



Nordic Council
of Ministers

A Sustainable Arctic

Arctic Co-operation Programme
2022–2024



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<https://pub.norden.org/politiknord2021-737>



Photo: Salvör Gissurardóttir

Purpose

Much of the Nordic Region lies within the Arctic region. Historically, the Nordic countries – both individually and collectively – have helped put the Arctic on the international agenda. As part of this work, the Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme has in recent decades contributed to new knowledge about the environment, economy and social conditions in the Arctic region.

The co-operation programme is, therefore, an important part of the work to promote Nordic international co-operation in the Arctic. The programme for 2022–2024 will be the ninth since 1996 and the first under *Our Vision 2030*. The programme period has been shortened from four years to three in order to align with the Vision 2030 Action Plan 2021–2024.

The main objective of the programme is to continue to focus on sustainable development. Conscious, systematic and continuous co-operation is required to ensure that development in the Arctic is based on peace, stability, protection, growth and prosperity. The Arctic is a region where both development and conservation must go hand in hand. The Nordic Council of Ministers has observer status on the Arctic Council, and the Arctic Co-operation Programme contributes directly to its projects and initiatives.

Over time, the Arctic agenda has expanded to include both managing and adapting to climate change as well as highlighting the population's living conditions – specifically, the desire to keep on improving them through economic development, improved business opportunities, innovation, entrepreneurship, education and skills enhancement.

The breadth of the programme and the ability of Nordic co-operation to reach smaller actors and stakeholders in the Arctic are two of Nordic co-operation's great strengths. At the same time, the individual parts of the programme are sufficiently targeted and focused that they are able to make a concrete contribution to the overall goal of sustainable development in the region.

The programme facilitates partnerships designed to contribute to concrete solutions to needs in the Arctic and to the challenges the region faces. It serves as the basis for setting up and running networks and meeting places that can help to enhance mobility, integration and exchanges of experience in relevant areas.



Photo: Visit Faroe Islands

Our Vision 2030 shows the way

Co-operation programmes and activities under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers contribute to fulfilling *Our Vision 2030* – i.e. the Nordic Region becoming the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. The Arctic Co-operation Programme helps achieve the three strategic priorities – a green Nordic Region, a competitive Nordic Region and a socially sustainable Nordic Region – and the 12 objectives set out in the Action Plan 2021–2024 for *Our Vision 2030*.

A green Nordic Region

Together, we will promote a green transition of our societies and work towards carbon neutrality and a sustainable circular and bio-based economy. We will:

- Strengthen the research, development and promotion of solutions that support carbon neutrality and climate adaptation, including in the areas of transport, construction, food and energy
- Contribute to the safeguarding of biodiversity and the sustainable use of the Nordic Region's nature and seas
- Promote a circular and sustainable economy, sustainable and competitive production, sustainable food systems, and resource-efficient and non-toxic cycles in the Nordic Region
- Make it far easier and more attractive for Nordic consumers to prioritise healthy and environmentally and climate-friendly choices by means of a joint investment in sustainable consumption
- Contribute to positive developments in international co-operation on the environment and climate, such as by promoting Nordic green solutions in the rest of the world.

The strategic priority area *A green Nordic Region* is linked primarily to the following Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals: 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15.



A competitive Nordic Region

Together, we will promote green growth in the Nordic Region based on knowledge, innovation, mobility and digital integration. We will:

- Support knowledge and innovation and make it easier for companies across the Nordic Region to take full advantage of the development opportunities created by the green, technical and digital transformation and the growing bioeconomy
- Develop skills and well-functioning labour markets that match the requirements of the green transition and digital developments and that support freedom of movement in the Nordic Region
- Leverage digitalisation and education to bind the Nordic countries even closer together.

The strategic priority area *A competitive Nordic Region* is linked primarily to the following Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals: 4, 8, 9 and 11.



A socially sustainable Nordic Region

Together, we will promote an inclusive, equal, and interconnected region with shared values and strengthened cultural exchanges and welfare. We will:

- Contribute to good, equal and safe health and welfare for all
- Work to involve everyone living in the Nordic Region in the green transition and digital developments, utilising the potential inherent in the transition without exacerbating inequalities as a result
- Give Nordic civil society, and especially children and young people, a louder voice and greater participation in Nordic co-operation, and increase their knowledge of the languages and cultures of neighbouring countries
- Maintain trust and solidarity in the Nordic Region, its shared values and the Nordic community, with an emphasis on culture, democracy, equality, inclusion, non-discrimination and freedom of expression.

The strategic priority area *A socially sustainable Nordic Region* is linked primarily to the following Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals: 3, 5, 10 and 16.



Our Vision 2030

A **competitive** Nordic Region

Together, we will promote green growth in the Nordic region based on knowledge, innovation, mobility and digital integration.

**The Nordic
Region will
become the most
sustainable and
integrated region
in the world**

A **green** Nordic Region

Together, we will promote a green transition of our societies and work towards carbon neutrality and a sustainable circular and bio-based economy.

A **socially sustainable** Nordic Region

Together, we will promote an inclusive, equal and interconnected region with shared values and strengthened cultural exchange and welfare.



Photo: Visit Faroe Islands

Categories in the Arctic Co-operation Programme 2022–2024

As part of *Our Vision 2030*, the Nordic Council of Ministers is working on Agenda 2030 and the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs). The sustainable development goals help to steer the work on the Arctic Co-operation Programme 2022–2024, as reflected in the priorities below. At the same time, however, the programme has a clear link to *Our Vision 2030* and its focus on the three elements of social sustainability, the environment and the economy.

