



"Nordic Partnerships for the Arctic"

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme 2018–2021

1. Introduction

The Nordic Council of Ministers' co-operation programmes outline key policy priorities for the areas concerned for a specific period. The Nordic Council of Ministers' first Arctic co-operation programme was launched in 1996. The programme for 2018–2021 will be the eighth in the series of Arctic Co-operation Programmes. Before the programme took on its current form in 1996, the Council of Ministers pursued its Arctic agenda through a research programme and an environment and nature programme.

The Nordic Council of Ministers has therefore worked on Arctic issues in a consistent and dedicated way since the Rovaniemi Process and the establishment of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) in the early 1990s, throughout the establishment of the Arctic Council in 1996, to the current Arctic agenda. The future agenda for the Arctic no longer focuses exclusively on the environment and nature protection, but also concerns sustainable development as a whole.

This entails, among other things, that the Arctic agenda is also about coping with and adapting to climate change; the overall standards of living of the population, including the indigenous peoples, and improving them; economic development and development of business opportunities; innovation and entrepreneurship as well as education, training and skills enhancement.

The Arctic is a region in development which needs conscious, systematic and continuous co-operation in order to maintain peace, stability, protection, growth and prosperity. It is also a region where development and conservation must go hand in hand. As a result of this, sustainable development has been central to all eight Arctic co-operation programmes since 1996 and remains central to the programme for 2018–2021.

The Nordic Council of Ministers will continue to work to create and contribute to sustainable development in the Arctic with the Arctic co-operation programme for 2018–2021. The strength of the programme is its wide range and the ability to reach out to smaller stakeholders in the Arctic. The programme aims at contributing to policy-making with

its projects and results. Initiatives under the auspices of the programme must fit within this framework.

2. Purpose of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme 2018–2021

The Arctic co-operation programme contributes to the Nordic Council of Ministers' vision of an "innovative, borderless, visible and outward-looking Nordic Region". It must also give substance to the Nordic Council of Ministers' other inter-sectoral strategies,¹ which are based on Nordic positions of strength and areas in which the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers carries weight, both within the Nordic Region and globally, and can generate added value. The work of the Nordic Council of Ministers, including the Arctic Co-operation Programme, has its roots in Nordic rights-based, legal and historical traditions of democracy and inclusion.

It is central to the Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme 2018–2021 that specific needs of the Arctic will be accommodated and that the programme will contribute to the region's sustainable development. In this context, the Agenda 2030 and the 17 global sustainable development goals adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015 play a significant role.

The purpose of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme 2018–2021 is to create sustainable and constructive development in the Arctic and for its people based on the five P's: **planet, peoples, prosperity, peace and partnerships**. Traditionally, the Council of Ministers has prioritised the partnership perspective and worked to integrate it horizontally into the programme. This will continue to be a priority.

3. The objectives of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme 2018–2021

In its general work on sustainability, the Nordic Council of Ministers pursues Agenda 2030, its ²17 sustainable development goals³ and the 169 targets, all of which are relevant from a general Nordic perspective. However, not all of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) can be achieved under the Arctic Co-operation Programme 2018–2021. The priorities outlined below reflect the SDGs on which the Nordic Council of Ministers will focus.

The priorities in the Arctic Co-operation Programme are based on development work in relation to the planet, peoples and prosperity. Particular attention will be paid to implementing this work in partnership.

¹ The inter-sectoral strategies for children and young people, gender equality and sustainable development.

² Reference to the Nordic Council of Ministers' programme for Agenda 2030.

³ <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

4. Priorities for the Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme 2018–2021

4.1. Peoples

The following SDGs are relevant to the Arctic co-operation programme under this heading: SDG #3 (health and wellbeing); SDG #4 (quality education); SDG #5 (gender equality); SDG #11 (sustainable cities); SDG #16 (strong institutions) and SDG #17 (partnerships).

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme 2018–2021 will seek to implement SDGs relevant to the theme of peoples in order to facilitate and strengthen co-operation projects and communication in the following areas:

- Indigenous peoples in the Arctic
- Families' standards of living, especially for children and young people
- Gender equality and gender roles in the Arctic
- Health and social conditions in the Arctic
- Research, education, training and skills enhancement in the Arctic
- International co-operation, co-operation between grassroots organisations and NGOs, and the development of civil society in order to strengthen peaceful, inclusive and democratic societies.

4.2. Planet

The following SDGs are relevant to the Arctic co-operation programme under this heading⁴: SDG #6 (pure water); SDG #7 (sustainable energy); SDG #11 (sustainable cities); SDG #13 (climate action); SDG #14 (life in the sea); SDG #15 (life on land) and SDG #17 (partnerships).

