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Nordic Council of Ministers

Sustainable Nordic Welfare

Status report for the Nordic Prime Ministers
Summer Meeting 22–23 June 2015

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Sustainable Nordic Welfare

Status report for the Nordic Prime Ministers Summer Meeting
22–23 June 2015

Background

The Sustainable Nordic Welfare programme implements the Nordic Prime Ministers' request that the Nordic Ministers for Health and Social Affairs prepare tangible proposals for how Nordic co-operation on health matters can be developed. At the Nordic Prime Ministers Meeting on 10 June 2012, the health ministers were asked to review, in particular, the Nordic co-operation on testing of new drugs and treatments, highly specialised functions, and research on health and welfare.

The Sustainable Nordic Welfare programme runs from 2013–2015. In addition to developing and specifying the Nordic co-operation on health, the programme also involves practical initiatives in the education and labour market areas. The two councils of ministers with main responsibility are the Council of Ministers for Education and Research (MR-U) and the Council of Ministers for Health and Social Affairs (MR-S).

The aim of the Sustainable Nordic Welfare programme is to provide the Nordic governments with tangible and innovative solutions and tools for managing welfare policy challenges. The solutions will help to increase quality and equality in education, work and health care. This will be attained through joint financing of practical initiatives and by building Nordic platforms for dialogue and knowledge sharing.

In 2013–2015, approximately DKK 62 million from the priority budget of the Nordic Ministers for Co-operation (including DKK 20 million from the presidency component of the priority budget) has been allocated to Nordic Sustainable Welfare initiatives, as well as approximately DKK 15 million from the professional sector's own budgets.

Sustainable Nordic Welfare is implemented through practical initiatives and activities in three focus areas:

1. Education and work for welfare
2. Research for welfare
3. Infrastructure for welfare

In autumn 2015, a concluding conference for the programme will be held, where results from the programme and from the individual projects will be presented. A net-based publication will also be produced that will present an overview of what has been attained throughout the programme. The conference will follow up on the launch conference held in August 2013 and the mid-term conference held in September 2014, where the target groups were contact persons from the Nordic countries, project managers, members of the committees of senior officials, and other Nordic players.

Various other conferences, seminars and workshops have been held within the individual projects, or across projects. For example, in spring 2014, national seminars were held in each country (with the exception of Denmark) where the programme and individual projects were presented and discussed, and attempts were made to place them in context with national activities in the area.

The primary objective of the Sustainable Nordic Welfare programme in 2015 is to show and disseminate the results, and to discuss how these should be followed up and possibly extended.

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Status: Focus Area 1. Education and work for welfare

Measures and activities in Focus Area 1 will help to:

- Ensure that education leads to work
- Secure the supply of skills and expertise in the health and care sector

Responsibility: The Ministers for Education and Research, in collaboration with the Ministers for Labour and Health and Social Affairs

Status: Focus Area 2. Research for welfare

Measures and activities in Focus Area 2 will help to:

- promote research and development of knowledge and models that can contribute to welfare for everyone

Responsibility: The Ministers for Health and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministers for Education and Research

Status: Focus Area 3. Infrastructure for welfare

Measures and activities in Focus Area 3 will help to:

- develop and secure the quality in the health care sector

Responsibility: The Ministers for Health and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministers for Education and Research.

Status: Focus Area 1. Education and work for welfare

Measures and activities in Focus Area 1 will help to:

- Ensure that education leads to work
- Secure the supply of skills and expertise in the health and care sector

Responsibility: The Ministers for Education and Research, in collaboration with the Ministers for Labour and Health and Social Affairs

The following results have been attained within the programme for *Focus Area 1, Education and work for welfare*.

Learning at the workplace

To meet the challenges of securing apprenticeships and internships for people in vocational training, and to improve the quality of workplace-based training, the Council of Ministers has started a project on learning at the workplace.

The project, which is led by the Swedish National Agency for Education, facilitates co-operation between local players and colleagues in other Nordic countries to enable knowledge sharing, and thereby stimulate their own development work regarding learning at the workplace. By extending work at local level to national and Nordic levels, the project will help improve workplace learning.

