

## **The Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme 2009–2011**

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme 2009–2011 is a follow-up to the decision by the Ministers for Nordic co-operation to make the Nordic Region an active part of regional co-operation in Northern Europe. The Arctic Co-operation Programme is one of several co-operation programmes that the Nordic Council of Ministers has established with a view to being able to enter into regional co-operation with neighbouring countries and organisations. The Nordic Council of Ministers is a good platform for the Nordic countries to exert influence and achieve benefits in relation to the political agenda for regional co-operation.

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme dates back to 1996, and was last revised in 2005. The current revision is taking place because the current programme period expires at the end of 2008 and reflects a) the experiences gained in the past years of work in the Arctic Council; b) the changes to the Nordic Council of Ministers' activities in the Adjacent Areas, which have led to the development of a Russia Programme and a geographically comprehensive policy for co-operation with the Nordic Region's neighbours; and c) the revised Nordic Strategy for Sustainable Development, which constitutes a foundation for modern co-operation at ministerial-council level and acts as starting point for joint Nordic input into sustainable development, as well as d) the evaluation of the Council of Ministers' Arctic co-operation, which was conducted in 2007.

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme shall be the Nordic Council of Ministers' platform for co-operation on Arctic questions with the countries in the Arctic Council, with the EU on the development of the Arctic Window in the EU's Northern Dimension, and with the Nordic Region's Arctic neighbours in the West in the period 2009–2011. The programme supplements the other Nordic strategies and programmes, including the Strategy for Sustainable Development, the Environment Action Plan and the Council of Ministers' Co-operation Programme with Russia.

The Arctic Co-operation Programme's overall objectives for the period 2009–2011 shall guide the planning and implementation of the Nordic Council of Ministers' regional co-operation activities in relation to the Arctic area, including a) to contribute to developing and improving the quality of life for the population and the ecological and economic prerequisites for continued human settlement in the Arctic; b) to contribute to increased knowledge of and initiatives to combat climate changes, pollutants and heavy metals in the Arctic; c) to contribute to and support the Arctic population's social and cultural development; and d) to contribute to preserving Arctic nature, natural qualities and biological diversity, and to guarantee sustainable utilisation of the region's resources.

The objectives and priorities for the coming three-year period are to a great extent an extension and consolidation of the current Nordic work in the Arctic, namely to 1) focus on climatic changes and pollutants in the Arctic, 2) to support follow-up on and the dissemination of the results of Nordic research in the Arctic Region, as well as 3) to contribute to a long-term legacy from the international work being done under the auspices of International Polar Year. The budget framework for the programme has increased from DKK 1 million in 1996 to a figure of over DKK 8 million in 2009.

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme 2009–2011 has been sent to NGOs and organisations representing indigenous peoples, and only positive acknowledgements have been received, including from the Saami Parliament.

The Nordic Council of Ministers' new Arctic programme for co-operation can be found below:

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## 1. Introduction

All activity in which the Nordic Council of Ministers participates shall be in line with the Nordic Council of Ministers' and the Nordic countries' over-arching strategies. The Arctic Co-operation Programme supplements the Nordic Council of Ministers' other programmes, strategies and action plans that can, in the same way, include relevant Arctic elements.

This Arctic co-operation programme is the Nordic Council of Ministers' platform for co-operation on Arctic questions with the countries in the Arctic Council, with the EU, including on the development of the Arctic Window in the EU's Northern Dimension, and with the Nordic Region's Arctic neighbours in the period 2009–2011.

## 2. The political objectives of the Council of Ministers' Arctic co-operation

The following over-arching objectives shall guide the planning and implementation of the Nordic Council of Ministers' co-operation activities in relation to the Arctic:

- Contribute to increased knowledge of and efforts to combat climate changes, pollutants and heavy metals in the Arctic and their consequences for human and animal living conditions, globally as well as in the Arctic Region.
- Contribute to the development and improvement of the quality of life of the Arctic population and the ecological and economic prerequisites for continued human settlement in the Arctic, with special responsibility for the situation of the Saami and Inuit population.
- Contribute to and support the Arctic population's social and cultural development, with due deference to the challenges that increased globalisation poses, including the promotion of understanding of multilateral and international processes.
- Contribute to preserving Arctic nature, natural qualities, biological diversity and sustainable use of the region's resources as far as both renewable and non-renewable resources are concerned.

