

Arctic Co-operation Programme 2015–2017





1. Introduction

The Arctic region is undergoing rapid change and the challenges this poses are more and more visible. Global climate change has had a huge impact on both the natural environment and the people who live in the Arctic. Glaciers and sea ice are melting due to rising average temperatures, making natural resources more easily accessible. This has consequences – good and bad – for people, society and nature, and also provides new opportunities. New shipping routes and new technology make it possible to extract natural resources from the harsh Arctic terrain and help meet the growing global demand for energy. The Nordic countries would like this potential to be exploited in a manner respectful of the unique and vulnerable Arctic nature and environment. It is also important to safeguard the way of life of the Arctic people and provide them with opportunities via a sustainable economic model and the development of a modern welfare state designed to benefit the population as a whole.

Since 1996, the Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme has given rise to several hundred projects, artistic activities and political initiatives on topics ranging from climate change, nature, the environment and sustainable development to health, culture and skills enhancement. These initiatives share one common goal: sustainable development that respects nature and looks after the welfare of the Arctic people.

The Arctic Co-operation Programme supplements other Nordic Council of Ministers' programmes, strategies and initiatives that address issues relevant to the Arctic.

2. Policy objective

To promote sustainable development in the Arctic

The point of sustainable development is to maintain a delicate balance between the responsible management of natural resources and generating economic benefits for local communities. Changes in the Arctic can lead to changes in traditional ways of life, settlement patterns, the local economy and the natural environment. However, there is also considerable potential for generating value, for example from the extraction of oil, gas and minerals, and from shipping, fisheries and tourism. The Nordic countries would like to see these new opportunities being developed in a manner that respects nature, the environment, the Arctic people's way of life and their development opportunities.

The objective of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme 2015–2017 (the Programme) is to help bring about sustainable development in a dynamic region. It supports processes, projects and initiatives that promote sustainable development that benefits the people of the Arctic under the conditions brought about by globalisation and climate change.

The Nordic Council of Ministers has observer status on the Arctic Council, and all of the Nordic countries recognise the importance of a strong and effective Arctic Council. The Programme provides backing for Nordic priorities in the Arctic Council and it is designed to enhance the Nordic countries' work and position in the Arctic and to generate Nordic synergies, e.g. by supporting operations and activities of the Arctic Council.

3. Themes

The themes for the Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation Programme 2015–2017 are:

People

In response to the challenges posed by urbanisation and lifestyle changes in the Arctic, the Programme seeks to support initiatives aimed at devising constructive solutions to challenges relating to demographics, settlement patterns, town planning and transport. The changes affect women and men differently, and gender equality is a prerequisite for the development of a sustainable society. The Programme supports approaches that ensure access to traditional food, guarantee food and water security, and promote public health. It pays particular attention to protecting the way of life of the indigenous peoples, to facilitating adaptation to the new conditions caused by climate change and globalisation and to exploring new economic opportunities. The Programme funds initiatives that build cultural and social capital among the people of the Arctic, as well as initiatives that support children and young people's participation in, and influence on, society.

The Programme adopts an inter-agency approach and seeks to bring together and co-ordinate all of the work done on Arctic issues by the Nordic Council of Ministers and its various institutions and working groups.

Sustainable economic development

The Programme seeks to promote sustainable economic development, provide support for potential new circumpolar business opportunities and address challenges related to increased economic activity and a more diverse economy. It aims to support the sustainable use of natural resources, innovation and green growth, e.g. in shipping, maritime safety, fisheries, tourism and renewable energy. Interaction between business and the community, e.g. through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, is of vital importance.

Environment, nature and climate

The Programme promotes initiatives that counteract environmental changes caused by human activity both in and beyond the Arctic, as well as initiatives that seek to preserve the unique natural environment and biodiversity of the region. It supports initiatives that enhance knowledge of the environmental challenges faced in the Arctic, and that address what can be done at local and regional level to stop the destruction of the region's environment, nature and seas.

