



# The Nordic Region – towards being the most sustainable and integrated region in the world

Action Plan for 2021 to 2024

# Our Vision 2030

## A **competitive** Nordic Region

Together, we will promote green growth in the Nordic Region based on knowledge, innovation, mobility, and digital integration.

## A **green** Nordic Region

Together, we will promote a green transition of our societies and work towards carbon neutrality and a sustainable, circular, and bio-based economy.



**The Nordic  
Region will become  
the most  
sustainable and  
integrated  
region in the  
world**

## A **socially sustainable** Nordic Region

Together, we will promote an inclusive, equal, and interconnected region with shared values and strengthened cultural exchanges and welfare.

# Contents

Introduction .....	4
A <b>green</b> Nordic Region.....	5
A <b>competitive</b> Nordic Region .....	12
A <b>socially sustainable</b> Nordic Region .....	18
How we will strengthen Nordic co-operation in the priority areas .....	25

# Introduction

The Nordic Region will be the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030.

This is the core of the vision adopted by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic prime ministers in August 2019.

COVID-19 poses new challenges for the Nordic Region and for the world as a whole and is included as an important element in all areas. Here, Nordic co-operation has an important role to play in ensuring an environmentally and socially sustainable economic recovery, as well as in advancing the transition towards a green economy and facilitating the more effective sharing of experiences in the field of community preparedness.

In order to realise this vision, over the next four years three strategic areas are being given priority in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers: [a green Nordic Region](#), [a competitive Nordic Region](#), and [a socially sustainable Nordic Region](#).

The Paris Agreement and Agenda 2030 show the way in this regard, and the Nordic Region must work even more ambitiously and quickly than the rest of the world.

To succeed in these efforts, all of the individual councils of ministers and Nordic institutions as well as the Nordic Council have been involved in providing concrete proposals for projects and priority areas. The Nordic Region's civil society and businesses have been consulted to a greater extent than ever before.

The outcome of these efforts is this [action plan](#) for the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers over the next four years, based on the 12 objectives linked to the strategic priority areas. The plan states what should be achieved through Nordic co-operation by the year 2024, and how the Nordic Council of Ministers will contribute to achieving this by:

- initiating and following up on political decisions that contribute to progress towards becoming the most sustainable and integrated region in the world;
- developing relevant knowledge and research that the Nordic countries require and use;
- bringing together actors from across the Nordic Region in order to learn from each other and gain a better understanding of each other; and
- implementing initiatives that specifically set out to make the day-to-day lives of those living in the Nordic Region easier.

The objective is an ambitious one. So as not to lose focus, efforts will be continuously monitored using indicators that signal how the Nordic Region as a whole is developing towards becoming the most sustainable and integrated region in the world, the broader impact of the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers, and the results of the Nordic Council of Ministers' individual measures.

There will be active co-operation with civil society and the business sector throughout the implementation of this action plan, both in the form of a network for building up involvement and through regular public consultations.

The action plan will also involve the strengthening of the Nordic Council of Ministers' efforts relating to sustainable development, gender equality, and a children's rights and young-people's perspective. Our international involvement in sustainability solutions and the values we share with Northwest Russia, the Arctic, the Baltic countries, our western neighbours, and the world at large are becoming more goal-oriented.

The Nordic Council of Ministers will conduct a mid-term evaluation of efforts relating to our vision in 2022 in connection with the first status report to the Nordic prime ministers. Thereafter, the plan is that the Nordic Council of Ministers will produce a final report on work relating to the vision in 2024.

# A **green** Nordic Region



# A **green** Nordic Region

Together, we will promote a green transition of our societies and work towards carbon neutrality and a sustainable circular and bio-based economy.

By 2024, the Nordic Council of Ministers will:

- strengthen research and development and the promotion of solutions that support carbon neutrality and climate adaptation, including in relation to transport, construction, food, and energy;
- help to safeguard biodiversity and ensure the sustainable use of the Nordic Region's nature and seas;
- promote a circular and bio-based economy, sustainable and competitive production, sustainable food systems, and resource-efficient and non-toxic cycles in the Nordic Region;
- make it much easier and more attractive for Nordic consumers to prioritise healthy and environmentally and climate-friendly choices, with joint efforts relating to sustainable consumption; and
- contribute to the positive development of international co-operation on the environment and climate, such as by promoting Nordic green solutions in the rest of the world.

