



Guidelines for the Nordic Council of Ministers' co-operation with North-West Russia 2009-2013

The nature of the co-operation:

The Nordic Council of Ministers and Russia have been developing co-operation in North-West Russia since mid-1995. These guidelines shall be seen as the Nordic Council of Ministers' (NCM) starting point for the further development of this co-operation.

The NCM seeks closer co-operation with a focus on democratic societal development, open pluralist cross-borders relations and the promotion of conditions for economic co-operation and trade.

The NCM attributes great importance to these themes because:

- As a precondition for citizens being able to engage in dialogue and participate in society, democratic societies require constant attention to fundamental human rights and to the principles of rule of law. Efficient and independent social structures are crucial for ensuring freedom of opinion and for making citizens feel responsible for the society in which they live.
- Experience shows that an extensive and diverse network of cross-border contacts on all levels is a crucial way of ensuring mutual understanding between neighbouring countries, which in turn serves as the foundation for stability and development in a regional and global perspective.
- Promotion of the conditions for economic co-operation and trade is dependent on a regulated market economy, which can offset the advantages of free enterprise for individuals and companies with the necessary deference to the basic conditions for economic life. In this context, the legislative framework, physical infrastructure, safeguarding of sustainable development and the allocation of resources in order to generate welfare are of key importance.

The co-operation with North-West Russia is of particular significance, as Russia is the largest neighbour of both the Nordic Region and the EU. Developments in Russia therefore affect the stability and security in the Region. It is vital that the co-operation promotes Russia's participation as an active partner in the Region.

The Nordic countries and Russia are responsible for and share an interest in protecting the adjacent marine areas, not only as economically significant transport routes, but also as cultural heritage, tourist destinations and a marine environment with sustainable fisheries.

The NCM's co-operation with North-West Russia is closely linked to the EU's policies for co-operation with Russia, especially the Four Common Spaces. The co-operation shall also be seen in the context of the EU's Baltic Sea Strategy. This guarantees that Russia plays an active role in co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region. In addition, the co-operation shall also provide particular support to the Northern Dimension.

The co-operation with North-West Russia shall contribute to a strong Baltic Sea Region and support the aims stated in the Nordic Prime Ministers' press release from the meeting in Punkaharju in June 2007 and the Riksgränsen Declaration of April 2008.

The NCM's co-operation with North-West Russia shall be focused and be in areas where Nordic added value is generated in comparison with both bilateral co-operation and EU co-operation. Co-operation initiatives in the prioritised themes can originate from both Nordic and Russian partners.

As a starting point, the co-operation is regional in nature, and is focused upon the areas of North-West Russia that border either the Nordic Region or the Baltic States. The co-operation shall complement the national initiatives of the individual Nordic countries and shall, through closely co-ordinated activities,

create synergies relevant to the work of other regional organisations – particularly the Council of the Baltic Sea States¹, the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro Arctic Council and Barents Regional Council. This will make it possible to organise particularly valuable activities in the Archangelsk Region.

The Russian partners are responsible for reporting back to the appropriate ministries in Moscow. The NCM Secretariat (NCMS) will keep the Russian Federation's Embassy in Copenhagen informed about general co-operation activities as a supplement to meetings between the NCM and the Russian authorities. Finally, every effort will be made to hold an annual meeting with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow. Dialogue with the Nordic Council about the cooperation will be continued.

The nature of the guidelines:

These guidelines will determine the activities of the NCM, and shall be seen as a starting point for the development of joint ambitions and activities between the Nordic countries and North-West Russia. The NCM consulted relevant official bodies in Russia during the drafting of the guidelines.

The Ministers for Nordic Co-operation (MR-SAM) and the Nordic Committee for Co-operation (NSK) have the overall responsibility for co-ordinating the joint Nordic elements of the co-operation. Ministerial councils and committees of senior officials shall ensure co-ordination with relevant Russian parties in the respective sectors.

Responsibility for the specific content of Nordic–Russian co-operation lies with the respective ministerial councils, while MR-SAM has overall responsibility. This ensures that the co-operation follows the principle guidelines laid down by MR-SAM, while the specific content can be defined by the relevant ministers.

The guidelines should not be regarded as a final product, but as a step in the ongoing process to further develop co-operation, between the NCM and North-West Russia.

Priority areas:

One priority will be to continue to build upon existing, effective and well-established co-operation in areas where further work is considered to be of mutual benefit, including in efforts to prevent and combat human trafficking. Promoting the Nordic Region is in the interests of all of the Nordic countries. Gender-equality principles are central and will be integrated into the co-operation.

The work on further developing the Nordic–Russian co-operation will have consequences for several of the NCM's areas of co-operation. However, it is necessary to identify the key themes for the co-operation, which will guide the work of the various ministerial councils. The Russian partners will be involved in the focusing and further joint prioritisation of specific areas of co-operation.

NCM has a special interest in developing certain key areas, especially the following themes:

- Education, research and innovation, including creative industries.
- The environment, climate and energy, including environmental conditions in the Baltic Sea and other adjacent waters and the promotion of effective environmental technologies and sustainable sources of energy, where joint approaches to sustainable development may be possible.
- Promotion of conditions for economic co-operation and trade, including legislative co-operation, anti-corruption measures and the protection of intellectual rights and patents.

¹ Special consideration will be given to the structural reform of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, as per the prime ministers' decision in Riga, 4 June 2008.

