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Nordic co-operation



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The Nordic region consists of Denmark, with the autonomous territories of the Faeroes and Greenland, Finland, with the autonomous Åland Islands, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. It has a population of around 23 million.

The Nordic people have a common history of both co-operation and occasional conflict. Today the Nordic states and their peoples work together on a basis of common traditions and a shared view of freedom and fundamental democratic values. Their political and economic institutions operate in similar ways.

The Nordic area is not a federal state. But it is in many respects a single unit, consisting of three monarchies, two republics, and three autonomous territories.

The Nordic Council is not a supranational parliament. But it is a place where representatives of all the Nordic parliaments take decisions guiding Nordic co-operation. The Nordic Council of Ministers represents the governments of the Nordic countries when decisions are to be implemented.

Many peoples and many languages

The region has many peoples and languages. It has many variants of a common culture and many interest groups. The Nordic people and their politically elected representatives want to maintain this diversity. But they do have a common basic philosophy and they wish to work together.

Nordic co-operation is not directed against anyone else. The region simply wishes to show how independent states can forge a common future.

Nordic co-operation is unique in that it often goes on on an unofficial basis, without red

tape. Government agencies, local authorities, institutions, and organizations in the Nordic countries can co-operate directly with their Nordic counterparts at all levels. And they do.

Nordic co-operation is a matter of benefiting from one another's knowledge and experience. Exchanges of information and views are free and informal. Political parties, trade unions, interest groups, and voluntary organizations find it perfectly natural to have Nordic umbrella organizations and hold Nordic conferences at which to swap ideas. Nordic co-operation is so natural and so diverse that we do not always realize that it is unique.

Sticking together

In economic terms, the Nordic area represents a single domestic market. Culturally, it is a region whose artists and writers support and inspire one another. There may be family quarrels. And beating a Nordic sister nation in the sports arena is something very special. But outside the region's borders we quite naturally stick together.

The Nordic Council was founded in 1952 and the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1971. But Nordic co-operation goes back a lot further, to times of misfortune when one nation helped another. For many generations in the Nordic countries this has created a strong sense of belonging together.

Today the region is prosperous. The Nordic countries work together in the UN and in international development efforts. Nordic co-operation does not isolate the region from the world community. It creates security and strength and provides a basis for wider international co-operation.

Freer travel and communications

Nordic nationals can travel freely throughout the region without passports or visas. For travellers from other countries the Nordic region constitutes a single passport control area. Passport exemption for Nordic citizens was introduced in 1954. Relaxations of border formalities have made travel between the countries easier.

Ten million people cross the sea between Sweden and Finland every year. Inter-state roads and direct air links across the Nordkalotten area (northernmost Finland, Norway, and Sweden) cut distances and travelling times. There is now a road between Kiruna and Narvik. In summer ferry services operate between the Faeroes and Iceland and the rest of the Nordic region. A fixed link – bridge or tunnel – across the Sound is being discussed. Travel in the region creates a unique opportunity for contact between nations.

The Nordic countries have concluded an agreement on transport and communications co-operation, designed to make transport rational and efficient. This is important to industry and commerce. Joint research is being conducted on technological developments in communications. In the computer technology field, the countries are co-operating on education and research, to give just two examples.

Road safety is enhanced by largely uniform road traffic regulations. The Nordic Road Safety Council's work has resulted in a series of practical safety measures such as compulsory use of seat-belts, helmets for motorcyclists, and running lights on cars.

The Nordic countries also work together to improve air safety and safety at sea.

Inland postal rates in the Nordic region

The Nordic postal and telecommunications

authorities have a long record of co-operation. Inland postal rates apply to letters posted to anywhere in the Nordic area.

Telecommunications authorities are collaborating on satellite links across the Atlantic, automatic mobile phone systems, and improvements to other telecommunications services in the Nordic area.

Many languages

Danish, Faeroese, Icelandic, Norwegian (*bokmål* and *nynorsk*), and Swedish are members of the Scandinavian language family. Faeroese and Icelandic are more closely related to Old Norwegian and are not readily understood by Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes.