A **green** Nordic Region



The strategic priority area *A green Nordic Region* is linked primarily to the following sustainable development goals of Agenda 2030. In addition, the strategic objective is linked to the objectives of the Paris Agreement for combatting climate change.



# Objective 1

The Nordic Council of Ministers will bolster research and development and the promotion of solutions that support carbon neutrality and climate adaptation, including in relation to transport, construction, food, and energy.

*Climate change is one of humanity's biggest challenges. Co-operation is required and political priorities need to be identified if the world is to succeed in halting global warming in accordance with what the countries have agreed in the Paris Agreement. The Nordic prime ministers have adopted a Nordic declaration on carbon neutrality, which states that the Nordic countries must strive to achieve carbon neutrality nationally and internationally. Nordic leadership is central to the green recovery that needs to be implemented in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nordic co-operation will now have an even more powerful role in supporting the Nordic countries' efforts to combat climate change. This means increased resources for expanding Nordic co-operation in this area over the coming years.*

## **In the period 2021 to 2024, the Nordic Council of Ministers will:**

- contribute **increased knowledge and research** to combat climate change and facilitate a rapid transition to a carbon-neutral Nordic Region. This depends on the green transition of the transport, energy, construction, and financial sectors. Special emphasis will be placed on the development of research on green societal development and sustainable change. This venture requires strengthened co-operation between several policy areas;
- ensure that by 2030, the Nordic Region has the most competitive, sustainable, integrated, innovative, and user-friendly **electricity market** in the world;
- make efforts in the development of climate-friendly **energy technology**, such as the development of renewable fuels and the capture, use, and storage of carbon dioxide. Knowledge will be developed for effective measures to reduce the climate impact of emissions from the energy sector by 90 percent;
- step up efforts to ensure a sustainable and competitive **construction and housing sector** in order to reduce its impact on health, the environment, and the climate;
- undertake major efforts in accelerating the green transition of the **transport sector**, including efforts relating to fossil-free transport. This includes the strengthening of co-operation in the transport sector between the relevant Nordic ministries;
- develop knowledge on the sustainable and climate-adapted **spatial planning** of, for example, infrastructure and transport systems. This includes strengthened Nordic co-operation at municipal level on green urban planning and development; and
- increase co-operation on education within the framework of Nordplus - the Nordic Council of Ministers' programme for lifelong learning. In 2021 and 2022, the emphasis of the programme will be on preparing **pupils, students, and adults** for a greener future. In 2023 and 2024, the emphasis will shift towards social sustainability.

## Objective 2

The Nordic Council of Ministers will help to safeguard biodiversity and ensure the sustainable use of the Nordic Region's nature and seas.

*Biodiversity is a prerequisite for all life on our planet. Functional ecosystems safeguard crops, the pollination of plants, and food from land and sea, and contribute to a stable climate. This is essential for our welfare and economic growth. Nordic co-operation is now upping its efforts to ensure robust ecosystems.*

### **In the period 2021 to 2024, the Nordic Council of Ministers will:**

- contribute to the development of the more [sustainable management of natural resources](#) on land and at sea to stem the loss of biodiversity. This involves the development of greater knowledge about how we can protect, preserve, and restore nature;
- further develop [nature-based solutions](#) for biodiversity and the climate. This involves working with solutions that increase and maintain land and sea-based carbon sinks;
- increase efforts to [develop food and feed crops](#) that are more resistant to extreme weather and climate change. This work primarily takes place at NordGen, the Nordic Region's joint gene bank and knowledge centre for the conservation of plants, domestic animals, and forests. NordGen's seed bank is used for research and development projects throughout the Nordic Region in order to, for example, develop new protein sources; and
- develop [research on aquaculture](#), i.e. farmed fish and aquatic plants. This research will provide solutions for more sustainable fish farming on land and at sea in the Nordic countries.



## Objective 3

The Nordic Council of Ministers will promote a circular and bio-based economy, sustainable and competitive production, sustainable food systems, and resource-efficient and non-toxic cycles in the Nordic Region.

