

NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

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The Governments of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden co-operate through the Nordic Council of Ministers. This co-operation is regulated by the revised Treaty of Co-operation between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden of 1972 and 1974 (revised Treaty of Helsinki) and the Treaty between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden concerning cultural co-operation of 1971. Unanimous decisions taken by the Nordic Council of Ministers are binding on the member states, when not subject to parliamentary approval in the national assemblies. The Prime Ministers and the Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs do not meet within the Nordic Council of Ministers.

MEMBERS

Denmark	Iceland	Norway
Finland		Sweden

Organization

(October 1986)

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

The Nordic Council of Ministers holds formal and informal meetings and is attended by ministers with responsibility for the subject under discussion. Each member state also appoints a minister in its own cabinet as Minister for Nordic Co-operation.

Formal decisions must be taken unanimously, and are binding on the member governments, except in certain cases where ratification in the parliaments is required.

Meetings are concerned with agreements and treaties, guidelines for national legislation, recommendations from the Nordic Council, financing joint studies, setting up Nordic institutions.

The Council of Ministers reports each year to the Nordic Council on progress in all co-operation between member states as well as on future plans.

SECRETARIAT

There are Divisions for:

1. Co-ordination, administration, budget and legislative questions;
2. Cultural and educational co-operation;
3. Research, advanced education, computer technology, protection of the environment, energy;
4. Labour market questions, occupational environment, social policy and health care, equality;
5. Finance and monetary policy, industry, co-operation in the building sector, trade and development aid;
6. Regional policy, transport, communications, tourism, farming, forestry, fishing and consumer questions;
7. Information.

Secretary-General: FRITJOF CLEMET.

COMMITTEES

Committee of Ministers' Deputies: for final preparation of material for the meetings of Ministers of Nordic Co-operation.

Committees of Senior Civil Servants: prepare the meetings of the Council of Ministers and conduct research at its request. There are a number of sub-committees. The Committees of Senior Civil Servants cover the subjects listed under the Secretariat (above).

Activities

ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

Nordic Investment Bank: founded under an agreement of December 1975 to provide finance and guarantees for the implementation of investment projects and exports; authorized and

subscribed capital 800m. IMF Special Drawing Rights. The main sectors of the Bank's activities are energy, metal and wood-processing industries (including petroleum extraction) and manufacturing. By December 1985 the Bank had granted 341 loans totalling 1,713m. SDRs. In 1982 a scheme for financing investments in developing countries was established.

Nordic Industrial Fund: f. 1973 with a capital of 10m. Swedish kronor, to be increased in stages to 50m. Makes grants, subsidies and loans for industrial research and development projects of interest to more than one member country. The budget for 1984 was 35.2m. Swedish kronor.

Nordic Economic Research Council: f. 1980 to promote research and analysis on Nordic economic interdependence particularly with regard to economic stabilization policies.

NORDTEST: f. 1973 as an inter-Nordic agency for technical testing and standardization; collaborates with the Nordic Committee on Building Regulations.

Nordic Project Fund: f. 1982 to strengthen the international competitiveness of Nordic exporting companies, and to promote industrial co-operation.

The national administrations for overseas development have carried out several projects as a group, and consult with one another frequently.

COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORT

A Nordic agreement for transport and communications entered into force in 1973. The main areas of co-operation have been road research, urban transport, transport in sparsely populated areas, transport for the disabled and road safety. Earlier agreements cover co-operation in post and telecommunications. Passports are not required for travel by Nordic citizens within the region.

LABOUR MARKET

Since 1954 a free labour market has been in force between Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. By 1980 more than one million people had moved across the frontiers in Scandinavia. There is a joint centre for labour market training at Övertorneå in Sweden.

ENVIRONMENT

The Nordic Convention on the protection of the environment was signed in 1974, entering into force in October 1976. The member states undertake to harmonize regulations for protecting the environment, and to assess certain measures affecting neighbouring countries.

The coastal states have also signed a Convention on the Marine Environment of the Baltic, which entered into force in May 1980; special agreements have been concluded between Denmark and Sweden on pollution in the Öresund, and between Finland and Sweden on pollution in the Gulf of Bothnia.

NORDFORSK (Scandinavian Council for Applied Research) has a special secretariat for environmental research in Helsinki.

The Nordic Institute for Advanced Studies on Occupational Environment was established in 1982.

ENERGY

Co-operation within the sector includes studies of energy saving, the use of coal, the introduction of new and renewable sources of energy, and the use of petroleum and gas. There is a special committee for atomic energy. A common authority for electricity supply (NORDEL) was set up in 1963.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

The main areas of co-operation are in consumer legislation, information on goods and services, consumer education and general questions of consumer policy.

LAW

The five countries have similar legal systems and tend towards uniformity in legislation and interpretation of law. Much of the preparatory committee work within the national administrations

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on new legislation involves consultation with the neighbour countries.

Citizens of one Nordic country working in another are in many respects given the status of nationals. In all the Nordic countries they already have the right to vote in local elections in the country of residence. The changing of citizenship from one Nordic country to another has been simplified.

There are special extradition facilities between the countries and further stages towards co-operation between the police and the courts have been recommended.