Dialogue and knowledge sharing has been the underlying principle in the project, and this has been followed up, for example via a number of meetings arranged in each country, the Faroe Islands and Åland. The meetings promote the development of Nordic skills between participants from different sectors, schools, authorities and organisations. In 2015, meetings will be

arranged in Finland and Denmark, in addition to the final conference to be held in Sweden.

Examples of the themes included in the Nordic dialogue are recruitment to vocational courses, counselling and career choices, collaboration between schools and businesses, planning, apprenticeships, and skills required for working life.

The project will result in several reports, including one on the methodology used in the project, and how we can learn from this method of working at a Nordic level; the target group is the Nordic Council of Ministers. Another will be a synthesis report of the most important experiences gained within the different themes of the project, and easily accessible inspiration material will be available for local development work in schools and workplaces.

Analysis of future challenges, needs and visions for the Nordic vocational and apprenticeship system
The report, *Rekrytering, genomströmning och relevans – En studie av yrkes- och lärlingsutbildningssystemen i Norden (Recruitment, throughflow and relevance – A study of vocational and apprenticeship systems in the Nordic region)* produced by the Technopolis Group, Faugert, was published in June 2014. The background of the report is, for example, the Nordic Labour Market meeting in Stockholm on 16 May 2013 and a themed discussion on vocational training in the Council of Ministers for Education and Research in January 2013. The report is the result of a joint project run by the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Education & Research and the Committee of Senior Officials for Labour.

The report identifies barriers to successful transition between education and working life, and reviews the prospective challenges, needs and visions that characterise vocational and apprenticeship educational systems in the Nordic countries, with particular emphasis on links to

working life. The report was presented to the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Education & Research in autumn 2014, and the issues raised in the report were partly followed up through the project, *Learning at the workplace*. The report was also presented at the meeting of the Nordic Council of Ministers for Labour in Reykjavik in May 2014, which was held in conjunction with the conference to mark the 60th anniversary of a common Nordic labour market.

Nordic knowledge bank on school dropout

The Nordic knowledge bank on school dropout is a Nordic web portal aimed at sharing and disseminating relevant knowledge about effective preventive measures and other methods that help more young people complete their education. The knowledge bank was launched in autumn 2013 at the address www.kunnskapsbanken.org, and is continually presented at various events in the Nordic countries. The work is led by the Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues.

The project publishes current news, reports and good examples of initiatives and projects to prevent dropout, and participates in a number of events throughout the Nordic region to disseminate results. A collaboration has also been set up with a number of key players in the different countries to increase awareness of the knowledge bank beyond relevant target groups.

In 2015, the knowledge bank was evaluated, and a decision will be made about its future.

Mobility and recognition of professional qualifications in the Nordic region

In order to increase mobility and reduce border obstacles, continual work is needed to simplify procedures for recognition of educational qualifications and expertise. This was also the background to a review of the Nordic countries' procedures and requirements regarding approval of Nordic applicants to regulated professions, which in 2014 resulted in the report *Regulated Vocational and Welfare Professions in the Nordic Region*.

The work is being discussed in the education, health, labour market and business sectors, and

in the recently formed Labour Mobility Council, which is working to ensure freedom of movement in the Nordic region. Activities at Nordic level are coordinated with national work on implementing the EU's revised directive on recognition of professional qualifications. The Nordic Council of Ministers arranges regular meetings with national coordinators for the directive, in order to share knowledge about implementing the directive and to support labour market mobility in the Nordic region.

The Danish presidency in 2015 will appoint a working group to look more closely at the possibilities for greater Nordic collaboration with regard to professional education programmes in the welfare area. The group will, for example, look at the opportunities for collaboration to support general mobility with regard to studies, both in education and in practice, increased knowledge support, i.e. teacher exchanges, and greater integration of education, for example by offering joint Nordic options.

Entrepreneurship in education

The future competitiveness and welfare of the Nordic region partly depends on the ability of the labour force to be innovative, spot opportunities, and convert ideas into solutions. The Nordic educational systems must stimulate the ability of pupils and students to work creatively and flexibly, take initiative, and develop innovative solutions to society's problems.

One objective of the project is to disseminate the Nordic entrepreneurial culture in schools, and to motivate primary schools to engage in and practice entrepreneurial teaching. The aim is that young people will be better prepared for the future labour market, and that they can contribute to innovations and future welfare solutions.