Finnish and Lapp, or Sami (South, North, and Skolt Sami), are related languages, but they are not mutually intelligible.

Greenlandic is not related to the other Nordic languages.

POPULATION

Denmark	5.1 million
Faeroes	45,000
Greenland	53,000
Finland	5.0 million
Åland Islands	24,000
Iceland	250,000
Norway	4.2 million
Sweden	8.5 million
Total	approx. 23 million





Get to know the Nordic region

There are many different ways to travel around and get to know the Nordic countries. Special fares are available for various age groups. One way is to 'interrail' with the NORDTURIST ticket, which is valid for a certain period of unlimited rail travel in other countries of the region, as well as on certain ferries and buses.

Young people can find summer jobs in other Nordic countries through the NORDJOB scheme run by the Norden Associations. The aim is to enable 18- to 25-year-olds to spend a couple of months in the summer getting to know young people and conditions generally in other Nordic countries.



Cultural co-operation

In terms of history, culture, and language the Nordic people have a great deal in common. Culturally the Nordic countries have long influenced one another. Official cultural co-operation is based on the 1971 Nordic Cultural Agreement. In it the countries undertook to strengthen and intensify their cultural co-operation, further develop a common cultural heritage, and increase their efforts in education, research, and other cultural activities.

Official co-operation is only part of cultural co-operation as a whole between the Nordic countries. The Norden Associations, other voluntary organizations, professional societies, and individuals also play an active part in spreading Nordic culture.

Education

Co-operation relating to schools has mainly focused on the development of joint projects and on exchanges of experience. Joint research and development is in progress on the future design of education. Co-operation is taking place on teaching materials and a range of specialized courses.

Many qualifications and courses enjoy Nordic recognition, especially those offered by arts and science faculties in higher education. General Nordic recognition of qualifications still does not exist, however. Universities and colleges in each country decide whether credit can be given for certificates and degrees awarded in other countries.

A handbook entitled 'Studying in the Nordic countries' (in Swedish) gives details of educational opportunities in other Nordic countries. Advanced training on a joint Nordic basis is provided at such establishments as the Nordic Institute for Studies in Urban and Regional

Planning, Stockholm, the Nordic School of Public Health, in Gothenburg, and the Nordic School of Journalism, Aarhus. The Nordic Folk Academy, in Gothenburg, is a meeting place for teachers and administrators working in adult education and at folk high schools.

To improve mutual understanding of languages there is a Nordic Language Secretariat in Oslo and a Nordic Language and Information Centre in Helsinki.

Research

In the area of research the Nordic countries collaborate by exchanging information on projects and findings. There are around 20 joint Nordic research establishments and committees, including the Nordic Institute for Theoretical Atomic Physics in Copenhagen, the Nordic Volcanological Institute, Reykjavík, the Scandinavian Institute of Maritime Law, Oslo, the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies in Uppsala, and the Nordic Institute of Folklore, Turku (Åbo).

The Science Policy Council, set up in 1983, analyses research policy developments in the Nordic countries and initiates co-operation designed to make the best use of and increase joint research efforts. The Council also seeks to improve training opportunities for research workers in the region.

The Nordic countries also share expensive scientific equipment, such as an optical telescope in the Canary Islands for research in astronomy. The next few years will see the development of a Nordic university computer network, NORDUNET, a data communications system between research-oriented computer centres at universities and research institutes throughout the Nordic region.



Literature, theatre, and music

Cultural co-operation also encompasses music, theatre, literature, art, and films. The Nordic Council of Ministers funds a range of institutions and committees in these areas and supports numerous cultural activities through various grant arrangements. Special attention is paid to making the culture of any one Nordic country better known in the others.

