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Nordic Road Map

Programme for the Icelandic
Presidency of the Nordic Council
of Ministers 2009



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of the Nordic Council of Ministers 2009

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Preamble

In today's world, no nation can define itself or set its own objectives without reference to the international context. Those who live in the Nordic Region do very well in an international comparison, enjoying the highest standard of living in the world. Nevertheless, an ongoing review of our strengths and weaknesses is necessary, because global competition and international affairs are in a constant state of flux.

Many of the challenges facing the Nordic countries can only be addressed through multi-lateral co-operation. Bearing this in mind, the Nordic prime ministers took an important decision in 2007 to set a new agenda for Nordic co-operation - one that centres on a response to globalisation. The agenda's primary purpose is to enhance the Nordic Region's competitiveness, but it also seeks to promote work on international climate-change agreements. The prime ministers' initiatives are therefore consistent with the Region's other efforts in the environment and energy areas, where the focus is on innovation and research that will benefit everyone on the planet. That work must be continued.

In the wake of the prime ministers' decision, a concerted effort has been made to put Nordic co-operation on a new course. The Swedish Presidency in 2008 has brought the Region's efforts together under the heading *Concentrating our Strengths*, and the following four themes: *competitiveness, climate, creativity and co-ordination*. This work is far from finished, however, and one of Iceland's main priorities for the 2009 Presidency will be follow-up on these globalisation initiatives.

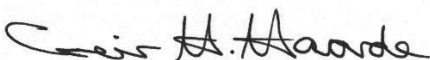
One key priority is implementation of the Nordic programme for excellence in research, *From the Nordic Region to the World*, which promotes innovation and research in the environmental, energy and climate areas. Research results must be incorporated into efforts for environmental protection and renewable energy production. Exports of Nordic high-tech solutions must also be encouraged, and it is essential that the business sector see an interest in taking part in this innovative work.

The Nordic Region is a pioneer in the health and welfare sectors. But welfare spending is increasing with advances in medicine and the rise in average life expectancy. There is every reason for us to adopt a collective approach to analysing the challenges faced by the Nordic welfare states and to learn from each other's experience. A Nordic excellence in research and innovation programme should therefore be initiated in the health and welfare sectors as well.

In spring 2008, Sweden's Prime Minister, in collaboration with the Nordic Council of Ministers, hosted the first Nordic Globalisation Forum on the theme *A Competitive Nordic Region in a Globalised World*. The next Globalisation Forum will take place in Iceland in late February 2009, when the focus will be on energy, the climate and the environment, with Nordic innovation as the overarching theme.

The Nordic countries are also engaged in close co-operation on preparations for the UN climate summit in Copenhagen in December 2009. It is vital for the international community that a new climate agreement is concluded – and that is also the Nordic Region's greatest ambition for this conference.

In a global economy, it is vitally important that Nordic co-operation be built on the solid foundation of our common history and culture, as well as our basic values regarding what is right and worth striving for. We must continue to safeguard those values.



Geir H. Haarde

Nordic Road Map

The prime ministers' Punkaharju Declaration of summer 2007 set a new tone in Nordic co-operation, presenting a vision of the future in which the Nordic Region's responses to the challenges of globalisation would be implemented. Within a short period of time, mechanisms of official co-operation have been changed to enable the Nordic Region to make a greater impact and give it greater potential to exploit the opportunities presented by globalisation. The competitive environment has undergone fundamental change. The idea of the global village has long since become a reality – people, goods and capital move freely across national borders and between continents, stimulating trade and educational and cultural interchange.

Driving force and strength

Iceland attaches great importance to follow-up on the prime ministers' globalisation policy and the projects launched over the last two years under the Finnish and Swedish presidencies. One priority is co-operation that promotes excellence in research, particularly as regards energy, the climate and the environment. The three Nordic research institutions NordForsk, the Nordic Innovation Centre and Nordic Energy Research play a key role in this effort. Iceland considers it essential to strengthen these institutions as a precondition for productive research. The next step will be preparations for a new programme to promote excellence in research on health and welfare issues.