The impact of global climate change is particularly severe in the Arctic. As a result, the Programme supports initiatives that generate and spread knowledge of the causes of climate change and its effects in the region. It supports initiatives designed to devise adaptation strategies and determine what can be done at local and regional level to curb the negative effects of global warming, greenhouse-gas emissions and pollution.

Education and skills enhancement

The Programme supports initiatives that promote education and skills enhancement, including at grassroots level and through Arctic-based organisations. This includes improving learning networks and fostering the competences needed to participate in democratic processes at local, regional and international level; developing competences and building capacity in local and regional governance; developing local competences in information and communication technology (ICT) and other initiatives designed to help the people of the Arctic develop a sustainable society.

4. Priorities

The priorities within the themes outlined above are activities that:

- promote positive Nordic synergies in the Arctic that underpin the Programme's objective, themes and criteria
- accord with the political priorities of the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic countries' Arctic strategies
- support the work of the Arctic Council, including its working groups and task forces.

Within the framework of the Programme, the Nordic Committee for Co-operation (NSK) is empowered to identify annual strategic priorities that help provide a holistic perspective on the use of the available funding.

5. Criteria

As far as possible, the Programme should involve local communities and other stakeholders in the Arctic – in particular, the indigenous peoples. When assessing funding applications, emphasis will be placed on whether they:

- are consistent with the Programme’s objective and themes
- are in accordance with the Nordic Council of Ministers’ work and priorities in the Arctic
- enjoy local/regional support and ownership
- include a self-financing component and are consistent with the Council of Ministers’ other financial instruments
- generate specialist insight and promote development
- generate Nordic synergy and strengthen Nordic and Arctic networks
- have a Nordic project manager and at least three Nordic countries among the participants, as per the Council of Ministers’ rules for project activities
- have integrated a gender-equality perspective.

6. Instruments

The Programme is designed to ensure coherence between the work done on Arctic issues by the various councils of Nordic ministers. It provides a proportion of the funding for the Nordic Council of Ministers’ activities in the Arctic and is administered by the ministers for co-operation (MR-SAM). The individual councils of ministers also provide funding from their budgets, as per their respective strategies and action plans, as do the Council of Ministers’ other international programmes, e.g. the programme for working with the Nordic Region’s neighbours to the West and the networking programme for partners in North-West Russia. NordForsk is running the major programme “Sustainable Development in the Arctic”. NORA also has a range of projects in the Arctic. The Council of Ministers’ other scholarship and mobility programmes also provide funding for activities in the Arctic. Projects applying for funding under the Programme should plan to generate synergies with other relevant Arctic initiatives at national, Nordic and/or international level.

Link to the Nordic Council of Ministers’ partners in the Arctic:

<http://www.norden.org/no/tema/arktis/ministerraadets-aktoerer-i-arktis>

Programme initiatives may take the form of standalone projects by countries, organisations or institutions in the Nordic Region that apply for funding, or of political initiatives instigated by one of the Council of Ministers’ sectors to address topical issues.



7. Administration

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat publishes information about the Programme on www.norden.org and via other relevant channels of communication. The Council of Ministers' administrative guidelines apply to the processing of project applications (including travel expenses, consultancy services, staff wages, etc.) and to financial reporting.

A Nordic-Arctic advisory committee can be set up to assist with the implementation of the Programme. The Committee would have an advisory role in the planning, implementation and follow-up of the Council of Ministers' Arctic activities and ensure inter-sectoral support, as well as co-ordination between the work of the various councils of ministers. It would also advise on topical issues and the Nordic country's priorities in the Arctic. Relevant stakeholders (regional forums, indigenous people's organisations, etc.) can also be invited to provide input into the Council of Ministers' work on Arctic issues, as per the guidelines for working with other organisations.

Communication and providing information about the results of initiatives under the Programme are high priorities.

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



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