

# The Nordic Region: A Green Climate Leader

Programme for the Finnish Presidency  
of the Nordic Council of Ministers 2011







## **The Nordic Region: A Green Climate Leader**

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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 three autonomous areas: 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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## Introduction

The Nordic countries have, by working actively together, demonstrated their ability to face up to and cope with a range of challenges. Nordic co-operation is down to earth, pragmatic and dynamic.

Finland will make “Coping with Climate Change” the main theme of the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2011. This is an important theme at both national and international level. Attention will be paid to every form of climate work in all sectors, and to promoting and reinforcing the leading role played by the Nordic countries in these endeavours.

Instead of launching brand-new programmes, the Presidency will support and promote ongoing climate work.

Regional structures and partnerships have proven their worth, in terms of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, in an ever-more globalised world characterised by increasing interaction. Nordic co-operation once again finds itself the focus of international attention as a positive role model, which enhances the Region’s ability to promote peace and stability. In terms of globalisation work, the Finnish Presidency will concentrate on Nordic exports of every kind – from scientific knowledge to structures for co-operation. The Finnish Institute of International Affairs’ extensive research project on the international position and future role of the Nordic countries (“The Nordic Region 2020”) will be published in summer 2011.

Northern Europe, which has the Baltic Sea Region at its centre and includes the northern waters, is stable from a defence and security point of view – a stability furthered by ever-closer Nordic co-operation on foreign and defence policy and by the enlargement of the EU and NATO. The potential also exists for the Nordic countries to form pragmatic partnerships within military crisis management and to build up the EU’s Nordic Battlegroup. Together, we can develop cost-effective co-operation and increase our overall capacity, e.g. by the national ministries of foreign affairs working more closely together.

Finland supports and promotes the reform of the Nordic Council of Ministers' working methods and structures based on the evaluation conducted in 2008. Reforms designed to improve and streamline co-operation across borders will continue. Finland will also seek to endow debates in the Council of Ministers with greater political weight.

The first part of the programme for the Presidency highlights Finland's priorities. The second part consists of sector-specific programmes and objectives.

An integral part of the programme consists of high-level events, seminars and discussions designed to raise the visibility of all things Nordic as well as the programme's priorities. These events kick off with a multi-sectoral conference for the Baltic Sea Region in Turku (January–February 2011), at which solutions will be presented for sustainable development at regional and local level.

The programme was drawn up in collaboration with the Government of Åland.



MARI KIVINIEMI  
Prime Minister

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mari Kiviniemi'.



JAN VAPAAVUORI  
Minister for Nordic Co-operation

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jan Vapaavuori'.



## Climate

### *Leading the way on climate issues*

The Nordic countries lead the way on climate issues. They combine excellence in climate-friendly solutions with a strong political will to stand on the frontline when it comes to confronting climate change. Our ability to cope with and counteract climate change is critical, and calls for specific, targeted measures on all levels – local, regional, national and global. This must serve as a guiding principle for all Nordic initiatives.

We must, as a region, face up to the challenges of climate change in a pragmatic and result-oriented way. By working together, we will achieve better results and generate significant synergies. The Nordic countries already have the solid organisational base, strong multi-sectoral administrative networks and broad expertise necessary for this purpose. During international climate negotiations, the Nordic countries are able to draw on this expertise to present and clarify questions of crucial importance. Nordic climate expertise is highly valued and commands attention.

Coping with climate change is the main theme of the Presidency. All of the Nordic countries have their own ambitious plans for climate and energy policy. Co-ordination and progress toward Nordic goals will reinforce the impact of those national plans and lead to better results.

The Presidency supports the following approaches to climate issues:

- Multi-sectoral activities
- Innovative interaction
- Partnerships with indigenous peoples.

Climate change has a particularly strong impact in the Region's peripheral areas. Coping with climate change and promoting sustainable development are particularly important in the Arctic. The Region also assumes a degree of climate responsibility in the developing world – the Nordic Development Fund's activities are specifically directed towards funding climate projects.

