Action Plan for Nordic Co-operation on Disability 2015–2017

Human rights • Diversity • Freedom of Movement

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on Disability 2015–2017**

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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 the 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.

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Nordic co-operation on disability

An important goal of Nordic co-operation is the social inclusion of people with disabilities. This co-operation is based on the values of democracy, rule of law, and equality, which are shared by all the Nordic countries, as well as the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland.

Equal opportunities and security regardless of a citizen's gender, ethnicity, religion, belief, functional capacity, age, or sexual orientation are cornerstones of the Nordic welfare societies. This also includes social rights and the principle that everyone should have equal access to healthcare and social services, education, and culture.

The Nordic countries seek to achieve sustainable social development based on their citizens' opportunities for individual freedom and self-fulfilment.

In February 2014, the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation published their vision statement, *The Nordic Region – Together we are stronger*, outlining the optimum conditions

for citizens to be able to move freely between the Nordic countries and for an innovative Nordic region that focuses on welfare, education, creativity, entrepreneurship, sustainability, and research. Additionally, the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation want to ensure that Nordic co-operation in international affairs complements the efforts of other organisations. Co-operation should create Nordic synergies, provide added value for everyone, and lead to concrete results.

Human rights

Diversity is a key aspect of the ideology of Nordic co-operation. It creates the conditions for equal opportunities, social solidarity, and security for all. Diversity is an issue relevant to most areas, and the ability for everyone to participate in society and social decision-making processes is a central element of Nordic co-operation.

The objective of the disability policy is the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of society. The policy is increasingly

characterised by a rights perspective which has gained global expression through the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

All the Nordic countries have signed the convention, and it has been ratified by Denmark, Sweden, Norway, the Faroe Islands, and Greenland. Ratification in Iceland, Finland, and Åland is anticipated in the near future. The convention's supplementary protocol on an individual's right of complaint has been ratified by Sweden and Denmark.

Article 33 of the UN convention describes how states that are party to the convention should implement the convention in accordance with their administrative systems and through three specific mechanisms. Firstly, there should be a co-ordination mechanism, secondly a supervisory mechanism, and thirdly, people with disabilities should be involved in the supervisory mechanism by way of the organisations that represent them.

Nordic synergies through co-operation on disability

Disability policy is pursued on different levels in parallel. Much of the policy is drawn up at the national level while implementation is increasingly taken care of at the municipal level across the Nordic countries. The countries co-operate on disability primarily through various exchanges of knowledge and experience between different actors at different levels. Disability organisations, government agencies, researchers, political parties, and government offices work together to develop a common understanding of how different laws, types of support, and services work in practice and how these can be developed for improved inclusion.

The countries work together internationally and are affected directly and indirectly by decisions and trends relating to policy and general market and social trends. By working together, the countries can remove border barriers, change legislation, share best practice, and avoid repeating each other's

mistakes. By working together, the countries enable the participation of vulnerable groups in society.

Nordic advantage means that co-operation provides added value through activities that would otherwise take place within a national framework but which achieve tangible positive outcomes by way of joint Nordic solutions.

This co-operation manifests and develops Nordic solidarity and increases Nordic expertise and competitiveness.

This action plan describes the Nordic advantage on the basis of this definition for both the overall objective and each focus area.

Action Plan for Nordic Co-operation on Disability

The selection of focus areas and activities in this action plan are based on the strategy documents for the Council of Ministers' operations, current strategy documents for disability policy in the Nordic countries and autonomous regions, the Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues' trend report for disability policy conditions¹, and a project report concerning disability policy in the Nordic region.

The action plan consists of an overall objective and activities in three focus areas: human rights, diversity, and freedom of movement.

The action plan includes activities of a general strategic nature that focus on the integration of the disability perspective in accordance with the sectoral responsibility principle. Consequently, this does not preclude further project activities on relevant topics.

Disability policy is a cross-sectoral concern; hence, the action plan includes several activities that involve sectoral responsibilities of the various Councils of Ministers².

Objectives of the action plan

The overall objectives of the action plan are to contribute to the meaningful inclusion of people with disabilities by way of better Nordic knowledge-sharing and closer co-operation with regard to disability policy issues.

Nordic co-operation on disability will:

- benefit the countries involved and make a difference for Nordic citizens with disabilities;
- complement and strengthen current national processes that aim for the inclusion of everyone in all areas of society;
- deepen existing and create new synergies with other international co-operation

programmes and processes aimed at inclusion;

- be a good example of how official activities can support diversity and the inclusion of people with disabilities.

Methods

- Create the necessary conditions for the exchange of experiences, preservation of expertise, and development of methods for the inclusion of people with disabilities for a number of strategic areas and selected contexts;
- Increase awareness of the disability perspective in key activities of the Nordic Council of Ministers and Nordic Council such as their secretariats, institutions, programmes, and networks;
- Increase the degree of accessibility for people with disabilities to and within the activities of the Nordic Council of Ministers and Nordic Council.