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme 2018–2021 will seek to implement SDGs relevant to the theme of planet in order to facilitate and strengthen co-operation projects and communication in the following areas:

- Innovative solutions for sustainable energy in the Arctic
- Sustainable cities and urban development in the Arctic
- Sustainable exploitation and use of marine resources
- Recognition of the importance of biodiversity and change in the Arctic
- Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, adaptation to climate challenges and resilient communities in the Arctic.

⁴ In some cases, one or more SDGs are relevant in multiple contexts, and are therefore mentioned under various headings and priorities.

4.3. Prosperity

The following SDGs are relevant to the Arctic co-operation programme under this heading: SDG #4 (quality education); SDG #7 (sustainable energy); SDG #8 (decent jobs and economic growth); SDG #9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure); SDG #11 (sustainable cities); SDG #12 (responsible consumption and production) and SDG #17 (partnership).

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme 2018–2021 will seek to implement SDGs relevant to the theme of prosperity in order to facilitate and strengthen co-operation projects and communication in the following areas:

- Innovation and entrepreneurship, including education and training for innovation/entrepreneurship, and start-up environments
- Digitisation
- Development of local business opportunities
- The importance of culture for a sustainable future in the Arctic
- Relevant businesses in the Arctic, including tourism, food culture and food exports.

4.4. Partnerships

The main SDGs relevant to the Arctic co-operation programme under this heading are SDG #16 (strong institutions) and SDG #17 (partnerships). The vision for Nordic co-operation in 2014 is “together we are stronger”. This is an acknowledgement that co-operation can yield results, experiences, solutions and added value that exceed what can be achieved by any single country or entity implementing an initiative or a project on its own. The Nordic Council of Ministers is built on shared Nordic democratic traditions and works on the basis of the principle of “Nordic synergy”, i.e. that co-operation between three or more Nordic countries generates added value that would not otherwise be created.

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme is by definition one that facilitates co-operation and partnerships, and will continue to do so in pursuit of concrete results and solutions to challenges and needs in the Arctic. The programme can, therefore, be used to create networks and establish meeting places in order to promote mobility and exchanges of experience in areas relevant to the Arctic agenda.

5. Organisation of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme 2018–2021

The Nordic Council of Ministers is an international organisation established by the Nordic governments in 1971 and is one of the oldest regional partnerships in the world⁵. The Nordic prime ministers have overall responsibility for the work of the Council of Ministers. There are

⁵ Read more at www.norden.org

eleven ministerial councils that facilitate political discussion and implement co-operation in a number of areas. There is one inter-sectoral ministerial council (the Nordic Ministers for Co-operation (MR-SAM)) and ten ministerial councils that address specific themes⁶. MR-SAM has the day-to-day responsibility for the overall co-operation in the Nordic Council of Ministers, including for international work. MR-SAM and the Nordic Committee for Co-operation (NSK) have responsibility for the Nordic Council of Ministers' work on the Arctic.

The Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat has three overarching objectives: (1) to initiate, set in motion, implement and follow up on political decisions, (2) to develop knowledge as a basis for Nordic solutions, and (3) to build networks for the exchange of experiences and ideas. It is the mandate of the Secretariat to carry out these tasks. The work of the Secretariat is governed by policy objectives, strategies and other directives for the Nordic Council of Ministers, e.g. MR-SAM's 2014 vision for Nordic co-operation,⁷ the prime ministers' initiative "Nordic Solutions to Global Challenges",⁸ the annual programmes for the rotating Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers,⁹ the inter-sectoral strategies of the Nordic Council of Ministers¹⁰ and the co-operation programmes – in this case, the Arctic Programme.

6. Criteria for the Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic co-operation Programme 2018–2021

6.1. Formal Nordic criteria

Co-operation projects must first and foremost contribute to and assist in the implementation and development of the global sustainability agenda in the Arctic, with a view to achieving visible regional and local results. Co-operation projects that receive funding are obligated to generate added value. In other words, this added value must provide "Nordic synergy". There are several ways to achieve "Nordic synergy". The criteria below are some of the requirements placed on eligibility for funding from the Arctic programme.

6.2. Partnerships and co-operation

As a general rule, three Nordic countries must be involved in a co-operation project. A partnership between three Nordic countries can be supplemented with one or more non-Nordic countries – for example, one or more of the other Arctic states (USA, Canada and Russia).

⁶ The 10 theme/sectoral councils cover (1) the labour market, (2) economy and finance policy, (3) fisheries, agriculture, food and forestry, (4) equality, (5) culture, (6) legislative co-operation, (7) the environment, (8) business, energy and regional policy, (9) health and social services, and (10) education and research.