### *Business involvement*

Sustainable economic development is only possible if due respect is paid to environmental values and due consideration taken of the social impact. Patterns of consumption and production methods exert a significant influence on both the environment and our competitiveness.

The Presidency will seek solutions that:

- integrate the environmental perspective more closely into business decisions
- improve standards of living while cutting emissions.

Green business is growing and the Nordic countries are at the forefront. An increasingly globalised economy needs new green products and low-carbon business ideas. The Presidency will promote the Globalisation Forum's vision of the Nordic Region as the "Green Valley of Europe" and encourage the business community to foster innovative companies that are capable of bringing clean Nordic technologies to the global market.

Nordic climate work is based on the programme for co-operation on environmental and energy policy. The long-term goal is to promote an efficient, competitive, safe and flexible energy supply, and a climate-friendly construction industry. Social and town planning have a role to play by taking into consideration the environmental impact of construction, housing and traffic. The primary industries must improve energy efficiency, develop sustainable forestry and devise methods to ensure a sustainable global food chain. By combining Nordic expertise, we can promote energy-efficient, low-carbon solutions and innovations.

Sustainable economic growth presupposes bold changes and innovation in economic structures. The Nordic countries need to develop brand-new, environmentally friendly technical solutions and working methods. As a result of information technology, traditional approaches, structures and services are being transferred to digital media, which improves eco-efficiency. As well as developing technology, the Region should seek to influence the scale and quality of consumption and learn from user experiences.

It is important that climate initiatives take the social dimension of sustainable development into account. Solutions must address the ever-changing nature of conditions as well as current social challenges. They must also be discussed with business. The transition to a low-carbon economy will not only affect the way in which companies and the labour market are organ-

ised, it will also impact upon the overall behaviour of the markets. The effects of climate change on employment need to be mapped out and analysed so that we can quantify the future demand for manpower and skills.

#### *A sustainable region: Local and regional solutions*

The Nordic Strategy for Sustainable Development 2008 is based on economic growth, good public health and a safe, dynamic working environment. These criteria support and complement each other.

The Nordic countries are international leaders in local involvement and grassroots implementation of sustainable development programmes. Ordinary people have also been enticed and encouraged to plan and implement local initiatives.

The Presidency will encourage co-operation between states, cities, regions, companies and organisations, as well as efforts to develop greater sustainability in the Nordic Region and in the Baltic Sea Region.

The starting signal for this work will be the major conference on sustainable development in Turku in late January/early February. Solutions for sustainable development for all of the countries in the Nordic Region and the Baltic Sea Region will be presented at the conference, and various stakeholders will be given the support they need to change their behaviour, services and products in order to become more sustainable in the longer term.

Deploying and sharing best business practices and solutions:

- promotes co-operation and entrepreneurship
- leads to new partnerships and socio-cultural models
- improves sustainable development throughout the Region.



## Globalisation

The Nordic Council of Ministers' globalisation work commenced under a previous Finnish Presidency in 2007. The prime ministers' commitment to globalisation work has raised the profile of these endeavours and encouraged closer collaboration between different councils of ministers.

Practical, real-world projects are the cornerstone of Nordic globalisation work – projects that promote economic competitiveness and meet the challenges faced by the Nordic welfare model. Finland will continue work on projects that have already been approved and try to raise their profile. Instead of launching new projects, the focus will be on promoting ones that have already started and ensuring that they are successful.

The themes for these projects are:

- the climate, the environment and energy
- research, innovation, education and training
- freedom of movement
- a more visible profile for the leading role played by the Nordic Region.

The annual Globalisation Forum, which has been held since 2008, will be held again in 2011. The prime ministers will chair discussions on the joint challenges we all face. The other participants will include representatives of business, research, politics, the media and a range of organisations. Finland supports the efforts of the Working Group for Green Growth set up by the prime ministers at the 2010 Globalisation Forum. Its remit is to map out Nordic positions of strength and report back to the Forum in 2011.