¹ <http://www.nordicwelfare.org/Publications/Trender-i-funktionshinderpolitiken/>

² The Nordic Council of Ministers comprises eleven councils of ministers for different policy areas, of which one – the council of ministers for the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation – has overall responsibility. For each council of ministers, there is a Committee of Senior Officials with officials from the ministers' respective departments in their country. The committee of the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation is called the Nordic Co-operation Committee. The Secretariat to the Nordic Council of Ministers manages all of the councils of ministers, including the work of the Committees of Senior Officials, and co-ordinates work with institutions, programmes, and a number of projects decided by the councils of ministers.

Focus areas of the action plan

Human rights

Support and strengthen work on the national implementation and monitoring of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Diversity

Strengthen inclusion, promote equality, and tackle discrimination against people with disabilities from a diversity perspective in all aspects of Nordic society through the integration of the disability perspective.

Freedom of movement

Promote freedom of movement and break down border barriers faced by people with disabilities.

Activity plan

The activities described opposite and below are preliminary proposals to be developed by the sectors to which they pertain where the sector concerned considers the proposals to be relevant.

Focus area 1: Implementation of human rights

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a relatively new convention. The purpose of the activities in this focus area is to promote each country's human rights efforts. This is accomplished by supporting the processes for national implementation and monitoring of the convention.

The objectives of the activities in this area are to:

- create platforms for the exchange of experiences and the development of effective instruments for implementing the UN Convention;
- deepen understanding regarding the implementation of the UN Convention;
- provide synergies with other international co-operation programmes and processes aimed at inclusion;
- strengthen the expertise of people involved in the implementation of the UN Convention;
- find good examples regarding the implementation of the UN Convention.

Activity 1.1 Expert network for strengthening the implementation of the UN Convention

The Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues co-ordinates the activities of the network. The countries and autonomous regions appoint members to the expert network. The network meets annually and maintains continuous contact during the implementation period of the action plan.

Relevant articles of the UN Convention include Article 33 on national implementation of the Convention, Article 4.3 on the involvement of people with disabilities and their representatives, and Article 32 on international co-operation.

Cost: This assignment falls within the existing economic framework of the Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues.

Activity 1.2 Conference on the implementation of the UN Convention

The Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues arranges conferences on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The conferences

may also touch on topics linked to the different articles of the Convention.

Relevant articles of the UN Convention include Article 33 on national implementation of the Convention.

Cost: This assignment falls within the existing economic framework of the Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues.

Activity 1.3 Nordic disability and rights training

In co-operation with Council of Ministers for Education and Research (MR-U) and the Committee of Senior Officials for Education and Research (EK-U) and selected educational institutions, the Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues is developing a training programme similar to the Irish model, the International Disability Law Summer School³.

Relevant articles of the UN Convention include Article 33 and Article 4.3 on CRPD for the national implementation of the Convention and the involvement of people with disabilities and their representatives.

Cost: DKK 300,000 (estimated).

³http://www.nuigalway.ie/cdlp/Summer_School_2015/summer_school_2015_info.html

Focus area 2: Diversity and integrating the disability perspective

Work regarding diversity based on a disability perspective relates to accessibility in a broad sense, which is also referred to as universally designed environments, services, and communications.

A tripartite umbrella project has been implemented within the framework of the Nordic Council of Ministers' strategy for sustainable development and through co-operation between the Council of Ministers for Health and Social Affairs (MR-S) and the Council of Ministers for Gender Equality (MR-JÄM).

The aim is to integrate disability perspective into a number of strategic contexts within official Nordic co-operation. The projects are co-ordinated and implemented by the secretariat of the Council of Nordic Co-operation on Disability at the Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues.

The objectives of the activities in this focus area are to:

- create a system for integrating the disability perspective, taking into account a gender equality perspective, into Nordic co-operation;
- arrange at least two workshops and expert meetings on gender-related violence against women and men with disabilities;
- formulate a draft measure on gender-related violence against women and men with disabilities;
- contribute to sustainable development through universal design, including the establishment of a Nordic working group;
- increase accessibility for women and men with disabilities to and within Nordic Council of Ministers and Nordic Council activities;
- formulate a proposal on how continued Nordic co-operation on universal design can be organised.

Cost: The projects have a total budget of DKK 1 million from the implementation budget for the diversity objectives of the Sustainable Development strategy.

Activity 2.1 Systematic monitoring and raising awareness of the disability perspective in accordance with the sectoral responsibility principle (mainstreaming) in official Nordic co-operation

This activity takes place in close co-operation with those responsible at the secretariats of both the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council, and consists of providing advice on how the operation can adopt policies and checklists for, e.g., accessible meetings and communications, and the diversity perspective in personnel policies relating to the work environment and recruitment, etc. It is especially important that people responsible for personnel matters are included in these efforts. This work is carried out with regard to the integration of gender equality, sustainable development, and the earlier identification of diversity within the Council of Ministers' operations.

Relevant articles of the UN Convention are Article 4 on general obligations, Article 8 on raising awareness of the situation for people with disabilities, Article 29 on participation in political and public life, Article 27 on work and employment, and Article 32 on international co-operation.