At a conference in November 2013 on entrepreneurship in schools, the magazine *Når jeg bliver stor ... (When I Grow Up ...)* was launched. The magazine contains examples of how schools in the Nordic region, in a contemporary and tangible way, work with entrepreneurship in schools. The magazine has been distributed to schools to provide inspira-

In spring 2014, key players in the countries further discussed wants and needs that can strengthen entrepreneurship in primary schools and in teacher training programmes in the Nordic region. This took the form of two workshops, *Entreprenørskab i grundskolen – en ny lærerrolle (Entrepreneurship in Primary Schools – a new role for teachers)*, which were held in Helsinki and Copenhagen. Participants included a broad cross-section of representatives for teacher training educational programmes, professional associations in the school area, and municipalities and ministries in the Nordic countries.

The input from the workshop has moved the project into its third phase, under the leadership of the *Danish Foundation for Enterprise – Young Enterprise*. In recent years, the foundation has served as a knowledge centre for entrepreneurship in teaching in Denmark. The objective of the third phase is to spread and demonstrate a Nordic entrepreneurial culture, and support the implementation of entrepreneurship in primary schools, by compiling and clarifying national expertise goals for entrepreneurship.

Social entrepreneurship

The objective of the project on social entrepreneurship, led by the Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, is to increase knowledge of initiatives in the Nordic region to promote social entrepreneurship and social innovation, in order to increase inclusion of vulnerable groups in the labour market and in society. In autumn 2014, the group completed a report with recommendations for further Nordic measures in the area. The Committee of Senior Officials for Health and Social Affairs decided that the group would continue its work by arranging a Nordic conference in 2015 on knowledge sharing and a common understanding of social entrepreneurship concepts.

The group also recommended an evaluation of the need to develop social innovation and socio-economic businesses as themes in vocational training, and this will be followed up in the third phase of the above project on entrepreneurship in education.

Analysis of the Nordic welfare model

A number of leading Nordic national economists worked on the report *The Nordic model – challenged but capable of reform*, which was coordinated by ETLA, the Research Institute of the Finnish Economy. The report examines the Nordic welfare model in terms of earlier and current performance, future challenges and possible solutions. A short, “popular version” of the report has been produced called *Does the Nordic Model Need to Change?*

The analysis was presented in conjunction with the Anniversary Conference of the Nordic Ministers for Labour in Iceland in May 2014, and at a number of other conferences. The analyses and recommendations in the report have been discussed by many committees of senior officials from different sectors. A video, presenting the main conclusions of the report, has also been produced.

Nordic Master’s degrees in the field of welfare

In spring 2015, there will be a call for proposals for four new Nordic Master’s programmes. Welfare is earmarked as a theme on one of them, and this will be funded through the Nordic Sustainable Welfare programme.

The Nordic Master’s programmes are conducted in English, and comprise at least 120 ECTS points. The programmes are very diverse, and the 21 joint Nordic Master’s degrees have so far been spread out over a number of different fields, from marine and engineering studies to studies in glass blowing and cultural leadership. Almost 40% of students on the programmes have been recruited from non-Nordic countries, so the Nordic Master’s programmes are helping to show and profile Nordic educational programmes internationally, while also strengthening Nordic collaboration between universities.

A minimum of three Nordic universities and/or university colleges can jointly apply for funding of up to DKK 1.5 million from the Nordic Council of Ministers to start a Nordic Master’s programme. Each programme must have one university that acts as coordinator, and at least two others as

partners. More information about the call for proposals can be found at www.nordicmaster.org.

Research collaboration in the welfare professions
The objective of this project, started in 2014 and led by NordForsk, is to help increase knowledge and exchange experience in research relating to welfare professions, and to give good examples of how new knowledge is transferred from research to education and implemented in practice.

Three analyses, carried out by DAMVAD and Faugert & Co., are under way, and their results will be discussed at a seminar in spring 2015. The results of the project will be presented in autumn 2015.

Status: Focus Area 2. Research for welfare

Measures and activities in Focus Area 2 will help to:

- promote research and development of knowledge and models that can contribute to welfare for everyone

Responsibility: The Ministers for Health and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministers for Education and Research

The following results have been attained within the programme for *Focus Area 2, Research for welfare*

Research on social inequality in health and welfare
The Nordic Council of Ministers is funding Nordic research on social inequalities in health and welfare. The research is examining the underlying causes of the unequal distribution of health and welfare in today's Nordic societies in terms of the intersecting points between gender, social class, ethnicity, regional differences, etc.