The Nordic Cultural Fund in Copenhagen provides support (Dkr 13 m. in 1991) for joint Nordic projects concerning all aspects of culture and the arts. Individuals, institutions, and organizations can apply for grants. There are also bilateral cultural funds. Special arrangements exist to support guest performances, translations of Nordic literature into other languages of the region, co-operation among youth organizations, co-operation on adult education, and the distribution of Nordic films in the region. Support is available for publishing literature in minority languages such as Greenlandic, Faeroese, and Sami (Lapp).

A Nordic Arts Centre in Helsinki promotes

co-operation in the creative arts. To develop cultural relations there are Nordic Houses in Reykjavik and Tórshavn and Nordic Institutes on Greenland and in Mariehamn.

The Nordic Council Literature and Music Prizes

The Nordic Council's Literature and Music Prizes, worth Dkr 150,000 each (1991), are awarded annually just before the Council session. The Literature Prize is awarded for a literary work in one of the languages of the Nordic region, including Faeroese, Greenlandic and Sami. In 1990 the prize went to Tomas Tranströmer of Sweden, in 1991 to the Sami writer Nils-Aslak Valkeapää.

The Music Prize for 1990 was awarded to the Norwegian composer Olav Anton Thommessen, while the 1991 prize went to jazz bass player Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen of Denmark.

Cultural co-operation plan

To strengthen common cultural values in the Nordic region, an action plan for Nordic cultural co-operation was adopted in 1988, for the period 1989-91. The plan covers three main areas—education, research, and culture in general. It is intended to make cultural co-operation more efficient and to create Nordic networks to facilitate collaboration between different bodies.

One of the plan's aims is to improve mutual understanding of the different languages of the region, partly through an action programme called 'Nordmål'. A single Nordic educational area is to be established, a key feature being mutual recognition of qualifications. The Nordplus exchange programme of-

fers students and teachers an opportunity to study in other Nordic countries. More support is to be given to cultural institutions such as the Nordic Arts Centre and the Nordic Houses and Institutes, and research co-operation is being stepped up.

Media co-operation, in the broadcasting, film and video sectors, will be promoted by a Nordic Film and Television Fund. In the Nordvision framework, the Nordic television companies have been exchanging and co-producing programmes since the 1960s.

The cultural action plan stresses that, to extend cultural co-operation in their own region, the Nordic countries need to be open to developments in Europe as a whole.

Law and justice

In many areas legislation in the Nordic countries is traditionally very similar. When introducing new laws, the countries try to take account of legislation in the rest of the region. The common labour market has also influenced lawmaking. Nordic nationals can more easily become citizens of another Nordic country than people from other countries. After three years' residence they are entitled both to vote and to stand in local government elections without being a citizen of the country concerned.

Harmonization of Nordic legislation is the oldest form of Nordic co-operation, beginning as far back as 1872 at the first meeting of Nordic lawyers. Uniform laws on the sale of goods, competition, establishing businesses, and commercial contracts are important to the business community. Partially similar laws exist in the area of family law. Regulations on names are the same in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. Rules on adoption are largely the same in all the countries, as are regulations prohibiting physical and mental punishment of children. Fighting drug-related crime is a common Nordic concern; the countries jointly station police and customs officers abroad.

The Nordic countries are co-operating on several projects to end labour market segregation between men and women. There is a Nordic action programme on equal opportunities.

Refugee questions are important in view of the many refugees the Nordic countries have accepted.

The Nordic Language Convention entitles Nordic citizens to use their own languages when dealing with public authorities and institutions, such as courts, hospitals, the





police, social services, employment and tax authorities.

Autonomous territories

The Faeroes and Greenland in the North Atlantic and the Åland Islands in the Baltic are constitutionally parts of Denmark and Finland, respectively. However, they all enjoy a large measure of self-government.

Through their popularly elected assemblies and their administrative authorities, these autonomous territories are entitled to legislate

on and administer their internal affairs without interference from national authorities. By international standards their self-government is very far-reaching. Once a self-governing authority has made a decision within its jurisdiction, national authorities cannot veto it.

The Faeroes, Greenland, and the Åland Islands have their own flags and issue their own stamps.

