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Nordic Council of Ministers Arctic Co-operation Programme 2012-2014

1. Introduction

The challenges faced by and in the Arctic have increased significantly and have become more visible over the years. Greater knowledge has been accumulated about the impact of globalisation and climate change, as well as of the opportunities they bring for the Arctic region, the local communities, the people of the region, the environment and nature. The Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme was first published in 1996, and it has grown in importance and scope over the years. Its priorities cover a wide range of projects and initiatives of various kinds. Evaluations of the programme have added valuable knowledge about the main challenges facing the Arctic societies in relation to sustainable development. This update to the programme is based on the lessons learned from these activities and initiatives, on the Nordic countries' Arctic strategies and on other topical political and economic trends in the Arctic¹. The Arctic Co-operation programme complements other Nordic Council of Ministers' programmes, strategies² and initiatives that cover issues relevant to the Arctic.

2. The Nordic Council of Ministers' policy objective for Arctic co-operation

"People First"

The Arctic stands on the threshold of major changes, which will not only have an impact on nature, the environment and the climate at global, regional and local level but will also, in the first instance, affect Arctic societies and the Arctic people in a number of important areas. On the one hand, there is the prospect of the loss of traditional ways of life, patterns of settlement and ways of making a living, as well as of natural phenomena and aspects of the environment. On the other hand, there is the prospect of new business and development opportunities. The Arctic is potentially facing more "mega projects" in the form, for example, of oil, gas and mineral extraction. This will very much be a case of "large-scale industries" meeting "small-scale societies", and will place demands on the population of the Arctic, but will also create opportunities that could be exploited to generate sustainable development in the region. It is important to continue to have and to develop processes that take into account the unique Arctic environment and involve local populations, so that decisions are consistent with their needs and desire for self-determination and are also compatible with environmental conservation and with sustainable development in the region.

The **people first** approach in Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme for 2012-2014 is designed to promote sustainable development. The basic objective of the Arctic Co-operation

¹ E.g. "Megatrends in the Arctic", "Arctic Social Indicators", "The Political Economy of Northern Regional Development", etc. (www.norden.org)

² e.g. the Strategy for Sustainable Development, etc.

Programme is to support processes, projects and initiatives that will help promote sustainable development and benefit the people of the Arctic under the conditions generated by globalisation and climate change.

3. Areas of co-operation

Five areas of co-operation have been drawn up for the Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme 2012-2014:

- **Population:** The Arctic Co-operation Programme is supposed to promote sustainable development in the Arctic by meeting the challenges created by urbanisation by supporting initiatives that provide tools for constructive solutions to demographic challenges, patterns of human settlement, urban planning and mobility. The Co-operation Programme is also designed to provide support for initiatives aimed at ensuring social cohesion, including issues related to integration, living conditions, promoting public health – particularly efforts to combat contagious and human-induced diseases – as well as initiatives and knowledge about traditional diets and about guaranteeing food safety. The programme pays special attention to the indigenous peoples of the Arctic, to their living conditions and to their adaptation to the new conditions brought about by climate change, globalisation, potential new business opportunities and other external developments.
- **The Environment and Nature:** The Arctic Co-operation Programme is designed to promote the work to meet the environmental challenges arising from human activity in and outside the Arctic, and work to preserve Arctic nature and biodiversity. The Programme will provide support for initiatives that generate knowledge about environmental and natural processes as well as initiatives directed at promoting knowledge and information about what can be done at a local and regional level to preserve and protect the environment, nature and the seas in the Arctic region.
- **Climate.** The Co-operation Programme should promote initiatives that will help combat climate challenges faced by the Arctic. The programme will support initiatives that generate and spread knowledge about the processes involved in climate change. The focus will also be on local and regional adaptation strategies, including the generation of knowledge and information about what can be done at a local and regional level to minimise the negative effects of global warming and of other local and global impacts on the climate.
- **Sustainable Business Development:** The Arctic Co-operation Programme is designed to promote sustainable business development in the Arctic, supporting the frameworks for potential new opportunities and providing back-up for the challenges caused by a larger and more diversified business structure in the region. The Programme supports the sustainable use of resources with development potential; innovation in and development of business as well as innovative approaches to structural business challenges in the form of e.g. renewable energy, infrastructure, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and development of local service-, production- and processing industries. In this context, focus will be on the interaction between business and society, incl. issues of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Corporate Responsibility (CR).
- **Education and Skills Enhancement:** The Arctic Co-operation Programme is designed to promote sustainable development in the Arctic by supporting initiatives that improve education, enhance the skills of the people and strengthen the grass-roots level and the work done by organisations in the region. This involves strengthening learning networks and improving competences to participate in democratic international processes; prioritisation of skills

enhancement and capacity building for local and regional government; development of local competences in information and communication technology (ICT), especially e-learning and telemedicine; strengthening indigenous peoples' and Arctic youth's understanding of the challenges and opportunities posed by globalisation and climate change and other measures designed to help the Arctic people further develop sustainable communities.