The Nordic Council of Ministers has allocated funding to a call for applications for research funding that will be administered by NordForsk. The call took place in summer 2014 within the framework of NordForsk's five-year research programme on health and welfare, Part 1, Distribution of Health and Prosperity, with a total budget of approximately NOK 140 million. The aim of the project is to intensify and strengthen Nordic research collaboration on socioeconomic differences in health and welfare. The research findings will form the basis of practical measures that can help to reduce these differences and thereby help to improve health and welfare in the Nordic region.

The call for proposals in spring 2014 resulted in 86 applications, which, after a scientific review by an international panel of experts, were submitted to

the NordForsk board for a decision in March 2015. The following projects were chosen. They are expected to start in summer 2015 and will run for five years:

- *Coming of Age in Exile (CAGE) – Health and Socio-Economic Inequities in Young Refugees in the Nordic Welfare Societies*. Project Manager: Allan Krasnik, Denmark.
- *Working hours, health, well-being and participation into working life*. Project Manager: Mikko Härmä, Finland.
- *Understanding the link between air pollution and distribution of related health impacts and welfare in the Nordic countries*. Project Manager: Jørgen Brandt, Denmark.
- *Psychosocial work environment and healthy ageing*. Project Manager: Mika Kivimäki, Finland.
- *Social inequalities in Ageing (SIA); health, care and institutional reforms in the Nordic welfare model*. Project Manager: Johan Fritzell, Sweden.

Report on the future Nordic co-operation on health (the Könberg Report)

Together with the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers, Dagfinn Høybråten, the Nordic Ministers for Health and Social Affairs initiated a study in 2013 of how the Nordic co-operation on health can be developed and strengthened in the next 5–10 years. The work resulted in the short report, *The Future Nordic Co-operation on Health*, which gave a total of 14 recommendations and tangible proposals for solutions. The report was presented to the Icelandic Minister for Health on 11 June 2014.

The Council of Ministers for Health and Social Affairs discussed the report in 2014 and decided to continue working on five of the recommendations: highly specialised treatments (Proposal 2), rare diagnoses (Proposal 3), psychiatry (proposal 10), health preparedness (proposal 11) and professional development of officials (proposal 13).

The Council of Ministers for Health and Social Affairs also decided to discuss the proposal about resistance to antibiotics (Proposal 1) with their ministerial colleagues responsible for foreign affairs and development.

During the Danish presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2015, the Council of Ministers for Health and Social Affairs will continue discussing the other recommendations in the report, with particular focus on the recommendation to combat the rising antibiotic resistance, and recommendations that encourage closer Nordic collaboration on public health.

Models for how to recruit and retain employees in the health sector

As part of the project on recruitment and retention of employees in the care and health sector, a review of the Nordic countries' work on recruiting and retaining staff in health services was carried out. The aim of the review was to examine the possibilities for, and build, a platform for Nordic collaboration in the area. The review, *Recruitment and Retention of Health Care Professionals in the Nordic Countries: A Cross-national Analysis*, concludes by pointing out that the similarity in the organisation of the health and care sector is a good starting point for developing joint measures and initiatives across the Nordic countries. Furthermore, similarities in challenges and choice of strategies in the area indicate that such a collaboration could generate benefits.

The report proposes, for example, that Nordic collaboration should focus on the professional transformation that is taking place in the four largest Nordic countries, including a paradigm shift from care to coping and help to self-help (e.g. welfare technology, everyday rehabilitation), and an examination of the possibilities inherent in task shifting and inter-profession collaboration.

Consequently, the Committee of Senior Officials for Health and Social Affairs has set up a Nordic forum for professional development of care and health services, comprising representatives from the national ministries. The forum will promote the development of knowledge and information about Nordic strategies and those in other countries, as well as practical, effective measures. The first meeting of the forum will be held in autumn 2015.

Nordic Welfare Watch

The project, started in 2014 as part of the Icelandic presidency programme, aims to develop knowledge that promotes the sustainability of the Nordic welfare systems in relation to future challenges, with particular emphasis on crisis situations.