Cost: Covered by the “implementation budget for the diversity objectives of the Sustainable Development strategy.

Activity 2.2 Multiple discrimination and gender-related violence against women and men with disabilities

In this project, knowledge is assimilated regarding multiple discrimination and discrimination protection, the risk of violence, and the different types of violence that the target groups are exposed to. This includes men, women, boys, and girls. Best practice for prevention and management is collated and communicated. The objective is to provide a draft measure and recommendation on the topic to the Nordic countries.

Articles relevant to this project in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities include general principles such as non-discrimination and accessibility as well as several of the Convention’s articles on rights. Article 6 addresses women with disabilities, Article 16 the right to freedom from exploitation, violence, and abuse, Article 12 equal recognition before the law, and Article 13 access to justice. Article 32 on international co-operation is also relevant in this context.

Cost: Covered by the implementation budget for the diversity objectives of the Sustainable Development strategy.

Activity 2.3 Working group on universal design as a means for a sustainable society

A working group of experts on universal design is appointed. The members of the group will support the implementation of universal design and efforts aimed at making Nordic co-operation more accessible in a broad sense. The

members of the group contribute by assisting in requirements analyses and proposals for improved accessibility.

The group will also develop a proposal for continued Nordic co-operation on the implementation of universal design.

Relevant articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities include Article 9 on accessibility, Article 29 on participation in political and public life, Article 27 on work and employment, and Article 32 on international co-operation.

Cost: Covered by the implementation budget for the diversity objectives of the Sustainable Development strategy.

Focus area 3: Freedom of movement

Raising awareness of and breaking down barriers to mobility across country borders is a priority area within Nordic co-operation. There is a new action plan for co-operation on border barriers and a specific agenda for the health and social sector.⁴ Although many border barriers have been removed and there are several surveys and projects in progress, many barriers remain for people with disabilities. This may be due in part to the lack of clarification of the disability perspective, or due to other barriers that need to be removed to enable citizens with special needs to enjoy the opportunities for mobility created between the countries. The EU is also making special efforts to break down barriers for people with disabilities.⁵

The objectives of the activities within this focus area are to:

- enhance expertise relating to the disability perspective among actors investigating and proposing solutions for

border barrier issues through two annual meetings with representatives from the Council of Nordic Co-operation on Disability;

- enhance expertise regarding border barrier co-operation among members of the Council of Nordic Co-operation on Disability.

The ultimate objective in relation to cross-border mobility is to break down barriers for people with disabilities.

Activity 3.1 Raising awareness of the disability perspective in border barrier co-operation

This activity is carried out through annual meetings of the Council of Nordic Co-operation on Disability with the Freedom of Movement Council and is covered within the Freedom of Movement Council's budget for 2015–2017.

Relevant articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons

with Disabilities include Article 18 on the right to liberty of movement, Article 9 on participation in political and public life, and Article 32 on international co-operation.

Cost: The project is carried out within the budget for the Council of Nordic Co-operation on Disability.

Activity 3.2 Study on the mobility of people with disabilities in the Nordic labour market

This is a project concept that needs further anchoring in the labour and work environment sector, which is responsible for co-ordination and funding. In collaboration with the Council of Ministers for Labour (MR-A) and the Council of Ministers for Labour as well as other stakeholders, the Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues is developing a study on the mobility of people with disabilities in the Nordic labour market. Other stakeholders include the Council of Nordic Co-operation on Disability, Nordjobb, Hello

⁴ <http://www.norden.org/en/nordic-council-of-ministers/ministers-for-co-operation-mr-sam/freedom-of-movement>

⁵ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/disability_and_old_age/c11415_sv.htm

Norden, the Assistance Group, the Social Security Group, the youth wings of disability organisations, some committees at the Nordic Council, the co-operative body, and employer organisations.

Relevant articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities include Article 27 on work and employment, Article 9 on accessibility, Article 20 on personal mobility, and Article 32 on international co-operation.

Cost: DKK 200,000 (estimated).

Activity 3.3 Study on the educational mobility of people with disabilities between the Nordic countries

This is a project concept that needs further anchoring, including in the education and research sector, which is responsible for co-ordination and funding. Additionally, dialogue is required with potential providers. Other

stakeholders include Nordjobb, Hello Norden, the Assistance Group, the Social Security Group, the youth wings of disability organisations, and some committees at the Nordic Council.

Relevant articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities include Article 24 on education, Article 9 on accessibility and Article 32 on international co-operation.

Cost: DKK 300,000 (estimated).

Next steps

All the activities in this action plan are described in relatively general terms and need to be developed further and described in more detail later in the process.

A more detailed project and communication plan, allocation of responsibility, and budget will be prepared for each activity. This is being done jointly between the key operations within the secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Some activities can be started immediately, while other proposals for activities need to be anchored, developed, and resolved within the various individual councils of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

It is important that people with disabilities and their representatives are involved in a meaningful way in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the execution of the action plan.

Methods for inclusion and implementation of the disability perspective are about accessibility and inclusive attitudes in a broad sense.

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