protracted process sometimes. After all, we do consist of many different countries and parts of the political spectrum, so of course disagreements will arise from time to time. Why not open up the discussion and let people join in?”
– Jakob Esmann

We need to focus on topics that people relate to and that affect their daily lives. By putting ourselves forward as individuals, the panel gave Nordic co-operation a face and a voice.”

Esmann also points out that Nordic politicians have a major responsibility to drive interest in Nordic issues in their home countries.

“We know it’s hard to get Nordic stories on the front page of *Aften-posten* or *Politiken*. But if the main-

stream media won’t prioritise Nordic coverage, we’ll have to do it ourselves. Together, we can set a Nordic agenda – e.g. on social platforms. If we – as Nordic politicians – don’t do it, who will?”

The debate goes on

Political co-operation is at its most visible when the Region gathers for sessions of the Nordic Council. Ministers for Nordic Co-operation – including Manu Sareen, Alexander

Stubb and Hadia Tajik – joined Marit Nybakk, who was the President of the Nordic Council in 2013, to host the Region’s Facebook page during the autumn Session 2013. On Twitter, the hashtags #nrsession and #unginorden were particularly popular, and Sandelin and Esmann both joined in the debates.

“There’s a limit to how many of us can be in the actual hall for the Session, but that’s not the case on Twitter. For example, an announce-

ment on youth unemployment by the Swedish Prime Minister is quoted on Twitter, retweeted by a trade union leader in Umeå and replied to by a young unemployed person in Reykjavik. The debate continues in completely different networks of people who aren't usually involved in Nordic co-operation. Twitter takes the Session out of the hall and opens it up," Sandelin points out.

Visibility requires courage

Transparency is particularly high on Esmann's wish list for the future of Nordic co-operation. "Social media let people take part, which they don't really do to the same extent by opening a newspaper or turning on the TV," he says.

"Maybe it's naïve, but I think transparency is important from a democratic perspective. Nordic decisions affect everybody in the Region, so I think we should encourage debate and dialogue," he adds.

"We can air suggestions, ideas and visions, and dare to show that reaching consensus is a protracted process sometimes. After all, we do consist of many different countries and parts of the political spectrum, so of course disagreements will arise from time to time. Why not open up the discussion and let people join in?" he continues.

Sandelin and Esmann would be happy to do it all again – not just for a week but for the long haul if that's what it takes to make Nordic co-operation visible, both on Facebook and elsewhere.

"If we go ahead and show how passionate we are about co-operation, the enthusiasm will spread like ripples on a pond," Sandelin concludes.

Debate Week on Facebook was hosted by Silja Borgarsdóttir Sandelin (Finland/Iceland), Jakob Esmann (Denmark), Henrik Nyholm (Finland), Johanna Lönn (Sweden) and Maria Kristine Göthner (Norway), who are all members of the Nordic Youth Council. ●

FACTS

Social media and Nordic co-operation

The Nordic Council and Council of Ministers are active on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram. Follow us and join the debate!

Facebook

- Facebook.com/nordensk (Scandinavian)
- Facebook.com/nordenis (Icelandic)
- Facebook.com/pmnpn (Finnish)
- Facebook.com/nordenen (English)
- Facebook.com/nrlitteraturpris Nordic Council Literature Prize
- Facebook.com/sdnordic Sustainable Development the Nordic Way

Twitter

- Twitter.com/nordensk (Scandinavian)
- Twitter.com/nordenen (English)
- Twitter.com/nordenis (Icelandic)

LinkedIn

- Follow company: The Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council

Instagram

- @Nordicways: Nordic co-operation in pictures

TOGETHER FOR SECURITY

Pooling, sharing, interoperability, procurement ... A minefield of jargon sometimes obscures the one word that defence policy is really about – security. In 2013, parliamentary support for making the Nordic Region the most secure in the world was stronger than ever. Three prominent figures look back on how they saw defence-policy co-operation in 2013.

BY HEIDI ORAVA

The defence minister

Finnish Minister of Defence *Carl Haglund* looks back on 2013, when Finland chaired Nordic Defence Co-operation (NORDEFCO), as a year in which significant progress was made.