The priorities are based on developments in relation to

- PLANET
- PEOPLE(S)
- PROSPERITY
- particular attention also will be paid to facilitating all of the work on these goals by means of PARTNERSHIPS.

In this way, the programme contributes to realising *Our Vision 2030* and to achieving the 12 secondary objectives set out in the Action Plan. The Arctic Co-operation Programme must also be seen in the context of the strategies for gender equality and for children and young people that the Nordic Council of Ministers applies in all of its sectors.

The following sustainable development goals are relevant to the Arctic Co-operation Programme under the heading **PEOPLES**: SDG #3 (good health and wellbeing); SDG #4 (quality education); SDG #5 (gender equality); SDG #11 (sustainable cities and communities); SDG #16 (peace, justice and strong institutions); and SDG #17 (partnerships for the goals).

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme will seek to implement sustainable development goals relevant to the theme PEOPLES in order to facilitate and strengthen co-operation projects and communication in the following areas:

- Indigenous peoples and communities
 - Families' standards of living, especially for children and young people
 - Gender equality and gender roles
 - Health and social conditions
 - Research, education, training and skills enhancement
 - 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.
-

The following sustainable development goals are relevant to the Arctic Co-operation Programme under the heading **PLANET**: SDG #6 (clean water and sanitation); SDG #7 (affordable and clean energy); SDG #11 (sustainable cities and communities); SDG #13 (climate action); SDG #14 (life in the sea); SDG #15 (life on land); and SDG #17 (partnerships for the goals).

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme will seek to implement sustainable development goals relevant to the theme PLANET in order to facilitate and strengthen co-operation projects and communication in the following areas:

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

The following sustainable development goals are relevant to the Arctic Co-operation Programme under the heading **PROSPERITY**: SDG #2 (zero hunger), SDG #4 (quality education); SDG #7 (affordable and clean energy); SDG #8 (decent work and economic growth); SDG #9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure); SDG #11 (sustainable cities and communities); SDG #12 (responsible consumption and production); and SDG #17 (partnerships for the goals).

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme will seek to implement sustainable development goals relevant to the theme PROSPERITY in order to facilitate and strengthen co-operation projects that focus on sustainable business and economic growth for the benefit of the indigenous peoples and communities in the Arctic in the following areas:

- Innovation and entrepreneurship, including education and training for innovation/ entrepreneurship and start-up environments
 - Digitalisation
 - Research and business development
 - Traditional knowledge and local knowledge
 - Development of local business opportunities
 - The importance of culture for a sustainable future in the Arctic
 - Relevant businesses in the Arctic, e.g. tourism, food production, food culture and food exports.
-

The main sustainable development goals relevant to the Arctic Co-operation Programme under the priority **PARTNERSHIPS** are SDG #16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and SDG #17 (partnerships for the goals), which serve as instruments for increased co-operation and the development of partnerships in the Arctic, with a focus on:

- Mobility and cross-border co-operation
- Capacity building and co-operation between different actors and institutions
- Co-operation between the public and private sectors, as well as civil society.



Photo: brandnorway.no

Organisation

The Nordic Prime Ministers have overall responsibility for Nordic co-operation. In practice, this responsibility is delegated to the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation (MR-SAM) and to the Nordic Committee for Co-operation (NSK), which coordinates the day-to-day work of Nordic inter-governmental co-operation.

The Nordic Council of Ministers was set up in 1971 and, despite its name, actually consists of several individual councils of ministers. There are currently 11 ministerial councils as well as the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation. All decisions in the Nordic Council of Ministers must be unanimous.

Arctic co-operation is part of the Nordic Council of Ministers' international co-operation, which falls under the remit of Ministers for Nordic Co-operation.

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. *Our Vision 2030* is an important instrument in this work.

As a rule, co-operation projects must involve three Nordic countries. This partnership can also be supplemented with one or more non-Nordic countries – for example, one or more of the other Arctic states (the USA, Canada and Russia). When assessing applications, the emphasis will be on whether the project:

- Contributes to a green, competitive and socially sustainable Nordic Region in terms of achieving one or more of the 12 objectives set out in the Action Plan for *Our Vision 2030*
- Leads to quantifiable positive effects from joint Nordic/Arctic solutions that could not be achieved by a project implemented purely at national level
- Has visible regional and local results in the Arctic
- Manifests and/or develops a sense of Nordic/Arctic cohesion
- Enhances Nordic competences and competitiveness
- Generates new and innovative knowledge and/or new partnerships that create new and innovative approaches to development in the Arctic
- Takes into account the indigenous peoples and local communities' traditional knowledge
- Helps strengthen overall Nordic influence internationally
- Publicises its results
- Contributes to the Nordic Council of Ministers' strategies that transcend sectors.

Budget

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 consists of two main parts:

1. a political priority part, which gives the countries the prerogative and opportunity to launch projects, initiatives and/or activities with high political priority within the framework of the programme
2. an open application part, which is 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 the fiscal year concerned.

Administration

MR-SAM has overall responsibility for the Arctic programme, including its implementation and administration. A Nordic Arctic advisory committee (NRKA) has been set up to assist in the annual implementation of the programme. The task of administrating the open round of funding applications may be outsourced to a third party. 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.

About this publication

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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, 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. Shared Nordic values help the region solidify its position as one of the world's most innovative and competitive.

Nordic Council of Ministers

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How the Co-operation Programme relates to Our Vision 2030

All activities in the Nordic Council of Ministers will contribute to fulfilling our vision that the Nordic Region will be the world's most sustainable and integrated region in 2030. The co-operation programme describes how the culture sector will work with the three strategic priority areas and contribute to reaching the 12 objectives in the Action Plan 2021–24 in the work to attain *Our Vision 2030*.

Read more: norden.org