*A more circular and bio-based economy is crucial if the Nordic Region is to undertake a green transition, achieve climate goals, and ensure biodiversity. The Nordic Region will be an economy with ample potential for material reuse, the recycling of products, and the sustainable production of biomass. Co-operation will help the Nordic Region to make considerable progress towards closing cycles and making them non-toxic and resource-efficient. In this way we can cap costs, create new business opportunities, and build a sustainable future.*

### **In the period 2021 to 2024, the Nordic Council of Ministers will:**

- increase knowledge about and promote the transition to a more **circular economy and non-toxic cycles**. This involves efforts to promote the demand for and supply of solutions for the circular economy, not least through public procurement;
- work to make the Nordic Region a leader in **circular, climate-neutral, and sustainable business models** for the business sector. The purpose is to develop measures that accelerate the circular economy and carbon neutrality, such as through efforts relating to companies' reporting on their corporate social responsibility and green data;
- pursue efforts to make the Nordic Region a leader in **sustainable mineral production**. These efforts will ensure methods for the sustainable, traceable, and climate-neutral extraction of minerals;
- pursue efforts relating to **rural growth and the green transition in rural areas**. The emphasis will be on the ability to manage acute crises linked to climate change. This involves adapting Nordic agriculture, forestry, fishing, and aquaculture to climate change in order to make them more resilient to extreme weather; and
- work to prevent land-based discharges and reduce plastic waste and microplastics in seas by supporting efforts to reduce and improve the use of plastics in fisheries and land-based marine industries. This will be achieved by producing knowledgebases and concrete measures to control plastic waste in seas.

## Objective 4

The Nordic Council of Ministers will make it much easier and more attractive for Nordic consumers to prioritise healthy and environmentally and climate-friendly choices, with a joint investment in sustainable consumption.

*The Nordic Region has one of the largest ecological footprints in the world. Unsustainable consumption habits in the Nordic countries pose a major shared challenge. Nordic co-operation will work to make it easier for those living in the Nordic Region to have sustainable lifestyles that are healthy and environmentally and climate-friendly.*

### **In the period 2021 to 2024, the Nordic Council of Ministers will:**

- help to facilitate and accelerate the **normalisation of sustainable lifestyles** in the Nordic Region. This will be achieved by way of interdisciplinary efforts relating to sustainable lifestyles, focusing on knowledgebases, policy development, and communication on behavioural and cultural change;
- develop methods for evaluating the **impact of consumption on the environment and climate**. This will support Nordic efforts to develop better solutions for reducing the impact of consumption on the environment and climate;
- develop **the Nordic Swan ecolabel**. This will enable those living in the Nordic Region to more easily choose environmentally and climate-friendly alternatives;
- invest in **education relating to sustainable development** for all levels of education. This will strengthen the role of teachers in society and promote knowledge and skills that will equip children and young people for creating more sustainable societies for tomorrow;
- promote **healthy and sustainable food consumption** and innovation in the Nordic food sector. This involves continued efforts with the New Nordic Food initiative and the expansion of the Nordic nutritional recommendations. These efforts will also contribute to the reduction of waste by way of efficient and uniform date labelling throughout the Nordic Region, as well as by expanding the Nordic nutritional recommendations;
- contribute to the creation of **ecodesign requirements**, i.e. requiring products to be energy-efficient, repairable, and reusable to promote the efficient use of resources and energy efficiency. An information campaign for improved energy labelling will be carried out;
- promote **green nature and culture experiences** in the Nordic Region. This involves green art, culture, and heritage initiatives, the development of attractive areas for recreation, and supporting the development of sustainable cultural tourism; and
- contribute to debates on sustainable development and consumer behaviour in the Nordic Region and globally. The Nordic cultural institutions play a central role in this.

## Objective 5

The Nordic Council of Ministers will contribute to the positive development of international co-operation on the environment and climate, such as by promoting Nordic green solutions in the rest of the world.

*Current environmental and climate challenges are largely cross-border and cannot be overcome nationally or regionally. They require international co-operation and global partnerships. By disseminating Nordic solutions and promoting international environmental and climate diplomacy, Nordic co-operation on the environment and climate can make a powerful contribution to the Paris Agreement on climate change and Agenda 2030 for sustainable development and international environmental and climate policy.*

- support co-operation with the [Baltic countries](#) that are contributing to knowledge on the green transition within the framework of the co-operation programme for education and Nordplus; and
- support regional and international co-operation in the Arctic and Barents Sea region, with an emphasis on societal development and on environmental and climate issues.