- The Northern Dimension's partnerships – especially the Partnership for Public Health and Social Well-being, with a particular focus on combating human trafficking and the spread of HIV/AIDS (which also takes into consideration the efforts being made in other forums, especially the work conducted under the auspices of the Council of the Baltic Sea States); the Environmental Partnership (mainly through NEFCO); and participation in the preparation of a prospective new partnership on culture².
- Promotion of democracy and civic society through co-operation on local government and good governance, co-operation between parliamentarians, co-operation between the media and journalists, and co-operation between NGOs.

Instruments used in the co-operation:

The co-operation's value lies in both its quality and in the parties' commitment. The instruments used to implement specific elements of the co-operation will vary. They include:

- the Knowledge Building and Networking programme
- adoption of joint programmes of co-operation, action plans and declarations
- joint initiatives that can form the basis for promoting projects with special development potential, which can then act as "pathfinders"
- participation in the Northern Dimension's Partnership for Public Health and Social Well-being; support for the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership; and participation in the preparation of a prospective new partnership on culture
- co-operation with non-governmental organisations within the NCM NGO programme for the Baltic Sea Region
- the inclusion of North-West Russia in joint Nordic-Baltic activities, e.g. innovation projects
- cross-border regional co-operation, including collaboration with the EU and the use of EU instruments. This includes Nordic/Russian co-operation as well as tripartite co-operation between the Nordic Region, North-West Russia and the Baltic states
- co-operation with other regional stakeholders
- co-operation through the Nordic institutions
- the NCM's Arctic co-operation programme.

NCM and its offices and information points (which are a part of NCMS) are catalysts for Nordic–Russian co-operation. The offices co-operate closely with the Nordic diplomatic representations and co-ordinate joint Nordic initiatives. The offices identify trends and opportunities for Nordic–Russian co-operation in dialogue with the Nordic embassies. They promote everything that is "Nordic" and broadly profile Nordic co-operation. They also act as project administrators, including in joint Nordic–Russian projects, in joint Nordic-Russian-Baltic projects or in Nordic-Russian-EU projects and are responsible for practical casework, quality assurance, etc. The heads of the NCM offices report directly to the Secretary General of the NCM. Meetings between the NCMS (Copenhagen), the NCM offices in St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad and the Nordic diplomatic representations take place twice a year. An annual meeting is also envisaged with the Nordic countries' embassies in Moscow.

² The Nordic-based international financial institutions NEFCO and NIB have an important role to play in the Northern Dimension Partnership for the Environment. They already work actively with HELCOM on the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan. NIB will also be active in the new Northern Dimension Partnership for Transport and Logistics.

Financial principles:

Fundamentally, Nordic-Russian co-operation is a partnership on an equal footing, and each party covers its own costs, though not in relation to initiatives to strengthen civil society. In special cases, the parties may collectively agree on a different method of meeting costs.

For the Knowledge Transfer and Networking programme, MR-SAM decided at its 13 December 2007 meeting that there shall be a minimum 30% joint funding of the activities, but that this would not be associated with initiatives for strengthening civil society.

The co-operation shall not cover tasks that ought naturally to be covered by an individual partner's own national budget.

Timetable:

The guidelines will apply from 2009 to 2013, and will thus run alongside the EU's financial perspective. Regular evaluations will take place during this period.

Evaluation:

The co-operation will be continuously evaluated. MR-SAM will conduct an in-depth mid-term evaluation in 2011, particularly in the light of developments in the Northern Dimension. An external evaluator will participate in the mid-term evaluation, which will form the basis for both discussion of the co-operation in MR-SAM and any amendment of the guidelines for future co-operation. A further evaluation will also be published in 2013.

The Ministers for Nordic Co-operation will continue to conduct an annual review, in general and in principle, of the development of the co-operation between NCM and North-West Russia on the basis of a brief report. Each ministerial council and relevant institution will once a year prepare a status report on the co-operation. These reports will outline the initiatives that have been implemented and evaluate the extent to which the political objectives have been met as well as whether it is desirable to retain or alter the political priorities. The reports from ministerial councils will also include a short description and evaluation of the coming year's activities.

The final status report will, following approval from MR-SAM, be sent by the Secretary General of the NCM to the Nordic foreign ministers. It will hereby be possible to create natural cohesion between the joint Nordic-Russian co-operation and other forms of co-operation between the Nordic countries and Russia, either bilaterally or through the other regional councils that are part of the informal Nordic co-operation. Evaluation of the co-operation should also be discussed at Nordic-Russian level, the specifics of which will be agreed between the relevant parties.

Individual initiatives and specific projects will be regularly monitored and evaluated, and the lessons learned will help to further develop the co-operation.

Profiling:

Profiling of the co-operation will also be done in line with the NCM's general profiling and communication strategies.

In the future, both the sectoral ministers and the ministers for Nordic co-operation will increasingly highlight and promote joint Nordic activities in North-West Russia, in order to spread knowledge about and create greater interest in the co-operation, and to raise its profile both in and beyond the Nordic Region. This task is also assigned to the NCM offices in North-West Russia and the NCMS in Copenhagen. The work will be done in collaboration with the Nordic diplomatic representations, relevant Nordic authorities and Nordic institutions. The profiling of the co-operation will be expanded and co-ordinated with the Russian partners, who ought to be involved on all levels and as much as possible in the process of making the co-operation visible.