

Working Together on Solutions for the Future

Denmark's Presidency 2020



Nordic Council
of Ministers

Working Together on Solutions for the Future

Denmark's Presidency 2020

PolitikNord: 2019:746

ISBN 978-92-893-6316-7 (PRINT)

ISBN 978-92-893-6317-4 (PDF)

ISBN 978-92-893-6318-1 (EPUB)

<http://dx.doi.org/10.6027/PN2019-746>

© Nordic Council of Ministers 2019

Layout: Mette Agger Tang

Cover Photo: Scanpix.dk

Print: Rosendahls

Printed in Denmark



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

Nordens Hus

Ved Stranden 18

DK-1061 Copenhagen

www.norden.org

Download and order Nordic publications from www.norden.org/nordpub

Programme for the Danish Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers 2020

Contents

04	Foreword
07	Programme for the Presidency
09	The green Nordic region
10	The competitive Nordic region
12	The socially sustainable Nordic region



Mogens Jensen

Minister for Nordic Co-operation
Denmark



Kaj Leo Holm Johannesen

Minister for Nordic Co-operation
Faroe Islands



Vittus Qujaukitsoq

Minister for Nordic Co-operation
Greenland

Foreword

The Kingdom of Denmark stretches far and wide, including the farthest points to the north, south and west of the Nordic region. Naturally, the region and its shared values are an important part of our identity.

During Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands' joint Presidency, we will work to strengthen the Nordic region that we hold so dear. We will realise the new vision of the Nordic region as the world's most sustainable and integrated region. It is important for us, for the region and for the world that the Nordic countries remain united and strong in the future, both internally and externally.

Climate change is one of the biggest and most worrying challenges we face. It calls for urgent action, and the Nordic countries must take the lead. We have particular expertise in this area and, therefore, a particular obligation to show the way forward. We will build on that, and with concrete examples of intelligent solutions that facilitate sustainable economic development, we will inspire other countries to follow suit.

We must ensure that in the future, the Nordic region remains one of the best and most sustainable places in the world to be born. We have strong social models and a community of countries based on shared values. The Nordic countries often top international rankings of the happiest people, the least corrupt societies and the highest quality of life. We have high levels of gender equality, innovation and prosperity and awareness of the environment, nature and the climate.

If the Nordic region is to maintain its global leadership in these areas, we must look ahead and embrace the challenges we face. We are at our best when we work together. Our joint Presidency programme is therefore titled *Working Together on Solutions for the Future*.



Programme for the Presidency

The Danish Presidency 2020 will be the first to implement the Nordic Council of Ministers' new vision: "The Nordic region will become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world". The vision sets out the ambitions for Nordic co-operation, and its three strategic priorities plot a clear course for future partnerships in a green, competitive and socially sustainable Nordic region.

The Nordic Council of Ministers' new vision and strategic priorities are designed to make co-operation more focused and to direct the efforts as well as the budget funds toward the main priority areas. The work also needs to be more results-oriented, so that citizens,

companies and official agencies have a better understanding of the tangible benefits of the work done by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) act as benchmarks for the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers, and will be central to the Danish Presidency.

This programme sets out the cross-sectoral focus areas that will characterise the Danish Presidency in 2020 in the light of the three strategic priorities. In addition to these focus areas, there will be activities across a broad range of areas of co-operation during the Presidency.



PHOTO: MARTIN SCHIØTZ



PHOTO: SCANPIX.DK

The green Nordic region

In relation to the green agenda, each of the Nordic countries is, in its own way, ahead of the curve. The joint Nordic electricity market is also an inspiring success story, and illustrates the value of working together to promote clean energy. Work on the green agenda will continue during the Presidency. Nordic co-operation on the environment, nature and the climate will be stepped up. This will entail working together to further develop Nordic work on the green and circular economies, as well as on the existing Nordic climate diplomacy. The UN Biodiversity Conference in Kunming (China) will be of particular importance. This is where new global goals for nature will be set.

As green pioneers, the Nordic countries have a special responsibility for, and interest in, inspiring and helping other countries to reduce their impact on the environment, nature and the climate, including improving conditions for biodiversity. Exchanges of knowledge regarding Nordic climate and environment solutions will, therefore, be a priority. The work of the Nordic Council of Ministers must also focus more closely on activities that support overarching national initiatives on sustainability, and which contribute to the development of new environment and climate policies. This will equip our countries and the region to move

faster and further on the green agenda, which is a cornerstone of the Nordic region's global brand. The foundations for ambitious action are already in place, in the form of the new vision, the 2018 strategic review of co-operation on the environment and climate, and the 2017 review of energy co-operation. The Nordic countries have set ambitious goals for plastic and other ocean waste, and will work collectively, on behalf of the whole world, to achieve a global agreement on reducing plastics in the run-up to the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA5) in February 2021.

Specifically, we will concentrate on further developing the Nordic electricity market and the opportunities for converting surpluses of green electricity into fuel; enhancing the green transition in business; working on the Helsinki Declaration on Nordic Carbon Neutrality; following up on the UN Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit in September 2019; focusing attention on sustainable transport; securing ambitious joint Nordic initiatives in connection with the Biodiversity Conference and the UNEA5 Assembly; and initiating a Nordic project on environmental problems arising from cruise-ship tourism. The Danish Presidency will also see the launch of a three-year project in which the Faroe Islands will be used as a test case for energy solutions in isolated areas.

The competitive Nordic region

At the core of the Nordic Council of Ministers' vision is green growth based on knowledge, innovation, mobility and digital integration of the Nordic countries.