In order to secure the Nordic Region's strong competitive position and the highest possible living standards, there must be improved co-operation on education, research and innovation. The purpose behind reform of Nordic research and innovation policy is to make the Region even more dynamic, effective and creative, which will attract both human and financial resources.

Creating a favourable environment for a knowledge-based society will require a major effort to strengthen and expand co-operation among Nordic universities. The importance of innovation must be widely stressed as well, and supported by close networks encompassing both business and educational institutions. Universities' opportunities to contribute toward innovation in enterprise must be strengthened, particularly as regards their input for business development in sparsely populated areas.

Integrating a gender-equality perspective into all areas of co-operation remains a priority. A strong and diverse workforce is a precondition for the Region retaining its leading position in the competitive international market, so it is important to fully utilise the potential inherent in the education, training and experience of both genders.

The Nordic Region also aims to be a single region in terms of business and the marketplace. This cannot be achieved unless structural barriers are removed and efforts made to avoid the emergence of new obstacles to the cross-border movement of people, goods, services and capital. It is therefore important to back the Nordic Freedom of Movement Forum, which was launched during the 2008 Swedish Presidency.

Making the Region more visible is one factor in strengthening its competitiveness, particularly in those parts of the world where economic growth is strongest. Iceland considers it natural to co-operate on innovation in Asia whenever our Nordic interests coincide. The world exhibition in Shanghai 2010 will provide an ideal opportunity to present the Region as a single market and highlight the Nordic countries' special status with regard to energy and environmental technology, design, art and the creative industries.







The climate challenge

One of the biggest challenges currently confronting the international community is that of developing environmentally-friendly energy solutions. The Nordic countries have a significant contribution to make in this area. Over the last few decades each country has, in its own way, been at the forefront of producing and using renewable energy. This pioneering work should be continued, and Nordic expertise shared with other countries. There should also be further integration of the Nordic electricity market.

The Icelandic Presidency stresses the development of new technology that promotes the sustainable use of energy and reduces emissions of greenhouse gases. A particular priority is the reduction of carbon emissions in the transport sector.

The most important international event during the Icelandic Presidency will be the UN COP15 Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen, which will take place in December 2009, when Sweden holds the EU Presidency. Joint Nordic participation in the summit will promote agreement on the most important targets in the negotiations. At the conference, the Nordic countries will also jointly present new technology and energy solutions designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

A new programme for co-operation on sustainable development in the Nordic Region will come into force at the beginning of 2009. The programme's inter-sectoral priorities will serve as unifying themes in all of the Nordic Council of Ministers' activities. The programme will also be the Region's contribution to co-operation on sustainable development in international forums.

Environmental, climate and energy issues will take priority in the Council of Ministers' co-operation with neighbouring countries and regional organisations.

A globalised region

Global warming is opening up new shipping routes, and demand for the Arctic Region's natural resources is growing. This development involves both opportunities and risks. It is important that the Nordic Region safeguard the northern marine areas, and that it have emergency provisions in place to avert environmental disasters. As a basis for such co-ordinated efforts, Iceland proposes charting the most vulnerable parts of the North Atlantic.

Iceland wants closer co-operation between the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Arctic Council. The Nordic Region should support communities in the Arctic Region and assist indigenous populations' efforts to preserve their cultural heritage.

Co-operation with the Nordic Region's neighbours to the west is also a key priority for Iceland, especially as regards Arctic and climate research. Iceland wishes to explore the potential for co-operation with stakeholders in Canada's eastern coastal areas when it comes to innovation and research on the effects of climate change on marine ecosystems.

Iceland prioritises the development of co-operation with the Nordic Region's Baltic neighbours, particularly in light of the EU's upcoming Baltic Sea strategy. In particular, Iceland wishes to focus on the implementation of the new guidelines for the Council of Ministers' co-operation with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as with Northwest Russia, which will enter into force in 2009. Support for the democratisation process in Belarus will be continued during the Presidency.