### **In the period 2021 to 2024, the Nordic Council of Ministers will:**

- contribute to the Nordic countries' efforts in [international negotiations](#) and actively pursue the ambitious implementation of agreements on the environment and climate. The Nordic Region will above all work towards an ambitious initial global review under the Paris Agreement. The Nordic Region is also seeking to act as an international driver of global agreements against marine plastic waste and microplastics. In addition, the Nordic Region is seeking to put in place an ambitious framework for biodiversity and a new agreement on chemicals and waste;
- implement [Nordic cultural ventures internationally](#) to raise awareness of and promote Nordic art and culture. Here special attention is drawn to Nordic models in relation to sustainability, innovation, and mobility;

# A **competitive** Nordic Region



# A **competitive** Nordic Region

Together, we will promote green growth in the Nordic Region based on knowledge, innovation, mobility, and digital integration.

By 2024, the Nordic Council of Ministers will:

- support knowledge and innovation and make it easier for companies throughout the Nordic Region to take full advantage of the development opportunities created by the green, technological, and digital transformation and the growing bioeconomy;
- develop skills and well-functioning labour markets that match the requirements of the green transition and digital developments, and that support freedom of movement in the Nordic Region; and
- leverage digitalisation and education to bind the Nordic countries even closer together.

A **competitive**  
Nordic Region



The strategic priority area *A competitive Nordic Region* is linked primarily to the following sustainable development goals of Agenda 2030. In addition, the strategic objective is linked to the Nordic objective of achieving freedom of movement.



# Objective 6

The Nordic Council of Ministers will support knowledge and innovation and make it easier for companies throughout the Nordic Region to take full advantage of the development opportunities created by the green, technological, and digital transformation and the growing bioeconomy.

*The Nordic Region is a leader in knowledge and innovation. However, ongoing development is required to ensure the green and digital transition. The focus of Nordic co-operation is on strengthening education and research, promoting digitalisation, and supporting the business community.*

## **In the period 2021 to 2024, the Nordic Council of Ministers will:**

- help to build up shared **knowledge and research**. By strengthening the relationship between education, research, and innovation, children, young people, and adults can be better prepared for the green and digital societies of the future. The NordForsk research institute will help to make the Nordic Region a world leader in research and innovation, and it will support top-level research on green societal development and sustainable change;
- **involve the business community** to a greater extent in efforts relating to the green transition in the Nordic Region. Through strengthened partnerships between public and private stakeholders, efforts to achieve carbon neutrality and a circular economy will be streamlined;
- develop knowledgebases on the **use of local solutions and smart specialisation** to accelerate the green transition. This will provide knowledge on how to ensure a competitive business community in sparsely populated areas;
- help to equip Nordic companies so that they can utilise **data and digital technology** for innovation and smart solutions. The Nordic Region can help to set the global agenda and promote core values such as trust, security, and user adaptation in digital development. Consequently, the Nordic Council of Ministers will pursue several ventures that support the safe use of digital technologies such as 5G, artificial intelligence, and data-based solutions. This also includes preventative measures to identify and mitigate security risks resulting from the adoption of new digital technology;
- promote access to **digital services across borders** in the Nordic-Baltic region to make it easier to study, work, and do business in another country in the region;
- drive progress at the Nordic level in **data development and open data** in priority areas. This includes making companies' financial data available throughout the Nordic Region and sharing data between transport companies to increase capacity and streamline deliveries. Priority is given to making it possible to share health data between the Nordic countries quickly and securely. This will be of great benefit to research, innovation, health, and healthcare, and will promote health and welfare both in the Nordic Region and beyond;
- contribute to the goal of turning Nordic **life science and health technology companies** into world leaders. This is an ambitious goal and can be achieved through co-operation on

joint Nordic marketing. It should also be easier for companies to develop solutions for Nordic hospitals;