⁷ <http://www.norden.org/en/nordic-council-of-ministers/ministers-for-co-operation-mr-sam/declarations/the-nordic-region-together-we-are-stronger>

⁸ The prime ministers adopted the initiative at the Session of the Nordic Council in 2015.

⁹ Norway holds the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2017. It will be the turn of Sweden in 2018, Iceland in 2019, Denmark 2020 and Finland 2021.

¹⁰ The Nordic Council of Ministers' inter-sectoral strategies cover (1) children and young people, (2) gender equality and (3) sustainability, including Agenda 2030 and work on the UN SDGs.

When assessing applications, the following criteria will be given weight:

- That the project will lead to quantifiable positive effects from joint Nordic/Arctic solutions that could not be achieved by a project implemented purely at national level
- That the project will have visible regional and local results in the Arctic
- That the project manifests and/or develops a sense of Nordic/Arctic cohesion
- That the project enhances Nordic skills and competitiveness
- That the project generates new and innovative knowledge and/or new partnerships that create new and innovative approaches to development in the Arctic
- That the project helps strengthen overall Nordic influence internationally
- That the project outcomes are communicated to the public.

When applying for funds under the Arctic Co-operation Programme, the Nordic Council of Ministers' application template will include sections in which the required information must be entered.

6.3. Political relevance

In 2014, a reform of the Nordic Council of Ministers' work ("New Nordic Region") was launched, with the aim of making co-operation more politically relevant and visible. This reform also applies to the Nordic Council of Ministers' work on the Arctic. The starting point for support for co-operation is that it helps to maintain, create and develop a political agenda relevant to the Nordic Council of Ministers' overall work.

The following guiding documents set out the Nordic Council of Ministers' current political agenda:

- The co-operation ministers' vision statement for the Council of Ministers: <http://www.norden.org/en/nordic-council-of-ministers/ministers-for-co-operation-mr-sam/declarations/the-nordic-region-together-we-are-stronger>
- The preceding, current and next year's programmes for the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers: <http://www.norden.org/en/nordic-council-of-ministers/regeringssamarbejdet/presidency-of-the-nordic-council-of-ministers>
- The Nordic Council of Ministers' inter-sectoral strategies
 - The strategy for children and young people: <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:norden.org:diva-4629>
 - The strategy for gender equality: <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:norden.org:diva-3715>

- The sustainability strategy: <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:norden:org:diva-1153>
- The Nordic budget for a given year: <http://www.norden.org/en/nordic-council-of-ministers/the-nordic-council-of-ministers/budget>
- The current co-operation programme for a given sector: <http://www.norden.org/en/nordic-council-of-ministers/council-of-ministers>

7. Communication, visibility and evaluation

As per the “New Nordic Region” reform process, as well as the countries’ wish for greater political relevance and increased visibility for Nordic co-operation, all co-operation projects under the Nordic Council of Ministers’ Arctic Co-operation Programme must address communication and include a communication plan. This will also be reflected in the application template. The Nordic Council of Ministers’ guidelines for communication plans provide inspiration: <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:859150/FULLTEXT02.pdf>.

If a project wishes to publish the outcomes of its work, this should be done within the framework of the Nordic Council of Ministers’ Publications Unit. See the guidelines here: <http://www.norden.org/en/publications/publication-guidelines>.

The project must also have an evaluation plan, and this will also be reflected in the application template.

8. Budget for the Nordic Council of Ministers’ Arctic Co-operation Programme

The fiscal year for the Nordic Council of Ministers’ budget is the calendar year. The budget for the Nordic Council of Ministers’ Arctic Co-operation Programme will follow established budget procedures of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The budget is formally approved at the annual Session of the Nordic Council in week 44 of each year.

The budget for the Nordic Council of Ministers’ Arctic Co-operation Programme consist of two main parts: (1) a political priority that gives the countries a prerogative and opportunity to launch projects, initiatives and/or activities with high political priority within the framework of the programme; and (2) an open application process part open to all applicants who meet the programme’s objectives and fulfil the necessary criteria. The annual budget for the Arctic Co-operation Programme, as well as the budget breakdown into these two parts, will be reflected in the budget for a given fiscal year.

8.1. Management of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme

MR-SAM has overall responsibility for the Arctic Co-operation programme, including its implementation and administration. A Nordic Arctic advisory committee may be set up to assist in the annual implementation of the programme, and administration of the open round of funding applications may be outsourced. Further information on the management and administration of the Arctic Co-operation Programme is available on the Nordic Council of Ministers' website.

For further general information about the Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme, please contact the Secretariat's international team and the relevant advisors for the area concerned.