The Åland Islands are a demilitarized zone and Ålanders are exempt from military service. Swedish is the only official language.

A common labour market and social security

There has been a common Nordic labour market since 1954. All Nordic citizens are entitled to look for a job in another Nordic country without a work permit.

For many professions where special qualifications are required, separate common labour market agreements have subsequently been reached. These cover doctors, dentists, nurses, psychologists, nursing auxiliaries, opticians, and veterinary surgeons, for example.

Professions requiring state authorization to practise are often excluded from the common labour market. Lawyers, accountants, architects, and estate agents, for example, cannot practise their professions in other Nordic countries.

Since 1954 over a million people have moved between the Nordic countries, most of them between Finland and Sweden. Problems caused by this migration have partly been solved on the Nordic Council's initiative.

Nordic citizens' rights

The 1955 Nordic Social Security Convention (revised in 1981) is the most comprehensive result achieved by co-operation in the social sphere. It means that a citizen of one Nordic country who is working or staying in another has the same social security and other social rights as the country's own nationals in terms, for example, of health care, child benefit, social assistance, pensions, and unemployment benefit.

A survey has been carried out to establish what rights Nordic citizens enjoy when they become permanent or temporary residents of another Nordic country and how their rights differ from those of the country's own citi-

zens. The purpose is eventually to eliminate as many differences as possible so as to make it easier to move to or stay in another Nordic country.

The Nordic Committee on Disability, in Stockholm, promotes the development of aids for the disabled. The Nordic Council on Medicines, based in Uppsala, harmonizes legislation and standard practices. Joint research is being conducted by the Nordic Council for Alcohol and Drug Research in Helsinki. Nordic hospitals collaborate on kidney transplants, for example.



The working environment

Nordic co-operation also extends to the working environment area. In occupational medicine co-operation is taking place on specialist training, limits on dangerous substances, industrial hygiene, and employers' medical services. Collaboration also covers psychosocial issues, such as the effects of stress, and working life in more general terms. A Nordic Working Environment Convention came into force in 1990.

Local and regional cross-border co-operation

Cross-border co-operation between Nordic local authorities is based on an agreement signed in 1977, which enables local authorities, especially in border areas, to work together with their counterparts in another Nordic country on matters of common concern. These may include health care, communications, tourism, education, culture, the environment, or information to industry and commerce. Local authorities may, for example, share schools and hospitals, municipal installations, fire-fighting equipment, or mobile libraries. Regional cross-border co-operation, financed wholly or partly by the Nordic Council of Ministers, takes place in the following nine areas:

The Sound region • Bornholm-South-east

Skåne • Arvika-Kongsvinger • Østfold-North Bohuslän • Stockholm, Åland, and Turku archipelagos • Central Nordic region • Kvarken straits region • Nordkalotten region • West Nordic region (Iceland, Faeroes, and Greenland).

In the Sound region co-operation is taking place on industry and commerce and communications, in the Central Nordic region on trade offices for the business community, in the Stockholm, Åland, and Turku archipelagos on the conditions of archipelago life, and in Nordkalotten on developing trade and industry. The West Nordic region is seeking to develop the fishing industry and utilize marine resources. A Nordic development fund for industry and commerce in the West Nordic region has been set up.



The Nordic Council

The Nordic Council is a vehicle of co-operation between the parliaments and governments of the Nordic countries.

The Council was set up in 1952 by Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. Finland joined in 1955, and since 1970 the autonomous territories of the Faeroes and the Åland Islands have had their own representatives on the Council. Since 1984 Greenland has also been represented. Co-operation was first regulated by a Statute, and is now governed by the 1962 Helsinki Treaty.

The Council initiates, encourages, and follows up the results of Nordic co-operation by issuing recommendations and statements of opinion to the Nordic Council of Ministers and to governments. Recommendations are expressions of political will with a basis in national parliaments. In most cases they result in action by governments or the Council of Ministers.