The Nordic countries signed yet another new agreement committing them to work together on tactical air transport, defence procurement was brought under a joint umbrella, Nordic special forces started to co-ordinate medical training (the first course was

held in Sweden in October) and, last but not least, NORDEFCO succeeded in formulating a vision based on the long-term political priorities for defence co-operation.

“The NORDEFCO vision underlines our willingness to work more closely together and sets clear targets for 2020. It is a tangible and much-needed tool for longer-term planning, one that provides the defence forces with real, long-term political guidelines,” says Haglund.

According to the minister, the Nordic Council and parliamentary support for NORDEFCO bring a new dimension to these political guidelines.

“It has forced us to think about popular support for defence co-operation, and reminded us that greater openness should always be a natural part of any Nordic project. These developments helped me, as chairperson, to ensure that MPs in my home country were kept abreast of the programme for the NORDEFCO Presidency throughout the year. Similar developments in the other Nordic countries have given a positive boost to the whole of NORDEFCO.”

With plenty of constructive and lively debate, the Nordic Council theme

session on foreign affairs, security and defence policy in Stockholm was, for Haglund, one of the high points of the year.

“I really appreciated the way MPs entered actively into the spirit of the debate and the genuine interest they showed in co-operation on defence policy. The debates about the future of co-operation held in all of the Nordic parliaments – in Finland’s case, during the summer – were also very interesting.”

“My clearest memory remains the series of meetings of Nordic, Nordic-Baltic and Northern Group ministers that we hosted in Helsinki in December, and which culminated in the defence ministers signing the vision for NORDEFCO. As far as the parliamentary debates are concerned, the round-table conference on defence and security in Helsinki in September was a high point. It was a positive initiative with many interesting discussions.”

“Plenty of people are aware of the synergies that joint procurement brings. But it is the most complicated form of co-operation – sharing capacity – that offers the biggest savings.”
– General Ari Puheloinen

The military man

For General Ari Puheloinen, Commander of the Finnish Defence Forces, the NORDEFCO vision embodies the political objectives that he himself called for at the roundtable discussion in September. Now, after several years of functional pragmatism, he looks forward to co-operation addressing the big military and political questions.

“Plenty of people are aware of the synergies that joint procurement brings. But it is the most complicated form of co-operation – sharing capacity – that offers the biggest savings,” the general says.

“Pooling – working together on military air transport, for example – is the easy bit. Sharing – i.e. when the countries apply the principle of reciprocity so that particular capabilities are only maintained in one country but placed at the disposal of all the others – is more complicated.”

According to Puheloinen, the political targets have now been set at a sufficiently high level. The challenge for the future will be to monitor what the Nordic countries make of the balance between co-operation and national differences, which cannot be ignored.

“The different countries have their own processes for decision-making and planning, and differ in terms of how they relate to national defence industries. The policy will help us develop and create better preconditions for military co-operation in the future,” he says.

“It is important for me not to lose sight of how important the political dimension is when talking about defence co-operation. So it was fascinating to witness the widespread interest in military co-operation at the roundtable talks held by the Nordic Council and NORDEFCO in Helsinki.”

The MP

Höskuldur Þórhallsson was enthused by the constructive spirit surrounding co-operation on defence policy in the Nordic Region in 2013. As a member of the Nordic Council, he is one of the Icelandic voices in the debate.

“The roundtable event in Helsinki was extremely useful. The Nordic countries are more willing than ever to work together on defence. Sweden and Finland may not be in NATO but that doesn’t detract from their willingness to collaborate more closely on defence. From my perspective, that’s extremely positive.”

Iceland is a member of NATO but does not have its own armed forces. In February 2014, units of the Swedish and Finnish air forces will take part in joint air-defence training exercises over Iceland for the first time.

“Icelanders in general are very peace-oriented and don’t want the country to join in military operations at all. But when it comes to working together on defence policy, patrolling air space or the war on terror, the attitude is quite different,” Þórhallsson says.

In 2013, the Icelandic government suspended negotiations about membership of the European Union – another reason why Þórhallsson considers Nordic co-operation, including on security issues in the Arctic, so important.

“Representatives of the Nordic Council also raised the issue of security at the roundtable talks in Helsinki. With the increasing traffic and exploitation of natural resources, more attention needs to be paid to environmental and personal security in the Arctic.”

