

**Nordic Council of Ministers
policy for mainstreaming**

**sustainable development,
gender equality, and
a child rights and
youth perspective**



Nordic Council
of Ministers

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Mainstreaming sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective is a prerequisite to attaining the Nordic Council of Ministers' vision that the Nordic region will become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world in 2030.

Introduction

Sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective are to permeate all the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers. Mainstreaming these perspectives is a prerequisite to attaining the [Nordic Council of Ministers' vision](#) that the Nordic region is to be "the world's most sustainable and integrated region in 2030".

In practice, this means that sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective will systematically influence all activities in the Nordic Council of Ministers. The perspectives will be incorporated in all stages of planning, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation. Responsibility for this lies with the officials and actors usually involved in the work.

This policy explains what is needed to realise the Nordic Council of Ministers' 'Our Vision 2030' about a greener, more competitive, and socially sustainable Nordic region. These conditions involve ensuring that the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers is sustainable, gender-equal, inclusive, representative, and accessible. The policy also spotlights an approach that accords with international undertakings, such as the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#), [the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#), and [the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) – an approach that is vital for a Nordic sustainability agenda in which nobody is excluded.



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Sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective

The three horizontal perspectives that are to be mainstreamed in the activities of the Nordic Council of Ministers are sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective. The following is a brief introduction to what mainstreaming these various perspectives in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers means.

- **Sustainable development:** Mainstreaming sustainable development in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers concerns understanding and considering how your initiatives and decisions influence society from the social, economic, and ecological dimensions of sustainable development. Agenda 30 and the global Sustainable Development Goals show the way forwards, particularly as a whole, but also through the individual sustainability goals and underlying targets.
- **Gender equality:** Mainstreaming a gender equality perspective in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers concerns understanding and considering how women and men are affected by your decisions and initiatives. In your work, you should therefore contribute to women and men having equal power to shape society and their own lives.
- **Child rights and youth perspective:** Mainstreaming a child rights and youth perspective in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers concerns understanding and considering how children and young people are affected by your decisions and initiatives. The best interests of the child must be a basis for all decisions. It also means that you must include the knowledge and perspective of children and young people in your work.



These three perspectives are of different character, and both overlap and complement each other. Sustainable development is an umbrella term that also encompasses gender equality and the opportunities for children and young people to develop.

When considering sustainable development, a big focus in the Nordic region is on ecologically sustainable development, because we are facing particular challenges in this region in view of unsustainable consumption and production, climate change, and the biodiversity crisis. However, the social and economic perspective must be integrated constantly before we can talk about real sustainability.

The social dimension of sustainable development includes a clear diversity perspective, where consequences and inclusion on the basis of gender, gender identity or expression, age, disability, ethnic background, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background must be considered. When considering both gender equality and a child rights and youth perspective, it is important to remember that women and men, boys and girls, are not homogeneous groups. In the work, it can be important to consider analyses of different power structures.

In many ways, each horizontal perspective is mutually dependent on the other two. Considering the varied living conditions of boys and girls is, for example, important from all three horizontal perspectives. Together, the Nordic Prime Ministers have emphasised and recognised the importance of gender equality as a condition for attaining Agenda 2030 and the Global Sustainable Development Goals.¹

In addition to being perspectives that must be constantly integrated in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers, sustainable development, gender equality, and child rights and youth issues are important policy areas in the Nordic co-operation. It is important to remember that the perspectives must always be integrated – including in the cases where the initiative specifically concerns sustainable development, gender equality, or child rights and youth issues, or where children and young people are an explicit target group.

The importance of considering these perspectives broadly in the work of the sectors and institutions is therefore emphasised in this policy.