Current globalisation projects address a wide range of environmental issues that are crucial to our wellbeing. They include limiting the use of chemicals that are hazardous to health and the environment; developing a Nordic policy on chemicals, products and waste; highlighting the life-cycle perspective; promoting non-hazardous products; encouraging material- and energy efficiency and the durability and reparability of products.

### *Based on research and innovation*

The Nordic Top-level Research Initiative (TRI) is the biggest-ever Nordic investment in research and innovation. Bringing together the best of climate, energy and environment research and innovation, TRI lays the foundations for closer international co-operation. The first stage focuses on the climate, energy and the environment, while the second will also cover health and welfare.

The research community needs access to the best possible tools and frameworks in order to generate new, top-level research and expertise. Advanced information- and communications technology provides opportunities, e.g. by building networks and distributing information and resources effectively, to conduct transparent research that uses effective methods and appropriate source material and makes the results accessible to all. eScience, which deploys the very latest information technology, data-collection methods and tools, opens new doors for scientific thinking. These developments also expand scientific horizons and promote interdisciplinary research.

Our competitiveness depends upon:

- co-operation between research groups and closer co-ordination of Nordic resources
- willingness to use and administer exponentially growing data streams
- the use of highly efficient calculating systems for modelling and simulations.

#### *The quality of education and training and the need for lifelong learning*

The knowledge society and innovation-based economic growth both require the development of knowledge resources throughout society. By training whole generations and continually developing the quality of education, we will:

- improve opportunities for living a good life
- create jobs
- improve economic competitiveness
- improve welfare services.

The development of Nordic exchange programmes, co-operation projects and networks will improve the quality of education and training, and enhance the Region's role in global education and research partnerships.

The requirements placed on competences in the labour market are changing rapidly. Demanding jobs that require a high level of vocational expertise and social competence are becoming more common. Marginalisation and exclusion from the labour market are damaging both for the individual and for the economy as a whole. Nordic exchange programmes would help to counteract these phenomena.

Structural changes and an ageing population both necessitate lifelong learning – it is essential that knowledge and skills are constantly added to and improved. Equal educational opportunities and guaranteed access to lifelong learning are Nordic values that have great social and economic significance.

### *Challenges facing the Nordic model*

One of the basic pillars of the Nordic welfare model and of our competitiveness is equal participation and influence for all. Targeted and consistent political measures can also mitigate the effects of globalisation.

Widespread participation by ordinary people and a commitment to achieve joint Nordic objectives are of key importance to the future of our welfare model.

High levels of employment and an adequate supply of labour are basic pre-conditions for economic equality and human wellbeing. An ageing population, climate change and financial crises affect production structures and the demands placed upon knowledge and expertise. As far as the labour market is concerned, it is important to support the ability of individuals and employees to adapt during periods of transition and upheaval. Highlighting examples of best practice will help create jobs, increase productivity and improve working conditions. One example of the benefits expected from Nordic co-operation on globalisation is the emergence of new “green” jobs.

An ageing population will require significant reforms if we are to maintain and adequately fund the welfare state. The key question is how to get people to work longer, and any successful answer will involve greater social participation, successful health-promotion initiatives and better working conditions.

Men and women enjoy equal rights on the Nordic labour market, which facilitates a high level of employment. Gender equality means that society is, to an increasing extent, underpinned by and benefits from the competences of both genders. A gender gap does still exist, however, and responsibility for childcare is also distributed unevenly between parents.

In every area of Nordic co-operation – but particularly globalisation initiatives – it is important to continue progress towards true equality. Another Nordic goal is equality between different social groups and people with different cultural backgrounds.

Freedom of choice, workforce mobility and entrepreneurship need to be strengthened further. Working in a different country – as well as other forms of mobility – is still problematic due to the different systems for social security, taxation and qualifications. The national authorities must work together to remove these obstacles to cross-border mobility.

## Grassroots

Nordic co-operation is based on a tradition of widespread participation at grassroots level. The Finnish Presidency wishes to improve the practical conditions for grassroots involvement and activate various different groups of the population. It is important that the effects of co-operation are also felt in the adjacent areas and neighbouring countries.