Annual session

Each year the members of the Nordic Council meet for a week-long session, held in the various Nordic capitals in turn. After an opening general debate, proposals submitted by members of the Council, the Council of Ministers, and governments are considered. The Council also monitors how past recommendations have been implemented and how Nordic institutions are operating. Questions are put to the Council of Ministers and individual governments.

The Nordic Council has 87 members, elected by the legislatures of the Nordic countries and autonomous territories. A country's elected members, alternate members, and government representatives make up its delegation. The Faeroese and Greenland delegations are part of Denmark's delegation

and that of the Åland Islands is included in the Finnish delegation.

Six committees

Members of the Council are assigned to one of six standing committees: the Economic, Legal, Environmental, Cultural, Social and Budget Committees. The first five prepare the business to be considered during the session of the Council. The Budget Committee co-ordinates consideration by the other committees of the Council of Ministers' budget proposals and supervises activities funded by the Council of Ministers.

Between sessions, the day-to-day work of the Nordic Council is directed by a Presidium consisting of eleven parliamentarians, ten full members and one observer. The Presidium has a joint Nordic Secretariat in Stockholm. Each delegation has a secretariat of its own at its national parliament.

The Council's business is conducted in Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish. At the sessions simultaneous interpretation from and into Finnish is provided.

THE NORDIC COUNCIL		<i>Number of members</i>
<i>Denmark</i>	<i>Folketing</i>	16
<i>Faeroes</i>	<i>Lagting</i>	2
<i>Greenland</i>	<i>Landsting</i>	2
<i>Finland</i>	<i>Eduskunta/ Riksdag</i>	18
<i>Åland Islands</i>	<i>Landsting</i>	2
<i>Iceland</i>	<i>Alting</i>	7
<i>Norway</i>	<i>Storting</i>	20
<i>Sweden</i>	<i>Riksdag</i>	20
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The Nordic Council of Ministers

The Nordic Council of Ministers, founded in 1971, is a body for co-operation between the governments of the Nordic countries. The executive bodies of the Faeroes, Greenland, and the Åland Islands also take part in its work. The Council of Ministers submits proposals to sessions of the Nordic Council, follows up its recommendations, reports to the Council on the results of co-operation, and directs Nordic co-operation in various sectors.

Each government appoints one of its members as minister for Nordic co-operation. These ministers are responsible for co-ordinating questions concerning Nordic co-operation between governments and for Nordic affairs within their own governments. Each of them has a specially appointed civil servant as his or her deputy.

The Council of Ministers consists either of the co-operation ministers or ministers responsible for particular sectors, who meet in various constellations depending on the matters to be considered. Unanimous decisions by the Council of Ministers are binding on governments. However, in some cases national legislation makes its decisions subject to parliamentary approval. Decisions affecting matters in the jurisdiction of the autonomous territories are binding on the Faeroes, Greenland, and the Åland Islands if approved by them.

The prime ministers, foreign ministers, and defence ministers hold regular meetings, but not as the Council of Ministers.

The groundwork on matters relating to Nordic co-operation is done by the Council of Ministers' joint Nordic Secretariat in Copenhagen and by some 15 senior officials' committees. The Secretariat deals with questions

concerning fiscal and foreign exchange policy, industry and energy, construction, trade and development assistance, employment and the working environment, social policy, environment, regional policy, communications and road safety, tourism, agriculture and forestry, consumer policy, equal opportunities, general culture and media co-operation, and research and education.

To deal with concrete co-operation questions there are some 60 joint institutions and permanent committees, funded via a joint Nordic budget.

FUNDING NORDIC CO-OPERATION

The Nordic countries contribute to Nordic co-operation according to a scale of assessments, based on each country's share of total Nordic gross national product.