¹ www.norden.org/en/declaration/joint-statement-nordic-prime-ministers-and-nordic-ceos-sustainable-future

An approach and responsibility that concerns the entire Nordic Council of Ministers

Mainstreaming sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers involves continually analysing your work on the basis of these three perspectives, and allowing decisions to be influenced by the analysis. In practice, it can comprise planning a project or a conference, deciding on funding criteria and allocating funding, formulating assignments for collaboration partners, or evaluating the results and effects of a campaign or initiative.

The overarching responsibility for implementing the policy lies with the Secretary General and the Councils of Ministers. The responsibility for mainstreaming sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers lies with everyone working in, or on behalf of, the Nordic Council of Ministers, regardless of policy area.

The responsibility applies to:

- officials at the Secretariat (department heads, advisers, coordinators, project managers, communications officers)
- officials at the Council of Ministers' institutions and collaboration bodies (institution heads, advisers, coordinators, project managers, communications officers)
- committee members
- projects awarded funding by the Nordic Council of Ministers
- collaboration partners (such as researchers and experts), decision-makers and contractors
- presidency countries, in the various processes and activities pertaining to the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Mainstreaming as a principle is based on the idea that, because you know your policy area and your work processes, you are in the best position to identify relevant perspectives on sustainable development, gender equality, and child rights and youth issues in your area.



Common principles for integration

The work of the Nordic Council of Ministers is to be *sustainable, gender equal, inclusive, representative, and accessible*. The following common principles for mainstreaming apply, to ensure that the perspectives can be integrated in an equivalent way in all policy areas and activities.

All sectors and institutions must

- ensure that they have the *knowledge and expertise* to work in accordance with the policy. The Nordic Council of Ministers constantly ensures that training opportunities and support material are available to develop the expertise required to work in accordance with the policy.
- carry out *consequence analyses and formulate outcome and operational goals* that can be used in their own work in terms of sustainable development, gender equality, and child rights and youth perspectives. The Nordic Council of Ministers ensures that the sectors and institutions are advised on how consequence analyses can be carried out and how goals can be formulated. The sectors and institutions are themselves responsible for the implementation.
- integrate all perspectives in their *policy documents and tools* in a systematic way that supports the everyday activities.
- *act consciously and contribute to strengthening* sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective in the Nordic co-operation. In order to ensure this, the sectors work from the consequence analyses of their own work on the basis of sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective.
- ensure *time and budget* in their resource planning that enables good integration of sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective.
- work to attain an *even distribution between men and women* in different types of committees and policy and reference groups (40-60 percent), and work to attain well-considered representation on the basis of other relevant diversity grounds.
- when *children and young people are involved* in the work, follow the Nordic Council of Ministers' [guidelines and principles for involving children and young people](#)
- when meetings and other events are held, ensure that they are *accessible* on the basis of the participants' capability. There are guidelines for this in the Nordic Council of Ministers' document, [Möten för alla – Råd och inspiration för tillgängliga konferenser, seminarier och arrangemang](#) (Meetings for all – Guidelines and inspiration for accessible conferences, seminars, and events). Clear and accessible language should be the aim in all communication.
- when procuring and using products and services, aim to *choose ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable alternatives*.

Follow up and evaluation

The work of the Nordic Council of Ministers in accordance with this policy is followed up and evaluated regularly. The Nordic Council of Ministers reports on the work in accordance with the policy to the Nordic Ministers for Co-operation (MR-SAM) and the Nordic Council every second year. The policy is updated as necessary every fourth year in accordance with the Nordic Council of Ministers' Action Plan for Our Vision 2030.

Further information and support material

For further support in mainstreaming, you can always consult the advisers in the areas of [sustainable development](#), [gender equality](#), and [children and young people](#). They can also identify further support material and resources for the work.



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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, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland.

Nordic co-operation has firm traditions in politics, the economy, and culture. It plays an important role in European and international collaboration, and aims at creating a strong Nordic community in a strong Europe.

Nordic co-operation seeks to safeguard Nordic and regional interests and principles in the global community. Shared Nordic values help the region solidify its position as one of the world's most innovative and competitive.

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