“The roundtable event in Helsinki was extremely useful. The Nordic countries are more willing than ever to work together on defence.”
– Höskuldur Þórhallsson

Flexibility, realism, tolerance and a long-term perspective. According to Marit Nybakk, President of the Nordic Council in 2013, these are the foundation stones for close co-operation on defence policy and security.

“The specialisation and sharing of responsibilities that characterises Nordic co-operation – and which is also the aim of it – are based on the assumption that we can rely on each other, that declarations of solidarity will actually mean something in a crisis. We will continue to work on these issues at the next roundtable talks.” ●

FACTS

Under the Norwegian Presidency of the Nordic Council, the spring meeting focused on defence and foreign affairs. The Council decided to take the initiative for wider-ranging roundtable talks in order to involve the parliaments in the defence debate to a greater extent. On 30 September, MPs, defence ministers and military representatives gathered in Helsinki.

Nordic Defence Co-operation (NORDEFCO) is the official body for political and military co-operation in the Region. In December, it launched a vision for defence co-operation up to 2020.

Pooling (often mentioned in conjunction with sharing – see below): being prepared to work together with the capacity and materials at hand.

Sharing: the countries agree which of them will maintain capacity in various areas and promise to share when needed.

UNITED AGAINST FOOD WASTE

A third of the world's food production is thrown out or goes to waste in one way or another. According to the United Nations, the economic loss is equivalent to 725 billion euro per annum, with the richest nations alone throwing out enough to feed all of the undernourished people of the world several times over. The Nordic governments and a group of stalwart campaigners aim to put a stop to this.

BY MICHAEL FUNCH

Selina Juul, founder of the Danish consumer movement *Stop Wasting Food* is one of the main figures. In 2013, she was awarded the Nordic Council Environment Prize for her work identifying new ways to reduce food waste in Denmark. Now, she aims to take her message to the whole of the Nordic Region.

New ways to reduce food waste

Juul sees her work as a way of bridging the gap between the affluent and the poor, between politicians in parliaments and people in the streets.

"People like me are helping to implement the political visions and fine words, so that action and change actually happens out there in the real world," says Juul, who has already decided what to do with her DKK 350,000 prize money.

"We're going to start a new network to make the best possible use of excess food. In short, we'll have a comprehensive system, including a website and an app, so people with surplus food and those who know what to do with it can co-ordinate almost instant pick-ups and deliveries," she says.

The first prize for the Nordic-Baltic Ad Competition on Food Waste was handed over at an event Juul arranged on City Hall Square in Copenhagen.

“Basically, the point is that all food produced should be eaten and not end up as waste. In the next few years, I hope to see a dramatic increase in awareness of food waste in the Nordic Region. We can be a pioneer in this field.”
– Dagfinn Høybråten

This greater flexibility will reduce the need for storage capacity and make far better use of surplus food from catering and the leftovers from food manufacturers, supermarkets, etc.

Around the world with the UN

In 2013, the Nordic Council of Ministers collaborated with the UN on a Nordic-Baltic poster contest to highlight the growing problem of food waste. Juul was on the jury.

She also arranged the food-waste event on City Hall Square in Copenhagen, at which the first prize was handed over. The event was attended by the Danish Minister of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, representatives of COOP and Unilever among others, as well as grassroots organisations that work with homeless people, etc. Ordinary folk from all walks of life converged to support a common cause, and 6,000 mouths were fed with the surplus food.

Selina Juul was awarded the Nordic Council Environment Prize 2013 for her work identifying new ways to reduce food waste in Denmark. Now, she aims to take her message to the whole of the Nordic Region.

“Basically, the point is that all food produced should be eaten and not end up as waste. In the next few years, I hope to see a dramatic increase in awareness of food waste in the Nordic Region. We can be a pioneer in this field,” said Dagfinn Høybråten, the Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The competition was part of a global campaign by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), so the Nordic

message has already been broadcast far and wide.

Høybråten also stressed the need to see waste as a resource rather than as a problem.