The Nordic Council of Ministers' 1991 budget totals Dkr 698 m.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NORDIC BUDGET IN 1991:

<i>Denmark</i> _____	21.3%
<i>Finland</i> _____	21.2%
<i>Iceland</i> _____	1.1%
<i>Norway</i> _____	18.9%
<i>Sweden</i> _____	37.5%



A Nordic domestic market

The Nordic countries are highly developed industrial nations. In recent years economic co-operation has become an increasingly important part of Nordic co-operation. The Nordic economic plans of action set out how the region can increase its growth and improve employment by 1992. This is to be achieved by a common industrial policy, research and development, export promotion, and tourism. The countries intend to combat unemployment, build motorways and railways, and develop regional cross-border co-operation. In international contexts, too, they aim to co-operate on economic questions.

Nordic industry is export-oriented. Many Nordic companies collaborate on production and subcontracting. The Nordic countries are each other's biggest trading partners. Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden sell around a quarter of their output to other Nordic countries. Iceland sells just under 10 per cent to other countries in the region. Efforts are also being made to remove technical and other barriers to trade between the countries, for example by co-ordinating national regulations and procedures so as to create broadly uniform terms for industry and commerce. The Nordic region is increasingly developing into a common domestic market for Nordic companies. Together, small Nordic firms can be stronger on international export markets. The Nordic countries collaborate on project-oriented exports of complete installations to developing and state trading countries.

Joint technical research and development strengthens Nordic industry and improves its position as an international competitor. A

Nordic Centre for Industrial Research and Development has been set up in Oslo, incorporating the Nordic Fund for Technology and Industrial Development and the former NORDFORSK (the Joint Nordic Council for Applied Research). The Centre initiates, co-ordinates and supports joint technical research and development in different fields.

Free trade

Trade between the Nordic countries has been liberalized as part of closer European co-operation.

After the Second World War the Nordic countries had far-reaching plans to abolish all internal Nordic tariffs and form a customs union. However, the idea never went beyond the planning stage. Instead, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden joined the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1959. Finland became an associate member in 1961 and a full member in 1986, and Iceland joined in 1970.

In 1967 tariff barriers on industrial products were abolished in EFTA, thus achieving the hoped-for common market in the Nordic region, though it eventually included non-Nordic countries as well.

Since 1972 Denmark has been a member of the European Community. The other Nordic countries have entered into agreements with the Community designed to facilitate trade. Finland has also signed an agreement with CMEA, the socialist countries' economic co-operation organization. Tariff barriers to trade in industrial products between EFTA and EC countries have now largely been abolished.

Nordic investments, project exports, environment and energy

The Nordic Investment Bank

The Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) in Helsinki strengthens economic co-operation between companies in the Nordic region and helps to increase production and exports. The Bank provides loans for various investment projects and for exports on which firms or public bodies in two or more Nordic countries are collaborating. It operates on a normal banking basis, i.e. it makes loans at commercial rates of interest for profitable projects.

A large proportion of the Bank's lending within the Nordic countries has gone to the energy and engineering sectors, but loans are increasingly being provided for environmental projects in the region. International lending by the Bank mainly supports projects in Eastern Europe and developing countries. The NIB also lends money for Nordic projects in Western Europe and North America.

The **Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO)**, launched in 1990, finances environmental investments, chiefly in Poland, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Primarily, loans are made to joint ventures involving Nordic and local firms. Finance can be provided for joint ventures which manufacture environmental protection equipment, exploit environmental technology industrially, or provide consultancy or other services in the environmental field. NEFCO is managed by the Nordic Investment Bank.

The **Nordic Development Fund (NDF)**, which operates in close conjunction with the NIB, provides long-term, interest-free loans for development assistance projects of Nordic interest.

The Nordic Project Fund

The Nordic Project Fund was set up to help Nordic companies compete more effectively for export orders, primarily from developing countries, but also from state trading nations. It does this by providing firms and institutions with financial assistance for feasibility studies on tangible projects and other activities that could lead to business contracts. Projects must be of Nordic interest.

Energy

The Nordic region has substantial but unevenly distributed energy resources. Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden use hydro-electric plants to generate much of their electricity, while Denmark is almost entirely dependent on oil. Norway and Denmark have their own oil and gas. Finland and Sweden also use nuclear power. In Iceland, where homes are heated with water from hot springs, there are large unharnessed supplies of hydro-electric and geothermal energy.