There is a permanent Council for Criminology, a Nordic Institute for Maritime Law in Oslo and a permanent committee for Penalty Law.

REGIONAL POLICY

Under a joint programme agreed in 1986, regional policy gives priority to cross-border co-operation for development in nine areas, with most financial support allotted to the 'Northern Cap' area (the northern provinces of Finland, Norway and Sweden) and the Western Nordic area (Greenland, the Faeroes and Iceland).

SOCIAL WELFARE AND HEALTH

Under the Convention on Social Security, 1955 (renewed in 1981), Nordic citizens have the same rights, benefits and obligations in each Nordic country. In 1974 a new agreement was made on arrangements for sickness, pregnancy and childbirth when temporarily in another Nordic country. Uniform provisions exist concerning basic pension and supplementary pension benefits when moving from one Nordic country to another.

In 1981 an agreement was concluded for doctors, dentists, nurses and pharmacists on the standards of competence required for obtaining work in other Nordic countries.

Institutions:

Nordic School of Public Health, Gothenburg, Sweden;
Scandinavian Institute of Dental Materials, Oslo;
Nordic Council on Medicines, Uppsala, Sweden;
Nordic Council on Alcohol and Drug Research, Helsinki;
Nordic Committee on Disability, Stockholm.

Other Permanent Bodies:

Scandiatransplant, under Nordic Committee on Kidney Transplantation, Århus, Denmark;
Nordic Medico-Statistical Committee, Copenhagen;
Nordic Committee of Social Security Statistics, Helsinki.

CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC CO-OPERATION

Nordic Cultural Fund: The Fund receives applications within the fields of research, education and general cultural activities. The Fund is part governmental, part parliamentary. The Fund board consists of a member of parliament and a senior civil servant from each of the member states. The Nordic Cultural Fund is located within and administered by the Secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers in Copenhagen. In 1985 it was allotted 10.3m. Danish kroner.

Education: Nordic co-operation in the educational field includes the objective content and means of education, the structure of the educational system and pedagogical development work.

Priority is given to:

1. Secondary education, adult education and vocational training.
2. Projects relevant for all levels of the educational system such as the teaching of Nordic languages and pedagogical research and development.

Joint projects include:

Nordic Co-operation in Adult Education
Nordic Educational Courses
Nordic Folk Academy
Nordic School of Journalism
Nordic Language Secretariat
Nordic Language and Information Centre
Nordic Federation for Medical Education
Nordic School of Nutritional and Textile Sciences
Nordic School Co-operation

Research: Nordic co-operation in research comprises information on research activities and research findings, joint research projects, joint research institutions, the methods and means in research policy, the organizational structure of research and a co-ordination of the national research programmes.

Much of the research co-operation activities at the more permanent joint research institutions consists of establishing science contacts in the Nordic areas by means of grants, visiting lecturers, courses and symposia.

The research institutions and research bodies listed below receive continuous financial support via the Nordic cultural budget. In many cases, these joint Nordic institutions ensure a high international standard that would otherwise have been difficult to maintain at a purely national level.

Nordic Accelerator Committee
Nordic Council for Arctic Medical Research
Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies
Nordic Documentation Centre for Mass Communication Research
Nordic Committee on East European Studies
Nordic Council for Ecology
Nordic Institute of Folklore
Nordic Geoexcursions to Iceland
Nordic Co-operation Committee for International Politics
Nordic Council for Marine Biology
Scandinavian Institute of Maritime Law
Nordic Council for Physical Oceanography
Nordic Institute for Studies in Urban and Regional Planning
Nordic Research Courses
Nordic Research Grants
Nordic Research Symposia
Nordic Association for Research on Latin America
Nordic Council for Scientific Information and Research Libraries
Nordic Summer University
Nordic Institute for Theoretical Atomic Physics
Nordic Volcanological Institute
Nordic Council for Co-operation in Silvicultural Research
Nordic Gene Bank
Nordic Research Policy Council

Cultural activities: Cultural co-operation is concerned with artistic and other cultural exchange between the Nordic countries; activities relating to libraries, museums, radio, television, and film; promotion of activities within organizations with general cultural aims, including youth and sports organizations; the improvement of conditions for the creative and performing arts; and encouragement for artists and cultural workers.

Joint projects include:

Nordic Co-operation among Adult Education Organizations
Nordic Amateur Theatre Council
Nordic Art Association
Nordic Arts Centre
Nordic Co-operation in Athletics
Nordic Council Literature Prize
Nordic Council Music Prize
Nordic Film Seminars
Nordic House in Reykjavik
Nordic House in the Faeroe Islands
Nordic Music Co-operation
Nordic Sani Institute
Nordic Theatre Committee
Nordic Writers' Courses
Nordic Youth Co-operation Committees
Nordic Literature Committee

FINANCE

Joint expenses are divided according to an agreed scale in proportion to the relative national product of the member countries. The 1987 budget of the Nordic Council of Ministers amounted to 537m. Danish kroner, of which Sweden was to contribute 37.1%, Norway 21.5%, Denmark 20.5%, Finland 20.0% and Iceland 0.9%. Various forms of co-operation are financed directly from the national budgets.