The project comprises three sub-projects:

- *Nordic Welfare Watch – preparedness for crisis events*: Study of how the Nordic welfare systems are prepared for potential crises, including the role of the social service system in relation to crises in society, and a study of whether an affiliate like the Icelandic Welfare Watch may be suitable for use in the Nordic region.
- *Crises and welfare – lessons learned for the future*: Joint Nordic research into the consequences for welfare in the light of financial crises from the 20th century up until today.
- *Nordic welfare indicators*: Development of welfare indicators that can be used to identify new and future welfare needs in the population, including those connected to crisis management.

The project began in 2014 and will be completed in 2016. Nordic expert groups have been set up for all three sub-projects. For sub-project 1, a report will be presented in spring 2015 that will include an evaluation of Icelandic Welfare Watch, and an analysis of future challenges for the Nordic welfare systems will be completed in autumn 2015. For sub-project 2, work has started on setting up a databank, which is expected to be completed during 2015. For sub-project 3, good links to associated established Nordic collaboration in the area is ensured, for example by including NOSOSKO and NOMESCO in the work.

Status: Focus Area 3. Infrastructure for welfare

Measures and activities in Focus Area 3 will help to:

- develop and secure the quality in the health care sector

Responsibility: The Ministers for Health and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministers for Education and Research.

The following results have been attained within the programme for *Focus Area 3, Infrastructure for welfare*

Nordic co-operation on biobanks, health registers and social registers

The overall objective of the project is to strengthen Nordic co-operation in research relating to registers, biobanks, and interventions, through improved access to Nordic data sources for research. In order to attain this, existing obstacles that make it difficult to share research data across national borders must be overcome. These obstacles may be ethical, legal, technical or organisational.

The target group of the project is the Nordic research community, with the aim of facilitating use of existing data sources. The project, which is led by NordForsk, involves several national and Nordic key players, including the national research councils, ethical review committees, central statistical agencies, and data protection authorities. A number of Nordic stakeholders are also involved: Nordic Infrastructure Collaboration (NeIC), Nordic Committee on Bioethics, and existing Nordic infrastructure networks (e.g. Nordic Trial Alliance, Nordic Biobank Network).

The project will follow up on the practical recommendations given by the NordForsk advisory group *NORIA-net Register* in December 2014 in the report

Joint Nordic Biobanks and Registers – a goldmine for Nordic health and welfare research, and the action points put forward in the session on health and welfare at the conference *Joint Nordic Focus on Research Infrastructures – Looking to the Future*, held in November 2013.

The following is a status update on these recommendations:

- *Set up a cooperative platform for the Nordic statistical agencies, national health registry institutes and other registry-hosting bodies in order to strengthen joint Nordic research.*
Status: Dialogue has been started with the Nordic statistical agencies about the possibilities to facilitate a Nordic cooperative platform and, in spring 2015, the NordForsk board will consider a joint application from the statistical agencies on this matter.
- *In collaboration with the Nordic Council of Ministers, investigate possibilities for attaining mutual recognition of ethical review approvals between the Nordic countries, and discuss models for informed consent.*
- *Monitor possibilities for Nordic cooperation that can arise during the ongoing revision of European legislation on data protection, clinical trials and copyright legislation. If necessary, and after consultation with the Nordic Council of Ministers, implement measures.*
Status: A lawyer has been commissioned to monitor whether the work on impending European data protection legislation may influence Nordic register-based research. In addition, an analysis will be performed on the possibilities for Nordic collaboration arising from the impending European regulatory framework for clinical research, and whether this affects Nordic intervention research. At the Nordic Trial Alliance annual meeting in January 2015, a decision was made to follow up these

issues (see also the report on the project *Nordic Collaboration on Clinical Studies* below).