Many Nordic companies are involved in exploiting finds of oil and gas off the Norwegian coast. Through the 'Southern Gas' project, Sweden imports natural gas from the Danish sector of the North Sea for use in the south of the country.

A plan has been adopted in the area of energy, covering such aspects as energy planning, energy and the environment, and energy conservation. The Nordic countries also cooperate on research and technological development in this field.

Through NORDEL, the Organization for Nordic Electricity Co-operation, temporary over-production in one country can be used in another.



Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries

The main agricultural areas in the region are in Denmark, southern Sweden, and a belt across south-west Finland and central Sweden. In terms of employment, agriculture is most important in Denmark and Finland. Agriculture and forestry are important in sparsely populated areas of Norway.

Forest covers roughly half the land area of the Nordic region. Forestry is important in Sweden and Finland. A Nordic action programme on agriculture and forestry covers the period up to 1995.

Fishing is of great importance to Iceland, the Faeroes, and Greenland, which are jointly developing the fishing industry and marine resources. Fishing is also important in western and northern Norway.

The Nordic Gene Bank, near Malmö, collects and stores economically important agricultural and horticultural plants, primarily for plant breeders and researchers. The Nordic countries co-operate on, among other things, plant breeding, plant protection control, evaluation of farm and forest pesticides, testing of agricultural and forestry machinery, and R & D in these areas.

Responsibility for the environment

The natural environment of the Nordic region is increasingly being subjected to pollution, emissions, and wear and tear. The Nordic countries are geographically close to one another and many environmental problems can therefore only be solved by joint action. Environmental co-operation has become an increasingly important part of Nordic co-operation in recent years.

The 1976 Nordic Environmental Protection Convention stresses that countries are responsible not only for their own environment, but also for that of their Nordic neighbours. Anyone infringing environmental protection regulations may be liable to pay compensation to those affected in a neighbouring country. The Convention also entitles parties to express their views in advance on environmen-



tal problems that might arise, say, if an industrial plant is built in another country.

All seven states around the Baltic have signed a convention to protect the marine environment. Environmental protection is also the subject of bilateral agreements, such as the agreement between Denmark and Sweden to protect the Sound from pollution. Nordic research on transboundary air pollution is of international significance. At the international level the Nordic countries are acting together to combat transboundary air pollution and other environmental problems. Following a Nordic initiative, some 20 European countries have agreed in the framework of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions by at least 30 per cent by 1993.



The Nordic countries and the international community

The Nordic countries have chosen different security policies. Denmark, Norway, and Iceland are members of NATO. Sweden has a policy of non-participation in alliances in peacetime with a view to neutrality in war. Finland pursues a policy of neutrality, and has a treaty of friendship, co-operation, and mutual assistance with the Soviet Union.

Security policy decisions cannot be taken by the joint Nordic bodies. To a certain extent foreign policy matters have, though, been discussed at sessions of the Nordic Council. Outside the framework of the Nordic Council, Nordic parliamentarians do discuss security matters, such as a Nordic nuclear-weapon-free zone.

The Nordic countries co-operate in a range of international bodies, particularly the UN and its specialized agencies. They work together to promote human rights, as illustrated by their efforts to combat apartheid. The Nor-

dic countries have joint representatives in international bodies such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the African Development Fund, and the Asian Development Bank. In the area of trade, they collaborate for example in the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) framework, where the Nordic members of EFTA have joint spokesmen.

The Nordic countries co-ordinate some of their development assistance, in line with the 1981 Copenhagen Convention. Joint Nordic projects are currently being carried out in Mozambique and Zambia, as part of the 'region-to-region' programme. The Nordic region is involved in economic and cultural co-operation with these and other southern African countries, including Namibia. Co-operation is also being developed with the Baltic Sea states, chiefly in the cultural and environmental spheres.