- strengthen the Nordic [bioeconomy](#) as a driver of growth and the green transition. Efforts will support competitive bio-based industries, the sustainable production of biomass, and the sustainable management of resources. This involves the strengthening of digitalisation in the bioeconomy. A specific goal is to have testbeds in forestry and agriculture join forces under the Nordic Testbed Network;
- help to make the Nordic Region a leader in the development of a sustainable [marine economy](#). Efforts are being made to support innovation and the development of technology in the Nordic marine sector and shipping. Co-operation will strengthen the knowledgebase for the sustainable and resource-efficient production of seafood. This includes efforts relating to fishing crime, ghost fishing, invasive species, and large-scale seaweed farming;
- strengthen [cultural exchanges between the Nordic Region and the rest of the world](#) and profile the Nordic Region as an innovative and creative region. A major cultural initiative that will take place during the period is Nordic Bridges, which will take place in Canada in 2022; and
- work to develop the Nordic [tourism industry](#). The emphasis will be on digitalisation and innovation to boost the competitiveness of the industry, profile the Nordic Region more heavily in long-haul markets, and create good conditions for sustainable tourism.

# Objective 7

The Nordic Council of Ministers will develop skills and well-functioning labour markets that match the requirements of the green transition and digital developments and that support freedom of movement in the Nordic Region.

*Our labour market is seeing constant and rapid change. New requirements are arising in tandem with the green transition and digital developments. Nordic co-operation will pursue ventures for lifelong learning in response to these challenges. Freedom of movement for people and businesses in the Nordic Region will be promoted by creating conditions for increased growth and mobility. The Nordic labour market model will play a key role in these efforts.*

## **In the period 2021 to 2024, the Nordic Council of Ministers will:**

- help to give everyone the opportunity to learn and develop throughout life through Nordic co-operation in the education sector and labour market. Efforts will be focused on [lifelong learning and future skills](#) by helping to equip children, young people, and adults for living in and contributing to a changing society. The Nordic network for adult learning (NVL) will help to promote lifelong learning in the Nordic Region by developing and implementing strategies;
- work in dialogue with labour market participants to bring about [increased labour participation](#) in the Nordic Region, primarily among vulnerable groups. The Nordic Council of Ministers will pursue efforts to strengthen people's connection with the labour market. Priority groups during the period will be immigrants and refugees, young people, people with a disability, and the elderly;
- implement a pilot project to develop knowledge based on the [experiences of the Nordic labour markets of the COVID-19 crisis](#). This includes developing knowledge of the various strategies that have been adopted in terms of measures, restrictions, and lockdowns, and the impact of these. The focus of the project will be on how labour markets can be stabilised following a crisis;
- promote [freedom of movement](#) in the Nordic Region, which is fundamental to Nordic co-operation. The free movement of people and businesses must be facilitated through the Nordic Council of Ministers working to break down obstacles to mobility and growth. Here, the Freedom of Movement Council within the Nordic Council of Ministers is tasked with identifying and breaking down obstacles to freedom of movement. Co-operation on the implementation of national and EU legislation is an important part of this. Efforts are being made to identify measures that increase the mobility of knowledge and skills across the Nordic Region's borders and which promote regional growth and a common Nordic labour market. A specific example of a focus area in the coming years is efforts to, as far as possible, ensure the immediate recognition of Nordic [vocational and educational qualifications](#) in the other Nordic countries;
- contribute to increased mobility and regional growth through [co-operation in art and culture](#) in the Nordic Region. Efforts will be made to promote the exchange of knowledge, skills, and contacts, as well as to strengthen cultural networks across borders. This will be achieved through Nordic cultural support programmes and the activities of cultural institutions; and
- initiate a research project that will help to prevent and [combat sexual harassment](#) in working life within various industries. The project is a follow-up to the Nordic Council of Ministers' efforts in the wake of #MeToo.



# Objective 8

The Nordic Council of Ministers will leverage digitalisation and education to bind the Nordic countries even closer together.