- *Support the development of technical solutions for secure data management, e.g. through the Nordic e-Infrastructure Collaboration (NeIC).*
Status: In the NeIC project *Tryggve*, work is ongoing to develop secure technical solutions for secure access to confidential data. The technical solution that has been emphasised for the Nordic project is one originating from a project at the University of Oslo. This solution is also the main option for the Swedish national research infrastructure for confidential data that will now be built up.
- *In collaboration with the Nordic Council of Ministers, investigate possibilities for creating solutions similar to the Danish system for health data in other Nordic countries.*
Status: Within the framework of NordForsk's Nordic Programme on Health and Welfare, NOK 30 million has been allocated to setting up a Nordic register. This pilot call is aimed at combining health and social data from at least three Nordic countries to create a joint Nordic research resource. Another aim is to monitor existing barriers to Nordic register-based research, and to develop solutions for how to overcome these in practice.
- *Call for proposals for funding for research pilots and training programmes to support Nordic register-based research within the NordForsk programme for health and welfare.*
Status: Within the framework of the Nordic e-Science programme, a Nordic Centre of Excellence has been set up, with the aim of developing database tools to improve monitoring and analysis of biobank samples. NOK 40 million has been allocated to this work over five years, and the Centre will promote the use of data from health registers, biobanks and social registers in research.

Nordic co-operation on clinical studies

The number of clinical studies, i.e. investigation of the effect of a pharmaceutical or a treatment method, has decreased dramatically in the Nordic region over the past thirty years. The Nordic Council of Ministers, via NordForsk, is working to simplify the processes for implementing clinical studies across the Nordic countries, with the aim of increasing the number of clinical studies in the Nordic region. Clinical studies are an important

component in introducing new methods and treatments for patients.

The pilot project, Nordic Trial Alliance (NTA), aims to increase Nordic co-operation in, for example, testing of new treatment methods and drugs, in order to promote quality, patient safety, and health.

NTA's target groups are researchers in academia and industry, university hospitals and general health care services, patients, small and medium-sized companies, the global pharmaceutical industry and the medical technology industry.

The NTA board comprises representatives of the Nordic research councils, the pharmaceutical industry, patient associations, and public agencies, and NordForsk's assessment is that NTA has made a powerful impact in its broad interest groups through its annual stakeholder meetings. The first stakeholder meeting was held in January 2013 with nearly 100 participants. At the meeting, the overall objective for NTA was identified, as well as an immediate need to strengthen the Nordic collaboration in a number of areas linked to clinical research.

As a direct follow-up of this, there was a call for NTA funding for networks to strengthen the Nordic collaboration. These networks will try to promote Nordic collaboration in 1) research ethics, 2) academia-industry collaboration, 3) monitoring of clinical studies, 4) registration of clinical studies, and 5) paediatrics.

The second stakeholder meeting was held in January 2014, with the theme *Towards a Common Nordic Research Area*. The meeting commissioned NTA to develop questions relating to a joint Nordic research arena.

NTA has also set up a database that can show ongoing Nordic studies, which will make recruitment of patients easier. The database can be accessed via www.nta.nordforsk.org.

In July 2014, as part of the NTA pilot project, the NordForsk board awarded funding to five research projects that promote Nordic clinical studies. The selected projects were allocated a total of NOK 16 million.

Nordic co-operation on highly specialised treatments

Within health care today, there are highly specialised functions where, because of their rarity, complexity, and/or shortage of resources, it can be hard to maintain expertise, experience, routine and technology. Co-operation on highly specialised treatments, which is led by the Norwegian Directorate of Health, will develop and describe models for Nordic co-operation. The models are developed through specified pilot studies in three areas: Nordic quality registers, common Nordic guidelines/processes for diagnostics and treatment in specific professional areas, and organisation and structuring of the professional co-operation for skills development, promotion of treatment quality, and patient safety.

Within the framework of the project on highly specialised treatments, seven pilot projects have been initiated:

- *A Nordic quality register for spinal cord injuries* (led by St. Olav's Hospital, Trondheim, Norway).
Status: The result of the project is that a Nordic quality register is being set up for spinal cord injuries, which is expected to be ready for use at the end of 2015. In connection with the pilot project, the data technology and legal conditions that must be considered when setting up a joint Nordic quality register have been identified. This identification is of a general nature, and will be useful in connection with setting up other quality registers relating to highly specialised treatment.
- *A Nordic database for arthroplasty in wrist and ankle joints* (led by Haukeland University Hospital, Bergen, Norway).
Status: A Nordic conference has been held, to which institutions carrying out arthroplasty in shoulders, elbows, and wrist and ankle joints were invited. Consensus was reached on a common dataset for shoulder and elbow prostheses and, assuming sufficient participation, a corresponding dataset will be set up for ankles and wrists. The end product will be Nordic databases into which each country enters its accumulated data. This will provide a much better basis for evaluating quality in treatment.
- *Professional development in paediatric surgery* (led by Odense University Hospital, Denmark).