Norden Associations

Of all the organizations involved in Nordic co-operation, the Norden Associations stand apart, as promotion of such co-operation is their sole aim. They are also a source of initiatives for action by bodies of the Nordic Council.

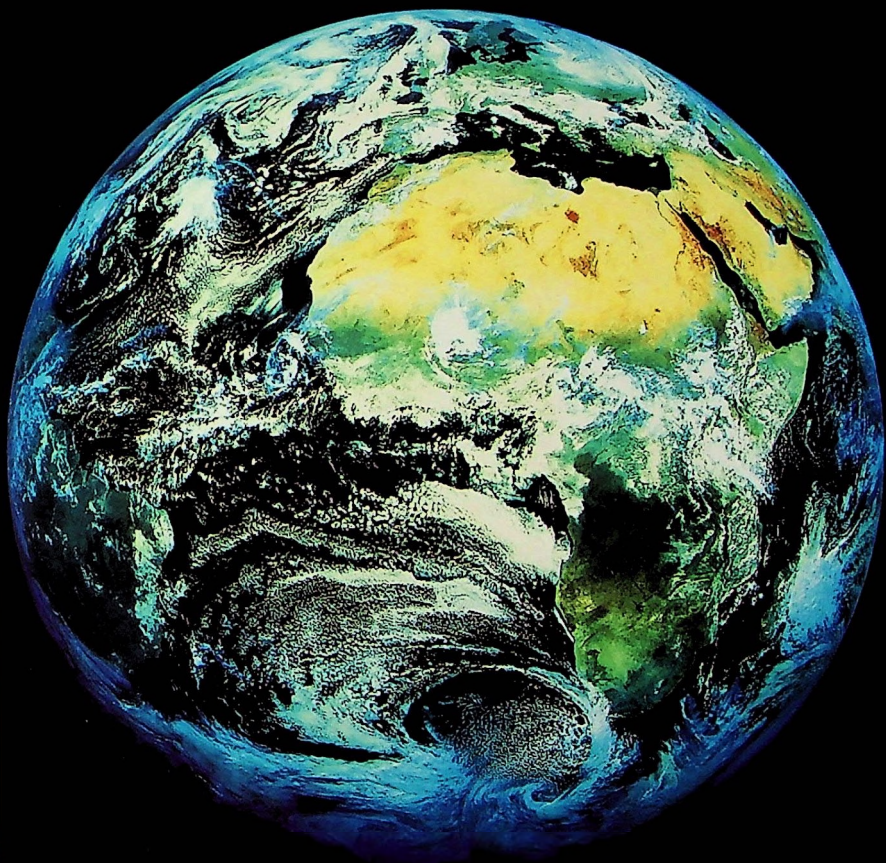
The Norden Associations, which are voluntary interest organizations, were founded in the early 1920s and exist in all the Nordic countries and autonomous territories. Members join local branches.

Among other things, the Associations disseminate information on Nordic matters by means of lectures, courses, and exhibitions, and arrange exchanges of teachers and

schoolchildren. There are also regional information centres throughout the Nordic countries, informing the public about official Nordic co-operation and regional Nordic activities. On the Norden Associations' initiative twin-town arrangements have been started and developed.

Other interest organizations

The Council of Nordic Trade Unions, representing the main trade unions, Nordic employers' associations and industrial federations, popular movements, and various groups in the business community are examples of the interest and pressure groups involved in and influencing Nordic co-operation.



GUSTAF STJERNBERG,

Dep. Sec. Gen.

IF YOU WANT TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT NORDIC CO-OPERATION READ:

NORDISK KONTAKT

A magazine (in the languages of the region) about what's happening in the Nordic countries. Published by the Nordic Council.

THE NORDIC COUNCIL

A handbook of rules and procedures.

NORDEN THE TOP OF EUROPE

A monthly newsletter published by the Nordic Council of Ministers in English, German and French.

YEARBOOK OF NORDIC STATISTICS

Published annually in Swedish and English.

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