From food waste to green growth

In the same spirit, the Nordic prime ministers have launched a range of green-growth projects that aim to explore the potential for their countries to work more closely together on improving economic sustainabil-

“There’s no such thing as us and them when it comes to huge issues like this. Politicians, civil servants, industry, business and people on the street – we’re all in this together. The trick is to do something, whoever you are, wherever you are, and everybody in their own way.”
– Selina Juul

ity. One of these projects focuses on food waste, and will look at ideas like food banks that operate across national borders.

Juul’s initiative to co-ordinate food waste and her plans to arrange a major Nordic food-waste event can play a role in finding common ground in the different countries.

Sometimes, there is a wide gulf between political objectives and what actually transpires, but buzzwords like green growth do actually arouse enthusiasm, including at grassroots level.

“Concepts like green growth and bio-economy are here to stay. We’re running out of resources, so we need to optimise our consumption and find new ways of doing things,” says Juul, who doesn’t let political slogans put her off.

Brown, yellow, blue, green

Bioeconomy is a political buzzword that encompasses both innovation and creativity.

The point of a bio-based society is to make better use of resources, in particular to wean the world off fossil fuels. So whether it’s brown (waste), blue (oceans and lakes), green/yellow (forests and fields), the emphasis is on finding new ways to use and recycle resources and raw materials.

In 2013, Nordic agencies took the first steps towards a bioeconomy, and a range of new initiatives will see the light of day in the next few years, including under the auspices of the 2014 Icelandic Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the prime ministers’ Green Growth Initiative.

But how does all this look from a grassroots activist’s perspective? Do top-down initiatives actually deliver, or do they just get bogged down in talk and bureaucracy?

“There’s no such thing as us and them when it comes to huge issues like this. Politicians, civil servants, industry, business and people on the street – we’re all in this together. The trick is to do something, whoever you are, wherever you are, and everybody in their own way,” Juul stresses.

Networking is one of the great strengths of Nordic co-operation. Like the Secretary General, Juul also stresses the role that the Region plays in the world.

“If we get a *Nordic food-waste* programme up and running, it’ll serve as an example to the rest of the world,” concludes Juul, who sees a bright future for work to *combat food waste*. ●

FACTS

The Nordic Council Nature and Environment Prize 2013 was awarded to “a Nordic company, organisation or individual who has developed a product, an invention or in some other creative way has increased resource efficiency and thereby contributed to reducing human beings’ ecological footprint in nature”.

FACTS

The Nordic prime ministers have launched a Green Growth Initiative to explore the potential for Nordic co-operation to generate sustainable growth in a number of areas. The initiative consists of ten projects, one of which is about food waste. See more at norden.org/greengrowth or read the online magazine Green Growth the Nordic Way at nordicway.org.

FROM WHITE PAPAL SMOKE TO TV SPECTACULAR

In 2013, for the first time ever, the winners of the Nordic Council prizes were announced live on prime-time TV in all of the Nordic countries. The Oscars-style event featured the faces – happy and sad – of the nominees. Not to mention quite a few politicians, celebrities and a live audience, on top of the half-million viewers at home.

BY: JESPER SCHOU-KNUDSEN

The last time that Anne-Marie Damm brought out her special tray for sweets and champagne glasses was for Princess Madeleine of Sweden's wedding in June. Before that, the night-time transmission of the Oscars in February. These are absolutely essential props for Anne-Marie whenever a big event is screened, like the Nordic Council Prize Gala on 30 October.

"I always find it momentous and entertaining when the major TV stations really give it gas at big events. I readily admit to being glued to the screen for Olympic opening ceremonies, royal weddings and funerals and the Oscars. I really enjoy the feeling of being witness to the big popular events, and I can't help

being moved by them. I also think I learn a bit, also about the gossipy nonsense," Anne-Marie says.

The 54-year-old Dane wasn't the only one transfixed in front of a TV when the five prizes were awarded. She was one of nearly half a million Nordic viewers to tune in when the Opera House in Oslo formed the setting for the first-ever Nordic Council awards ceremony to be broadcast live on television.

The winners of the Council's five prizes – Literature, Music, Film, the Environment and the new one, Children's and Young People's Literature – were announced in front of viewers across the Region. It was a marked change from previous years, when the announcement of the winners

and the awards themselves were kept strictly separate.