Status: The aim is to share and develop skills in the area. A large Nordic conference was held, attended by 28 treatment units. At the conference, possible collaboration arenas for developing skills in specific paediatric surgery treatments were discussed. Industry experts gathered to set up a retrospective study of surgical treatment of long gap oesophageal atresia.

- *Joint training of specialists in pre-natal medicine* (led by Rigshospitalet in Copenhagen, Denmark).

Status: The project aims to develop a Nordic training plan for specialists in this field, and this requires collaboration between the treatment units in the countries that conduct this type of treatment. The project will set up a Nordic platform for training of foetal medical specialists. Through this platform, joint systematic training will take place of younger doctors in this highly specialised form of treatment. The training measures will be implemented in 2015/2016.

- *Guidelines for treatment of retinoblastoma (cancer in the eye that is often congenital)* (led by St. Erik's Hospital, Stockholm, Sweden)
Status: The pilot project will produce Nordic guidelines for treatment of retinoblastoma. The guidelines are expected to be completed in 2015.
- *Guidelines for surgical corrective treatment of tetraplegia (which involves loss of function in arms, pelvic organs, legs, and the rest of the body, caused by damage to the neck section of the spinal cord)* (led by Haukeland University Hospital, Bergen, Norway).
Status: The aim of the project is to develop Nordic guidelines, and the work will be started in 2015. The project also includes a training project for surgeons in this field.
- *Nordic exchange of skills and experience regarding diagnostics and treatment of transsexual people* (led by Oslo University Hospital, Norway).
Status: The aim of the project is to set up a platform for sharing experiences on diagnostics and treatment between the relevant treatment units in the Nordic countries.

The project will also describe how Nordic co-operation in highly specialised treatments can take place within the frameworks of national

laws and policies, and how an established co-operation can be secured for the future within existing economic and organisational frameworks. These descriptions will be made available for other professional areas that see the need for Nordic co-operation, with the aim of securing professional development, quality and patient safety in their own area.

Welfare technology – CONNECT

In spring 2014, the Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues started a project to increase the implementation capability and skills level of municipalities in relation to welfare technology in order to strengthen the Nordic municipalities' work on welfare technology. By collecting the best examples from Nordic municipalities, the CONNECT project will create a process description and practical tools for the future work on welfare technology. This will be used by those who use welfare technology in their everyday work, and decision-makers at municipal and national levels.

In addition to the ten municipalities from the Nordic countries that have been selected to participate in the project, collaboration has also

been started with a total of eight central national authorities in the area. The following is a list of participants in the project:

- *Denmark:* Local Government Denmark (KL), Centre for Welfare Technology, Odense municipality, Aarhus municipality.
- *Sweden:* Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL), Swedish Agency for Participation, City of Västerås, City of Gothenburg.
- *Norway:* Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS), Norwegian Directorate of Health, the Lister region, Lindås municipality.
- *Finland:* National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), Oulu municipality, South Karelia.
- *Iceland:* Ministry of Welfare, Reykjavik municipality, Akureyri municipality.

Another aim of the project is to help develop a joint market for welfare technology products, involving, for example, a collaboration with Nordic Innovation.

Read more about the programme, the individual projects, and the reports mentioned in this text at www.norden.org/welfare.

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Status report for the Nordic Prime Ministers Summer Meeting 22–23 June 2015

The Sustainable Nordic Welfare programme implements the Nordic Prime Ministers' request that the Nordic Ministers for Health and Social Affairs prepare tangible proposals for how Nordic co-operation on health matters can be developed. At the Nordic Prime Ministers Meeting on 10 June 2012, the health ministers were asked to review, in particular, the Nordic co-operation on testing of new drugs and treatments, highly specialised functions, and research on health and welfare.

The Sustainable Nordic Welfare programme runs from 2013–2015. In addition to developing and specifying the Nordic co-operation on health, the programme also involves practical initiatives in the education and labour market areas. The two councils of ministers with main responsibility are the Council of Ministers for Education and Research (MR-U) and the Council of Ministers for Health and Social Affairs (MR-S).

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– a programme for
new welfare solutions
for people in the
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