*Education and digitalisation are key tools in the integration of the Nordic countries. Education has long contributed to mobility in the Nordic Region and helps to improve our understanding and knowledge of one another. Digitalisation is opening up new opportunities for strengthening links between the countries and helping to further improve mobility in the region.*

## **In the period 2021 to 2024, the Nordic Council of Ministers will:**

- boost efforts to achieve [cross-border digital services](#). The goal is for public digital services to be used across borders to make it easier to do business, study, and work in another Nordic country;
  - work to allow a greater proportion of children and young people to receive all or part of their [education in another Nordic country](#). Nordplus, Nordic agreements in the education sector, and sectoral efforts on the mutual recognition of education all play key roles here. From 2021 to 2024, Nordplus will continue to support thousands of mobility activities for children, young people, and adults throughout the Nordic and Baltic regions;
  - prioritise efforts relating to [digitalisation in the education sector](#). The overall objective is to boost the quality of education and digital skills at all levels of education, as well as to raise awareness of new digital teaching methods and tools, including in higher education; and
- develop [Nordic research infrastructure](#). Nordic Research Infrastructure Hub, which is a collaboration between Nordic research institutions, will strengthen Nordic expertise in this area. This will enable cost savings and improve research quality. Nordic co-operation will assist in the development of advanced IT tools and services to increase research productivity. The goal is to accelerate the development of cost-effective and valuable e-infrastructure services that will reach even beyond national borders.

# A **socially sustainable** Nordic Region



# A **socially sustainable** Nordic Region

Together, we will promote an inclusive, equal, and interconnected region with shared values and strengthened cultural exchanges and welfare.

By 2024, the Nordic Council of Ministers will:

- contribute to good, equal, and secure health and welfare for all;
- work to involve everyone living in the Nordic Region in the green transition and digital developments, utilise the potential of this transition, and counteract the widening of gaps in society as a result of this transition;
- give Nordic civil society, and especially children and young people, a louder voice and greater participation in Nordic co-operation, as well as increase their knowledge of the languages and cultures of neighbouring countries;
- maintain trust and cohesion in the Nordic Region, its shared values, and the Nordic community with an emphasis on culture, democracy, equality, inclusion, non-discrimination, and freedom of expression.



A **socially sustainable** Nordic Region

The strategic priority area *A socially sustainable Nordic Region* is linked primarily to the following sustainable development goals of Agenda 2030.



# Objective 9

The Nordic Council of Ministers will contribute to good, equal, and secure health and welfare for all.

*Good health and welfare are fundamental to people's ability to reach their full potential and contribute to the development of society. The Nordic welfare model, with its equal access for all to health and welfare services, is facing a number of challenges. It therefore needs to be safeguarded and adapted. Through the sharing of knowledge and experiences, Nordic co-operation helps to promote solutions that work. This applies especially to vulnerable groups. Priority is given to preventative early measures that create the conditions for good physical and mental health.*

## **In the period 2021 to 2024, the Nordic Council of Ministers will:**

- further develop the [Nordic welfare model](#) with special emphasis on vulnerable children, young people, and adults, pursue efforts in sparsely populated areas, and strengthen co-operation with volunteer organisations;
- further develop [Nordic co-operation on health](#) to ensure better health for all despite the challenges brought about by an aging population and COVID-19. Supporting healthy lifestyles that counteract lifestyle-related diseases is essential to good and equal health and for relieving the pressure on health and social-care services. Improved public health and mental health, especially among children and young people, digitalisation and innovation in health and welfare, and fighting antibiotic resistance are examples of key focus areas of Nordic co-operation. The exchange of Nordic knowledge, research, and innovation is required in order to find effective, system-enhancing initiatives and interventions;
- pursue efforts to overcome the challenges of an aging population, emigration, and large distances in [sparsely populated areas](#) of the Nordic Region. The Nordic Council of Ministers will therefore pursue efforts to increase knowledge about how to create the conditions for participating in society and how to maintain good health, employment, and welfare systems in these specific circumstances. This will be achieved by sharing good examples of solutions between the Nordic countries;
- contribute to more effective measures to [strengthen social inclusion, belonging, and well-being](#) among children, young people, and adults in vulnerable positions. This includes promoting the well-being of young people in the education system by working to achieve a healthy performance culture. Furthermore, in 2023 and 2024 Nordplus, which is a programme for the entire education system, will place particular emphasis on the social sustainability of the Nordic Region as part of projects touching on good, equal, and secure health and welfare for all;
- integrate and implement [sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective](#) in all activities of the Nordic Council of Ministers;
- facilitate the equal opportunities, treatment, and rights of [LGBTI](#) people in the Nordic Region as a policy area of Nordic co-operation. Efforts will include research and the creation of knowledgebases, cross-sectoral project collaboration, support for civil society's Nordic networks, visibility, and communication;
- pursue efforts to overcome the significant impact of and the challenges brought about by COVID-19 in the health and social-care sectors. Older people, people with disabilities,

and other vulnerable groups have been hit especially hard. Our society has proven to be more vulnerable than we previously realised. Consequently, it is extremely important to focus on the social impact of the crisis. Better knowledge of this and the efforts that the Nordic countries have gone to in order to mitigate the impact will be a key focus area of Nordic co-operation;