In particular, the Literature Prize – the Council’s oldest and most prestigious award – was surrounded by an almost mythical aura with regard to the selection and announcement of the winner. In the months leading up to the announcement, the biggest and most serious Nordic daily papers would compete to predict the outcome. But everyone had to wait for the white smoke to discreetly emanate from the adjudication committee’s final, decisive meeting.

The impetus for the new live TV concept was political and crystal-clear: both the awards ceremony and the prizes were to extend their reach to ordinary people throughout the length and breadth of the Region.

“There has long been a desire to bring the Nordic Council prizes into a new era and reach out to a wider audience. With this Oscars-like ceremony, we are professionalising the announcements and prize-giving, and hope to draw even more attention to the Council’s prestigious awards,” said Marit Nybakk, President of the Nordic Council, at the launch of the new gala concept.

Another innovation this year was that the names of prize-winners weren’t revealed until the actual ceremony. The Nordic Council also chose to ratchet up the tension an extra notch by inviting all of the nominees for the prizes to be present at the Opera House, along with an audience of more than 1,000 people. The vast majority of the nominees turned up, which added a touch of Hollywood-style glamour to the event – something the Council was criticised for in the run-up to 30 October.

The Nordic literati and connoisseurs had worried that the prizes would get less attention amid all the glitz and glamour but preliminary studies show that the awards have never attracted as much attention as they did in 2013. And this time, they not only catered for savvy literature readers and discerning radio listeners – half a million TV viewers tuned in.

At first glance, this figure might not look very impressive – an audience of half a million across the entire Region doesn’t come close to competing with the likes of *The*

Bridge or *Borgen*. But it is acceptable for a new programme, and enough to capture the imagination of some of the Nordic citizens whose taxes help to fund the prizes and cultural co-operation.

“I openly admit that I’d never heard of the prizes, other than the Literature Prize. And to be honest, I don’t really know what the Nordic Council actually does. But now I’m a little bit wiser – not only about the Council, but about the other prizes too. It’s great that there’s a special prize for children’s books,” says Anne-Marie.

Another innovation this year was that the names of prize-winners weren’t revealed until the actual ceremony. The Nordic Council also chose to ratchet up the tension an extra notch by inviting all of the nominees for the prizes to be present at the Opera House, along with an audience of more than 1,000 people.

Finnish was spoken, thanks were said in Norwegian, and there was rejoicing in Danish and singing in Swedish – all of which was true to the spirit of the Council’s aim of reaching as many Nordic viewers as it could with as wide and beautiful a selection of art as possible.

However, the seasoned Danish television viewer says that it was the prospect of good entertainment that drew her to the screen.

“I was, of course, a little seduced by what both Danish TV and the papers said about the Oscars-style party. Those kinds of things usually draw the celebrities in. On the other hand, there weren’t as many of them as I’d expected, so I was a little bit disappointed by that. But the features screened during the award ceremony were really professional and entertaining. The Danish commentator talked far too much, which meant I didn’t catch everything that the two young hosts had to say. He reminded me of Jørgen de Mylius, who used to commentate on the Eurovision Song Contest in Denmark,” she adds.

The Nordic Council Prize Gala has since been criticised for failing to provide proper translations. Finnish was spoken, thanks were said in Norwegian, and there was rejoicing in Danish and singing in Swedish – all of which was true to the spirit of the Council’s aim of reaching as many Nordic viewers as it could with as wide and beautiful a selection of art

as possible. However, the challenges of subtitling turned out to be greater than expected, and the Council will take this into consideration when planning next year’s gala in Stockholm.

Back in Hellerup, Denmark, Anne-Marie Damm reflects on how she saw the gala now that the sweet tray and champagne glasses are empty.

“The prize gala in Oslo might not have been a proper Oscars party, and the commentator may have talked far too much. But it was good fun and fascinating to learn more about the prizes. I didn’t know that that we also award Nordic prizes for film and the environment, so I’ve learned something. And I’ll be tuning in again next year,” she concludes. ●

FACTS

The Nordic Council, in collaboration with the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) and the Opera House in Oslo, announced the winners of the Council’s five awards for Literature, Music, Film, the Environment and the new prize – Children’s and Young People’s Literature. The winners of the DKK 350,000 prizes also received brand-new statuettes for the first time.

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