In the political sphere, it is particularly important to continue to develop rational forms of co-operation and co-operation forums between the Arctic states in such a way that we mutually and collectively live up to our responsibility to implement the joint projects that are necessary in order to turn the overall objectives for the co-operation into reality.

Normally, initiatives and activities shall be taken by the Nordic countries within the Arctic Council. Other initiatives are, however, possible if the Arctic Council is judged not to be the right forum.

## 3. The Council of Ministers' activities in the Arctic in 2009–2011

Within the overall objectives mentioned above, the following will be prioritised in the period 2009–2011:

- **Nordic activities and Nordic participation within the frameworks of the Arctic Council**, including following up on the conclusions reached by the Arctic Council's Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, continued initiatives aimed at preventing the spread of pollutants and heavy metals in the Arctic, and following up on the conclusions reached by the Arctic Council's Arctic Human Development Report.
- **Follow-up and publicity work of the results of Nordic research** into development in the Arctic regarding climate changes in the Arctic and the indigenous people's living conditions and economic and cultural development opportunities.

- **Nordic activities that contribute to guaranteeing a long-term legacy from the International Polar Year 2007–2008 (IPY).**

This Arctic Co-operation Programme is valid for all of the Nordic Council of Ministers' work on Arctic questions. The prioritised activities mentioned can be supplemented in the separate ministerial councils' sector programmes and strategies, which can include:

- work to preserve Arctic nature and biodiversity, as well as tracing, monitoring and combating pollutants.
- strengthening of networks and competencies for participation in democratic international processes, prioritisation of indigenous peoples' competency development, and capacity building in association with the local and regional administration of and participation in international processes.
- promoting economic development through business development, innovation and competence building in sparsely populated areas, incl. alternative energy supplies, development of the service and culture sectors, and local production and processing.
- research focusing on the Arctic area that underpins the common policy on the climate, energy, nature and environment, and which contributes to guaranteeing and further developing the results achieved during IPY.
- co-operation on health-promoting initiatives, including in particular combating contagious and man-made illnesses, as well as the development of indicators for living conditions on the Arctic populations' own premises.
- co-operation between institutes of higher education in the Nordic Region.

#### **4. Instruments**

Specific work under the Arctic Co-operation Programme will be conducted as individual projects as per applications from countries, organisations or institutions in the Nordic Region or neighbouring countries, and as initiatives that emanate from the separate ministerial councils' need to support political processes.

The Nordic Council of Ministers' activities in the Arctic are funded by the respective councils of ministers and by a special overall budget line under the Ministers for Nordic co-operation (MR-SAM), or through co-funding. The overall Council of Ministers' budget line is allocated to the implementation of this programme.

The Nordic Council of Ministers can contribute financially to co-operation in the Arctic Council's working groups and instruments. The Nordic Council of Ministers' other scholarship and mobility programmes can also fund activities in the Arctic.

#### **5. Administration**

The Nordic Council of Ministers communicates information about the programme, e.g. through the website. The existing Nordic institutional structures are used for the contact activities.

The Nordic Council of Ministers' administrative guidelines for the processing of project applications, incl. travel costs, consultancy services, wages and conditions, etc., as well as for financial reports and evaluating the outcomes of projects shall be complied with.

The Nordic Committee for Co-operation (NSK) has set up an Arctic Expert Committee (ASK) to advise on the Arctic co-operation. ASK will continue to be the Nordic Senior Arctic Officials, as well as representatives of the Faroe Islands and Greenland. ASK will have an advisory role in devising, implementing and in following up of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic activities. ASK can invite ICC Greenland and the Saami Council to take part in the work in accordance with

the Council of Ministers' guidelines for co-operation with voluntary organisations. NSK and MR-SAM are the decision-making organs in relation to the Arctic Co-operation Programme.

The Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat provides the secretariat function for ASK, while project and budget administration, project reports and the updating of the Arctic database are the responsibility of an administrative body outside the NCM Secretariat.