- work to improve healthcare preparedness, taking lessons from COVID-19 in order to contribute to the better [management of crises](#) such as pandemics or other health risks by way of, for example, co-operation on supply chain security and the stable production and secure distribution of food and medicines. The Nordic pharmaceutical group will continue to work with preparedness in the field of vaccinations and pharmaceuticals;
- contribute to the development of Nordic co-operation in the field of societal security against the backdrop of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. By further developing the Nordic research programme in societal security under the auspices of NordForsk, Nordic co-operation will assist with research-based knowledge on the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, analyse the effect of the measures taken, compare the measures taken, and promote the sharing of experiences across the Nordic Region and
- collaborate within the framework of the One Health initiative to improve the management of [medicines](#) in the Nordic Region and reduce the use of antibiotics internationally. The Nordic countries can jointly adapt the work of food authorities to take into account the changes that can be expected as a result of COVID-19.

# Objective 10

The Nordic Council of Ministers will work to involve everyone living in the Nordic Region in the green transition and digital developments, utilise the potential of this transition, and counteract the widening of gaps in society as a result of this transition.

*An equal society is based on the principle of everyone's equal rights and opportunities, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, or any other difference. Equality is a prerequisite for an inclusive transformation of society. Nordic co-operation will work towards a society where no one is excluded from developments to achieve sustainability.*

## **In the period 2021 to 2024, the Nordic Council of Ministers will:**

- work towards a socially [sustainable green transition](#) that does not increase inequalities in Nordic society. These efforts aim to counter socio-economic, cultural, and geographical challenges linked to the green transition;
- work to include [all regions in the Nordic Region](#) in the green transition. Surveys and the exchange of experiences will counteract
- the overrepresentation of social challenges in certain areas. Efforts will be equally targeted at urban and rural areas;
- help to ensure that the transition to a climate-neutral economy can take place in parallel with [sustainable economic growth](#) by developing new research. The transition should also not increase disparities, such as between urban and rural areas;
- provide Nordic support for [LGBTI issues and gender equality](#) for the implementation of projects that seek to combat discrimination and gender segregation in the labour market;
- promote an equal, inclusive, and accessible [arts and culture scene](#) in the Nordic Region by way of Nordic cultural institutions;
- explore how the green transition in the [energy sector](#) can be implemented without upsetting the social balance. The project will result in improved analysis capacity in the area as well as research on how the proportion of women in the energy sector can be increased;
- strengthen and expand Nordic leadership in relation to trust and responsibility in the digitalisation of societal functions, both within the EU and globally. The goal is to create a sustainable, fair, and inclusive practice for the development of [secure digital solutions](#) based on transparency and the secure use of data;
- pursue efforts relating to equal access to welfare services throughout the Nordic Region in order to promote regional development and mitigate exclusion. A pan-Nordic effort will contribute to the transition of the health and social-care sectors to enable them to take advantage of [digital solutions, offer health and social-care services remotely](#), promote innovation, and reduce their climate impact;
- leverage the exchange of experiences and the development of new methods to create tools to reach the majority of Nordic consumers and make [healthy and climate-friendly food alternatives](#) attractive to all; and
- develop joint Nordic indicators for media literacy for the population of the Nordic countries. The purpose of this is to make people more media-savvy and [increase their ability to resist disinformation and propaganda](#).

# Objective 11

The Nordic Council of Ministers will give Nordic civil society, and especially children and young people, a louder voice and greater participation in Nordic co-operation, as well as increase their knowledge of the languages and cultures of neighbouring countries.