### **A Region for its citizens**

#### *Involving young people*

If co-operation is to continue to flourish in future, it is important to reinforce young people's sense of Nordic identity and improve their understanding of the Nordic languages.

The Presidency will develop young people's knowledge of:

- the cultural, social and historical links between the countries
- the forms of co-operation
- the importance of language skills.

The Presidency will also address issues related to teaching immigrants in their first language and in the language of the host country.

Young people's language skills and their commitment to co-operation will be boosted by making the most of the current system and its tools, e.g. the Nordjobb exchange programme and Nordplus's development, network and mobility programmes. Promoting mobility and developing mobility programmes will be another priority for the Presidency.

Future challenges of importance to young people include access to education, training and jobs; lifelong learning; and the ability to predict and adapt to trends for supply and demand on the labour market. The Council of Ministers has commissioned a wide-ranging research project to map out the current situation in each of the countries. The results will be presented and an expert seminar held on the subject during the Finnish Presidency.

In early autumn 2010, a climate festival will be held for students of various subjects, who will be invited to address climate and environment issues. As per the main theme of the Presidency, the festival aims to encourage young people to face up to climate change and inspire them to devise new forms of Nordic co-operation.





### *Nordic language skills*

The Nordic languages are the mainstay of co-operation. Language skills are absolutely crucial to strengthening the sense of Nordic identity, the feeling of solidarity and an understanding of our shared history. They also serve as a valuable resource both within the Region and beyond. Knowledge of other languages and cultures also makes people more flexible and better able to understand different cultures and values.

Knowledge and understanding of the Nordic languages is promoted by a series of Nordic and national projects targeting children and young people, e.g. the Svenska NU programme (Swedish Now). The programme for the Finnish Presidency includes a seminar on promoting mobility and the Nordic languages. The seminar forms part of the planning process for the next period of the Nordplus programme.

### *Freedom of movement*

Removing obstacles to cross-border mobility is a basic prerequisite for freedom of movement for people and companies. The Freedom of Movement Forum, chaired by the former Finnish defence minister and diplomat Ole Norrback, has had its mandate extended by three years to cover the period 2011–2013. The Forum has identified and proposed solutions to several obstacles to freedom of movement, but a great deal of work still remains to be done. As well as identifying existing obstacles, the aim is to improve co-ordination between the countries so that new ones do not arise as a result of national or EU legislation.

The Nordic governments support closer co-operation between official bodies to make it easier to commute to work and study in another country. Trading between countries and in the border regions also needs to be further simplified and developed, so that it is easier to work or run a business in another country. Obstacles to cross-border trade for small and medium-size companies, particularly tax, business and social security regulations, also need to be removed. This work can draw upon the experiences of the advisory service Hello Norden.

It is natural and important that particular attention is also paid to obstacles to freedom of movement in border regions. Many of the border committees, which have traditionally been supported by the Council of Ministers, address issues related to cross-border mobility. Finland will highlight the work done by organisations involved in cross-border partnerships and co-ordinate it with other initiatives to promote freedom of movement. Hello Norden's activities will be made more efficient by establishing a contact point in Mariehamn in early 2011.

### *The new challenges facing cultural co-operation*

Nordic cultural co-operation has served as a model in various international contexts. It is solidly anchored in values shared by all of the countries – democracy, equality, openness and diversity – as well as a broad understanding of the importance of culture.

The Nordic countries consider culture a resource. Cultural consumption is already at a high level in the Region, and directing consumption away from material goods and towards cultural experience will provide a further boost to sustainable and environmentally friendly development.

Mobility within the Region and beyond also strengthens the position of the creative industries. The Nordic Region aims to profile itself as a centre for creative industries, which can only be done if the culture and business sectors work closely together. Within the framework for cultural co-operation, the Nordic countries have developed projects that meet the challenges of globalisation and promote the creative economy.