The transition from a linear global economy to a circular one is a key factor in the promotion of sustainable growth, as well as in relation to meeting the aims of both the Paris climate agreement¹ and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The global market for circular and climate-friendly solutions is rapidly increasing. The Nordic economies have a strong focus on the circular transition, and it is now internationally recognised that Nordic green technologies and sustainable business models are second to none.

The entire Nordic region, all the way to the most distant skerry, must feel border-free, and function as one big domestic

market for our citizens and businesses. Similar social models, significant trade with each other and shared history, culture and mutual understanding of each other's languages make Nordic co-operation an obvious forum within which to develop our societies and policies in a way that ensures that we sustain high growth and remain competitive. The preconditions for this are joint research, innovation and investment.

Digitalisation is central to boosting our competitiveness, and provides new opportunities for integration in the Nordic region. This is perhaps most clearly visible in the project Nordic Smart Government. Its purpose is to make everyday life easier for small and medium-sized businesses, particularly in terms of reporting to the authorities. It also seeks to create new business opportunities and support



PHOTO: MARTIN SCHIØTZ



PHOTO: SCANPIX.DK

growth by providing access to real-time financial data. Digitalisation also provides hope and expectations of removing many of the traditional barriers to cross-border freedom of movement. It is anticipated that efforts to achieve this will intensify once digital self-service solutions are made available to citizens and businesses from other Nordic countries.

The Nordic countries have a strong collective and global brand, which can support exports by companies in the region. Tourists are increasingly drawn to the Nordic region due to its great variation, the beautiful scenery, the history, culture, experiences and modern, sustainable cities. The vast majority of tourists from distant markets, visit more than one of the Nordic countries, and tend to think of them as a single destination. This paves the way for working together on the tourism action plan for 2019–2023, not least in relation to sustainable tourism and enhancing our marketing in selected distant markets in order to position the Nordic region as an attractive tourist destination.

Specifically, this will include boosting green growth in the Nordic region by raising the level of ambition for Nordic co-operation on the circular economy. The Presidency will also work on mobility. The Nordic Council of Ministers' working life sector

will work on new forms of employment and the future-proofing of Nordic labour markets. This work will form an overall framework for co-operation, which will include the final stage of the project exploring the future of work. Another area for Nordic co-operation will be initiatives that provide access to digital self-service solutions across all of the Nordic countries, especially in the areas that are the most important for mobility and integration in the Nordic region. In addition, we will continue to develop the Nordic Smart Government project. During the Presidency, we will also work with artificial intelligence, develop a new co-operation programme for regional policy, and build on existing work on sustainable cities.

We will also work to make transport greener, more digitised and more competitive. Using Greenland as the starting point, a Presidency project will look at sustainability and value creation in the coastal communities of the future, with a particular focus on the fishing industry. Areas of interest will include demographic challenges, responsible resource management and the sea as a safe place to work.

Note 1: The Kingdom of Denmark has applied for a territorial opt-out from the Paris Agreement on behalf of Greenland.

The socially sustainable Nordic region

Geographical distance is no longer as important as it once was, which presents challenges for Nordic cohesion. It is now far easier and cheaper to travel long distances. Most young people in the Nordic countries have a better command of English than they do of other Nordic languages, and the internet has put the whole world at their fingertips. Our social cohesion relies on awareness of our shared values, the benefits of working together and the importance of balanced societies based on trust, democracy, community and equality, with opportunities for all. It also depends on a generation of strong young people who are able to work together, devise innovative solutions and address the challenges of the future.

The education and culture sectors provide particularly good opportunities to ensure

widespread popular support for Nordic co-operation, particularly when it comes to bringing young people together and nurturing their friendships. The various exchange programmes run by the Nordic Council of Ministers, as well as other highly regarded youth projects, play an important role in this context. In other words, a stronger voice for children and young people, mobility, working together as young people, good mental health and knowledge of the Nordic languages are important aspects of Nordic co-operation.

A socially sustainable Nordic region is also one that enables everyone to reap the benefits of co-operation – both young and old alike; those with plenty of opportunities and those with few. Peaceful and democratic societies in which all citizens feel safe and secure are a prerequisite for development.



PHOTO: ANN-SOFI ROSENKVIST / VISITSWEDEN.SE



PHOTO: CARSTEN EGEVANG

Specifically, the Presidency will focus on areas such as the potential for sustainable local growth in all parts of the Nordic region; it will support exchange schemes between Nordic countries; develop a Nordic agenda on the learning and skills of the future; establish a new Nordic approach to LGBTI issues; initiate work on structural solutions to the challenges faced by the health service, particularly at local level; mark the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the UN's Beijing Platform for Action on gender equality and women's rights; and develop even closer co-operation between Nordic police forces.

The Presidency will launch an interdisciplinary project aimed at young Nordic women and men's participation in sustainable communities, with a focus on democratic citizenship, cultural involvement and mental wellbeing. The project will seek to enhance the skills and knowledge of professionals who work with young people, and to create

spaces, both inside and outside schools, that will help promote *sustainable communities* for young people.

Sustainable communities are defined as inclusive ones that have the strength and potential to continue beyond the end of the project in 2023. Part of the ambition behind the project is to develop and test learning materials for children and young people that promote democratic participation. It also involves political events or similar activities run by, for or in conjunction with Nordic young people, in order to create spaces for democratic dialogue and make young people more democratic citizens and more culturally engaged. The project will also seek to improve the mental wellbeing of Nordic young people by bolstering the sense of community across the Nordic countries and working even more closely together on health and social affairs. The project is based on inter-sectoral collaboration between teaching, education and training, social affairs, equality, culture and health.





Nordic Council of Ministers
Nordens Hus
Ved Stranden 18
DK-1061 Copenhagen
www.norden.org