Driving Force

The Nordic Region's competitiveness is based on education, knowledge sharing, innovation, adaptability and initiative. The Icelandic Presidency will therefore emphasise interdisciplinary co-operation on research and innovation between official bodies, institutions and companies. It is of crucial significance that we fully utilise the expertise built up by the institutions NordForsk, Nordic Energy Research, Nordic Innovation Centre and Nordregio. A close network of companies and institutions will be encouraged in order to improve knowledge transfer and innovation in all fields. One of Iceland's top priorities will be to make the Nordic Region a dynamic, effective, appealing and integrated region for research, innovation and entrepreneurship.

The starting point in the area of education will be the initiatives included in the Council of Ministers' globalisation process. Multi-sectoral co-operation will be set up with the aim of boosting creativity, innovative thinking and entrepreneurial culture on all levels of the education system. The Nordic Masters initiative will be continued, and the Nordic Region will be profiled as a single education area. Lifelong learning will also continue to be developed as part of the globalisation initiative.

Art training, cultural activities and the creative industries play an increasingly important role in the economy and will therefore be accorded special attention. Strengthening the creative industries will enable the Region to make the most of their creative power to achieve a leading global position. In addition, the education system should also take into account the growing number of immigrants, conscious integration efforts and the potential inherent in a multicultural society.

One of the basic elements in Nordic co-operation is to develop the Region as a joint marketplace. Iceland attaches importance to opening up the Nordic market, e.g. to medicines and health services.

A new programme for regional co-operation comes into force in 2009 and will remain valid until 2012. A key priority for Iceland is to implement the programme as quickly as possible, especially in the areas of research and innovation.

TASKS

- The excellence in research initiative will be set in motion in 2009. It targets specialised projects in the areas of energy, the environment and the climate, and is based on the same core concept about integration of research and innovation as the *Nordic Research and Innovation Area* (NORIA).
- Preparations will be launched for a new excellence in research programme on health and welfare.
- Efforts will be made to extend the network between NordForsk, Nordic Innovation Centre and Nordic Energy Research, and to improve their links with innovation institutions in the Nordic countries.



- The Nordic white paper on research and innovation will be evaluated with the aim of improving the innovative competences of business and meet the challenges of globalisation and climate change. The results of this evaluation will be presented at a conference.
- Efforts will be made to improve the Nordic university system as a whole, and to profile the Nordic Region as a dynamic, international region in higher education.
- Work will also be done on the mutual recognition of qualifications at institutes of higher education, and on quality assurance at universities. A conference will be held on the subject.
- Art subjects at all school levels and their role in the universities' research and disciplines will be an area of focus. A conference will be held to discuss the role of art schools as a driving force for creative thinking, innovation and entrepreneurship in society.
- A seminar will be held on the education and training of immigrants and their integration into Nordic society.
- A seminar will be held on innovation and development projects based on the outcomes of health research.
- Efforts will be made to liberalise the Nordic market for medicines and to enhance competition. An assessment will be carried out of the preconditions for more countries participating in the Icelandic–Swedish pilot project on reciprocal permission for medicines. Iceland also attaches importance to opening up the market for health services and to identifying and removing possible obstacles.
- Follow-up work will be done on a Nordregio study, which concluded that locating a university where a densely built-up area is planned will generate positive results.
- Methods will be developed to promote entrepreneurial activity in sparsely populated areas, with a particular focus on women's innovation.
- A seminar will be held on standardisation of service in energy, transport and safety.
- Preparations will begin on joint Nordic profiling for the Shanghai World Exhibition in 2010. The Nordic countries are pioneers in environmental and energy technology, as well as art and design. The planned projects should take these specialities into account.



Strengths

The Nordic Region's strengths lie in democracy, equality, a shared set of basic values, and responsibility for the welfare and health of all. They are also based on the general principle that education and research, as well as creative initiative on the part of individuals, companies and social groups, constitute the basis for progress.

Creativity is one of the fundamental strengths of the Nordic countries. It is beneficial for democracy that as many people as possible enjoy the opportunity to share in cultural experiences and take part in creative activities. During its Presidency, Iceland will strive to utilise the Region's creativity and its capacity for innovation as a platform for collective progress. Interdisciplinary projects will be initiated with the aim of strengthening links between culture, research and entrepreneurship. The Region's role in *The European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009* will also be on the agenda.