To further raise the profile of culture, it is important to build upon Nordic knowledge of cultural activities, cultural entrepreneurship and the cultural economy. National art and cultural institutions can learn from each other and work together in global arenas. Cultural co-operation has also been structured in a way that takes into account the needs of the peripheral areas. Throughout the Region, cultural co-operation is being rejuvenated to meet the requirements of a continually changing world.

The Nordic network of local authorities has provided local decision-makers with an opportunity to access and exchange information. Different types of local government reform in the individual countries have cut some of these ties, but other opportunities and structures for co-operation have emerged. To encourage new ties, the Presidency will commission a survey of co-operation between local authorities.

The Nordic associations also engage in cross-border activities. Their main focus varies from country to country, but they all play an important role in informing the general public about Nordic activities.





## **The adjacent areas and waters**

*North-West Russia, the Arctic, the West Nordic Region, the Nordic Dimension and regional bodies*

The Nordic Council of Ministers' guidelines for co-operation with North-West Russia, and the funds for it, cover the period 2009–2013.

The guidelines cover:

- research, innovation, education and training, including the creative economy
- the climate, the environment and energy
- developing economic co-operation
- anti-corruption measures
- Northern Dimension partnerships
- promoting democracy and supporting civic society.

The Council of Ministers co-operates with regional and local authorities, organisations and universities, and runs offices in St Petersburg and Kaliningrad, which are responsible for Nordic projects in the area.

The Council of Ministers' co-operation with North-West Russia complements its work with other regional organisations, e.g. the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Council of the Baltic Sea States. Finland will continue the work of developing closer co-ordination between the various councils.

Arctic co-operation has increased and intensified. The Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Programme 2009–2011 stresses the importance of sustainable development and sets out frameworks for co-operation. Nordic funding has facilitated projects in the Arctic. Finland supports this form of co-operation and interaction between all of the Arctic stakeholders.

The guidelines for co-operation with the Nordic Region's neighbours to the west are scheduled for approval in 2011.

The Nordic Council of Ministers is also an active participant in the EU's Northern Dimension, supporting activities within the various partnerships, in particular the new cultural partnership and the social and health partnership. The traffic and logistics partnership, as well as the environmental partnership, is in the process of drawing up the conditions for working together on the environment, energy and the economy. By working together within the framework of the Northern Dimension partnerships, the Nordic countries are able to exert influence on developments in various sectors in the adjacent areas and beyond.

The Northern Dimension Institute (NDI) is a multidisciplinary university network. The Nordic Council of Ministers will benefit from surveys conducted by NDI on subjects relevant to the northern regions.

#### *Co-operation with the Baltic countries*

The Nordic Region has a long-standing tradition of co-operation with the Baltic countries. The Council of Ministers' guidelines for co-operation with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania cover the period 2009–2013.

The priorities are:

- research, innovation, education and training
- business, clusters and the creative economy
- the climate, the environment and energy
- cross-border challenges facing the welfare state
- cross-border regional co-operation.

The Nordic–Baltic mobility programmes cover the civil service, business and culture. The Council of Ministers' offices in Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius play a central role in realising the aims of the programme and add significant value to co-operation between the Nordic and Baltic countries.

#### *Spotlight on the Baltic*

The Nordic Council of Ministers is helping implement the EU's Baltic Sea Strategy, which focuses on the environmental challenges faced by the Baltic. The Council of Ministers is all set to take charge of three or four flagship projects that have close links to existing Nordic co-operation.

Nordic funding bodies help promote core Nordic objectives in the Baltic Sea Region and North-West Russia. It is important to identify projects that will generate real added value. Projects are also the mainstay of the Northern Dimension's partnerships and of the EU's Baltic Sea Strategy.

Nordic co-operation with the Baltic Sea Region is based on well-established structures such as:

- the Nordic Council of Ministers and its secretariat in Copenhagen
- the Nordic Council of Ministers' offices in Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius
- the Nordic Council of Ministers' information offices in St Petersburg and Kaliningrad
- the Nordic funding bodies.

Positive frameworks encourage and intensify co-operation and make the Nordic Council of Ministers an important and valued partner.









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