Transcending different focus areas, the Arctic Co-operation Programme is designed to help collate and co-ordinate the work relating to the Arctic within the framework of the Nordic Council of Ministers and its institutions.

4. Special priorities for the Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme 2012-2014

Within the overall objectives and focus areas mentioned above, the following will be prioritised in the period 2012-14:

- Activities that include Arctic and Nordic involvement and fall within the frameworks of the objectives, focus areas and criteria set by the Arctic Co-operation Programme.
- Activities that follow up on and disseminate the results from Nordic initiatives concerning the Arctic, including results from the Arctic Co-operation Programme 2009-2011.
- Activities that are in line with current political priorities, including those of the ministerial councils' and of the countries' Arctic strategies, etc.

The Nordic Committee for Co-operation (NSK) is empowered – within the frameworks of the Arctic Co-operation Programme – to define annual strategic priorities that ensure a common focus for Nordic funding.

5. Criteria for the Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme

The Programme is designed to involve the local population and other stakeholders in the Arctic, including the indigenous peoples. When assessing applications, emphasis will be placed on the following criteria:

- Whether the applications are consistent with the programme's objectives, focus areas and priorities and encapsulate the urgent challenges faced in the Arctic.
- Whether applications are in accordance with the Nordic Council of Ministers' activities in the area.
- Whether applications have local/regional support and ownership.
- Whether the applications include a self-financing component and are consistent with other financial instruments under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers.
- Whether the applications will provide specialist insight and generate development in the area concerned.
- Whether the applications generate Nordic synergy³ and strengthen Nordic and Arctic networks.

Projects must comply with the Nordic Council of Ministers' general rules for Nordic participation.

³ Nordic synergy is a term for the added value generated by running initiatives collectively, involving multiple (Nordic) countries, and enhancing the political and social value that would be generated if the activities were not co-ordinated at a Nordic level.

6. The Council of Ministers' instruments in the Arctic Co-operation Programme 2012-2014

The Arctic Co-operation Programme is designed to ensure coherence between the Arctic activities by the various Nordic councils of ministers. The Nordic Council of Ministers' activities in the Arctic are funded by the Arctic Co-operation Programme, which is administered by the Nordic Ministers for Co-operation (MR-SAM) but activities can also be funded from the budgets of the individual councils of ministers as per their respective strategies and action plans. Activities in the Arctic may also be funded from the Council of Ministers' other grant and mobility programmes.

Specific parts of the Arctic Co-operation Programme will be run as individual projects, dependent on applications from countries, organisations or institutions in the Nordic Region or adjacent areas, or run as initiatives that emanate from the needs of the separate ministerial councils to support work on topical, specialist issues.

The Arctic Co-operation Programme allocates funding on the basis of applications submitted on www.norden.org. Funding can also be allocated directly at the behest of the Nordic Co-operation Committee (NSK). Projects must comply with the objectives, priorities, and criteria laid out in the Arctic Co-operation Programme and the maximum grant per project is normally DKK 500,000.

7. Managing the Co-operation Programme

The Council of Ministers' Secretariat publishes information about the programme, e.g. on www.norden.org. Existing Nordic institutions are used to forge contacts and the Council of Ministers' guidelines apply to the processing of project applications, incl. travel costs, consultancy services, pay and conditions, etc. as well as for financial reporting and reporting on the outcome of finished projects.

The Nordic Ministers for Co-operation (MR-SAM) and the Nordic Committee for Co-operation (NSK) are the decision-making bodies in relation to the Arctic Co-operation Programme. MR-SAM and NSK are entitled to set up an advisory committee to assist with Arctic co-operation. The committee plays an advisory role in the design, implementation and follow up of the Council of Ministers' Arctic activities and ensure that there is an interdisciplinary foundation and co-ordination between the endeavours of the various ministerial councils and issues faced currently in the Arctic. Other relevant stakeholders (regional fora, indigenous peoples' organisations, etc.) can also be invited to provide input into the Nordic Council of Ministers' work on Arctic questions in accordance with the Council of Ministers' guidelines for co-operation with other organisations.

Communication of the activities and results of the programme will be accorded high priority.

The Council of Ministers' Secretariat provides the secretariat function for MR-SAM and NSK.