One effect of globalisation has been greater mobility of labour, which has contributed to long-term economic growth in the Nordic countries. However, it has also led to social dumping, increased pressure in the workplace and ever greater demands on the workforce's flexibility. Efforts to combat unemployment will be prioritised both in specific areas and trades.

Iceland wishes to continue the work in the Nordic welfare and health sector's core area: *welfare innovation*. One important task in this context will be to focus on how the Nordic welfare model can be developed to cope with the global economy. Co-operation on globalisation's challenges will be concentrated on three areas: demographic change and the prevention of marginalisation of vulnerable groups; quality enhancement in the social and health services; and co-operation with the Nordic Region's Adjacent Areas, including campaigns against people trafficking. Particular emphasis will be placed on the integration of the welfare and planning sectors in order to counteract social division in the housing market and in society in general. Other priorities include efforts to increase participation in the labour market and strategies that support personalised and user-driven welfare services. Efforts will also be made to enhance research, innovation and skills in the welfare and health sectors.

The Nordic countries' efforts to promote gender equality through paternity and maternity leave have attracted a great deal of interest. The results of these schemes will be evaluated during the Icelandic Presidency. Further studies will look at the reasons behind the delay in achieving an equal representation of men and women on company boards and in politics. Emphasis will be placed on promoting gender equality co-operation in the West Nordic Region. Further studies will look at the ways in which women influence climate policy and the consequences of climate change for gender equality.

Iceland attaches great importance to the principle that differences in the individual Nordic countries' legislation must not cause problems for companies and citizens. Co-operation and harmonisation work in the legal sphere will therefore continue. The Icelandic Presidency will aim to ensure that no new obstacles emerge as a result of the implementation of EU legislation in the Nordic countries.



TASKS

- The Icelandic art and culture festival *Art without Borders* will be developed and tour the Nordic Region. The intention is to facilitate access to art and culture for people with disabilities, and to make their own art more visible. The 2009 festival will focus on Nordic participation.
- The Icelandic photo exhibition *Special Children* will tour the Nordic Region. A film festival and a seminar will be organised on the subject of minority languages, including sign language.
- Interdisciplinary art and cultural projects will be initiated to promote healthy lifestyles.
- Iceland will take the initiative to have Viking-era finds placed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.
- A co-operation project will conduct comparative surveys of young people's attitudes to sport, leisure activities, education/training and their expectations of the future. The results will be analysed on the basis of age and gender.
- Information material about the working environment and the rights and duties of Nordic workers and employers will be published in the languages of the largest immigrant groups.
- Work will be done to co-ordinate Nordic legislation on health, safety and conditions in the workplace. This includes a comparison of the individual countries' laws on the working environment. A report with the results will be published.
- The registration of accidents at work in the Nordic Region, as well as the processing of this data, will be co-ordinated so that the information can be effectively utilised in co-operation on the working environment.
- A conference will be held on efforts to encourage more people into employment, e.g. via work experience, retraining and other labour-market initiatives.
- A multi-sectoral working group will be set up in order to improve co-operation between welfare institutions and the national labour directorates.
- The Presidency will take the initiative to set up four interdisciplinary co-operation groups by the ministerial councils for the labour market and for the social and health sectors. One of these groups will be charged with comparing the housing market's importance for the Nordic welfare model; another will collate information about personalised and user-driven welfare services; the third will examine how senior citizens' participation in the labour market affects their health and quality of life; and the fourth group will study how the ideology of self-determination benefits people with mental illnesses.
- The Nordic countries' institutes for public health will be encouraged to work together on efforts to get people to stop smoking.
- A study will be conducted of how forestry and afforestation promote public health.
- A seminar will be held on combating obesity.
- A comparative study of the representation of men and women in politics and on company boards will be presented at a conference.
- A study of maternity- and paternity-leave schemes in the Nordic countries will be launched. The results will be published in book form and presented at a conference.

- A conference will be convened at which the results of the gender-equality teaching programme in Nordic pre-schools and elementary schools will be presented.
- Equality legislation in the West Nordic Region will be the theme of a conference, and West Nordic co-operation will be initiated on gender-equality teaching in pre-schools and elementary schools.
- A seminar will be held on the issue of responsibility for internet publication, and on efforts to counteract online crime.





The Climate Challenge

The Nordic Region's approach to climate change is on the one hand about preventing and reducing environmental consequences, and on the other about the exploitation of natural resources and the ability to adapt.

At the UN climate conference in Copenhagen in December 2009, the final touches will be put to an agreement on combating climate change – work that will affect everybody on the planet. The Nordic countries agree that the average global temperature must not rise more than 2°C above the level recorded at the start of industrialisation. In order to achieve this target, a co-ordinated effort is needed from both the industrialised nations and the Third World.

Like the other Nordic countries, Iceland attaches great importance to reaching a successful conclusion in Copenhagen. Efforts will be made to ensure that agreement is reached on a vision of the future as well as on quantifiable results. Holistic solutions need to be found for funding and technology transfer, and rules must be fixed for the binding and emission of carbon by means of afforestation and changes to land use. Iceland has already put forward a proposal for alternative methods of binding carbon, e.g. by restoring wetlands and cultivating arable land.

Each of the Nordic countries has, in its own way, made considerable progress in the use of renewable sources of energy. This expertise ought to be exploited in as many places around the world as possible. The Nordic countries will therefore play an active part in European and international energy co-operation, and will initiate projects aimed at the further development of environmental technology. New energy solutions in the transport sector, especially shipping, will be a priority.

Multi-sectoral tasks associated with the international community's climate strategies will weigh heavily in Nordic co-operation in the finance sector, e.g. regulatory measures aimed at counteracting emissions of greenhouse gases.



TASKS

- In the course of the year, the working group on the use of energy in sparsely populated areas in the West Nordic Region will be further strengthened. It will focus on the use of energy in fisheries and transport, and will also seek co-operation with other coastal areas around the North Atlantic.
- A new four-year energy action plan will be drawn up in 2009.
- Software for the calculation of energy consumption and fuel prices for different types of cars will be translated and made available online in order to improve consumer awareness of energy issues and greenhouse gas emissions.
- A conference will be organised on the subject of sustainable energy for cars and ships.
- A working group under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Agriculture, Food and Forestry will be charged with studying the consequences of climate change for primary production.
- A project will be initiated to map out the impact on commerce and industrial policy in the Nordic Region. The results of the project will be presented at a conference.
- At the UN climate summit in Copenhagen in 2009, the Nordic countries will present their contribution to informing citizens about sustainable development, adaptation to climate change and climate measures.
- A Nordic event on the subject of gender equality and climate change will be held in parallel with the conference of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March 2009. After that, a report on gender equality and the environment will be presented at the climate summit in Copenhagen.
- Projects about land use and carbon binding will be initiated. Follow-up work will be done on the objectives defined in the *Selfoss Declaration on Sustainable Forestry*.
- Co-operation will be initiated on methods of restoring damaged eco-systems.
- Representatives of Nordic youth organisations will be invited on a study tour of the Vatnajökull national park, the largest in Europe. The tours will provide an introduction to practical methods in the protection of the natural environment and the sustainable utilisation of natural resources.
- A study project will analyse the potential of biotechnology in agriculture, animal husbandry, fish farming and forestry.
- In the light of the *Selfoss Declaration on Sustainable Forestry*, emphasis will be placed on tree breeding as a form of adaptation to climatic change.
- A presentation of Nordic genetic resources will be arranged for the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.
- Efforts will be made to draw up simple and appropriate systems of environmental management for small and medium-sized enterprises. Certification schemes for these systems will also be studied.
- “The Swan”, the Nordic environmental label, will be strengthened. The proposals that emerged during the process of revising the label in 2008 will be assessed, and examples of positive outcomes will be collated.



A Globalised Region

To a great extent, Nordic co-operation is influenced by the international community and by global challenges and opportunities. The Nordic countries are therefore well placed to generate synergies in collaboration with other countries and institutions.

In future, co-operation with the Nordic Region's neighbours around the Baltic Sea will continue to be an important part of the Council of Ministers' activities. Iceland will focus in particular on implementing the new guidelines for the Council of Ministers' co-operation with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as for North-West Russia, which will come into force in 2009.

One of Iceland's highest priorities in international forums will be co-operation on protecting the seas and the Arctic Region. Iceland also prioritises closer co-operation between the Nordic countries and the neighbouring areas to the west, particularly eastern Canada's coastal areas, Scotland and Ireland. Emphasis will be placed on co-operation in research and innovation. In addition, dynamic Nordic co-operation on the Atlantic will remain a priority.

A strategy for the protection of the sea is one of the main elements in the Nordic Region's response to climate change. Iceland attaches great importance to research into the consequences of climate change for the marine environment, as well as to a co-ordinated response to environmental threats. Constant monitoring of marine life is necessary in order to prevent environmental disasters. Iceland wants the seas' vulnerable eco-systems identified and international co-operation instigated in order to protect them.

It is also important to respect northern populations' right to – and responsibility for – sustainable utilisation of the sea's living resources. The Nordic countries should continue to be ardent advocates for these rights in international and regional organisations.

The Nordic Region is party to several international conventions, including OSPAR and HELCOM, that deal with protection of the northern marine areas. Work will be done on projects in other forums, e.g. the Arctic Council and the UN. A status report on the conditions of the sea will be produced within the framework of the OSPAR convention. The Nordic Region should play an active role in this work, in the same way as it does in other activities that fall within OSPAR's remit.

Iceland emphasises the importance of the Nordic countries working together within the Arctic Council. In this respect, it must be re-emphasised that one responsibility of the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) working group is to evaluate the effects of increased shipping traffic on the changing Arctic environment. Similarly, Iceland will highlight the importance of the regional programme for the protection of Arctic marine areas from land-based sources of pollution, which forms part of the UN's Global Programme of Action. Work is currently ongoing within PAME to update the Arctic regional programme. The revised programme will be presented in the course of 2009, and will form an important basis for national action plans in the Nordic Region.

Nature in the far north has a broad popular appeal. As a result, nature and culture tourism in the sparsely populated peripheral areas deserve to be supported. Marketing the Nordic Region as a unique tourist destination will improve its overall competitiveness.

TASKS

- Guidelines will be implemented for the Nordic Council of Ministers' co-operation with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as North-West Russia, for 2009–2013.
- Co-operation with the Nordic Region's neighbours to the west, especially Canada, will be initiated.
- Iceland will establish co-operation on a mapping exercise covering the vulnerable areas of the North Atlantic. This exercise is a precondition for systematic environmental contingency planning in the Arctic marine areas, which are subject to increasing ship traffic and competition for natural resources.
- Co-operation and the dividing up of responsibilities between the Arctic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers should be strengthened. Regional organisations and Arctic co-operation projects will continue to be supported.
- A working group will be set up in order to compare the different schemes for managing fisheries, and to analyse the ways in which they can be used to minimise the consequences of climate change. The results will be presented at a conference.
- A conference will be held on innovation in fisheries and new ideas for utilisation of the sea's resources.
- A conference will be organised on the subject of food safety, sustainability, purity, health and traceability.
- The New Nordic Food project will continue to be developed in order to promote innovation and the marketing of Nordic food produce.
- A seminar will be organised on innovation and quality in tourism.
- An initiative will be taken to profile the Nordic Region as a joint tourist destination, especially in more distant markets.







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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, and three autonomous territories: the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

Nordic co-operation has firm traditions in politics, economics and culture. It plays an important role in European and international collaboration, and aims to create a strong Nordic community in a strong Europe.

Nordic co-operation seeks to safeguard Nordic and regional interests and principles in the global community. The common values shared by the countries strengthen the position of the Nordic Region and make it one of the most innovative and competitive regions in the world.

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