*Residents of the Nordic Region must perceive Nordic co-operation as being for them and as being beneficial. Language and culture initiatives are important tools for creating an integrated region and a cultural community. Children and young people are priority groups because improving the well-being of children and young people and their ability to exercise their rights and be heard is a prerequisite of achieving our vision. Nordic co-operation will strengthen co-operation with civil society and plan and implement more projects in co-operation with children and young people.*

## **In the period 2021 to 2024, the Nordic Council of Ministers will:**

- work to support and include [civil society](#) in its work on our vision. Nordic civil society will be supported in establishing contacts across the Nordic countries and will routinely be included in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers;
- give children and young people a clearer voice and greater influence in Nordic co-operation. The Nordic Committee for Children and Young People (NORDBUK) actively works with young civil society and supports [the opportunities of children and young people to organise themselves and participate and have influence in the Nordic Region](#);
- contribute to [linguistic and cultural understanding](#), which is essential to the perception of the Nordic Region as a community. Linguistic and cultural understanding is also important for increasing people's interest in, and motivation to study or work in, a neighbouring country. The Nordic Council of Ministers supports both mobility and language initiatives. The Nordic Council of Ministers' support programme

for lifelong learning and mobility, Nordplus, supports networks and school exchanges with an emphasis on languages. In addition, Nordplus supports thousands of activities that promote the mobility of children, young people, and adults in the Nordic Region. Another important support programme is Volt, which will contribute to language and culture projects that aim to increase children's interest in and their desire to read Nordic literature and languages;

- implement activities to improve the [mutual understanding of Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish among children and young people](#). This includes youth summits and conferences, as well as courses for teachers and students; and
- prioritise measures via Nordic cultural institutions to enable children and young people in the Nordic Region to get to know the [cultures](#) of the other Nordic countries. Support programmes in the field of culture will enable the creation and dissemination of culture by and among children and young people in the Nordic Region.

# Objective 12

The Nordic Council of Ministers will maintain trust and cohesion in the Nordic Region, its shared values, and the Nordic community, with an emphasis on culture, democracy, equality, inclusion, non-discrimination, and freedom of expression.

*Shared Nordic values and culture support democracy, trust, and thus the cohesion of the Nordic Region.*

## **In the period 2021 to 2024, the Nordic Council of Ministers will:**

- help to strengthen democracy, inclusion, and cohesion in teaching at Nordic schools. The objective is to promote the ability of the education sector to address societal challenges using democratic means, and to promote active **democratic citizenship and critical thinking among children and young people**;
- implement a project on the **well-being of LGBTI children and young people**. There will be an emphasis on the exchange of experiences and development of skills in schools and the education sector in order to help give all children and young people the same conditions to thrive in school, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity;
- work to ensure that **Nordic co-operation on culture** includes the building up of trust, understanding, and community through shared cultural experiences. The many initiatives and collaborative projects that are realised in the field of culture and cross-border and intercultural initiatives are essential to Nordic cohesion;
- support the national **integration policies** of the Nordic countries through the sharing of experiences and research-based knowledge. One objective is to help refugees and immigrants become active members of society;
- pursue efforts to achieve a better **gender balance in the field of the bioeconomy**. Young people must be involved to a greater extent than they are currently. The bioeconomy is of huge importance to sparsely populated areas, which often face demographic challenges;
- assist with research into the prevention of **extremism**. The aim is to reduce the recruitment of new members of extremist organisations in the Nordic Region and thus improve societal security;
- help to deepen **Nordic police co-operation** in order to increase the proportion of solved crimes. In the longer term, serious cross-border crime will decrease; and
- initiate a study that will help to increase **legal security** for individual residents and public authorities in the digitalisation of the public sector. The aim is to help create and maintain trust both between individuals and between residents and public authorities.



# How we will strengthen Nordic co-operation in the priority areas

## Emphasis on concrete results

The Nordic Council of Ministers will actively follow up its efforts relating to our vision for 2030 to ensure that changes happen and that momentum is maintained. Follow-ups will involve the monitoring and evaluation of the progress of the Nordic Region towards being the most sustainable and integrated region in the world, the impact of the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers on the development of the Nordic Region, and the outcomes of the Nordic Council of Ministers' individual ventures on the overall results.

The Nordic Council of Ministers will conduct a mid-term evaluation of efforts relating to our vision in 2022 in connection with the first status report to the Nordic prime ministers. Thereafter, the plan is that the Nordic Council of Ministers will produce a final report on work relating to the vision in 2024.

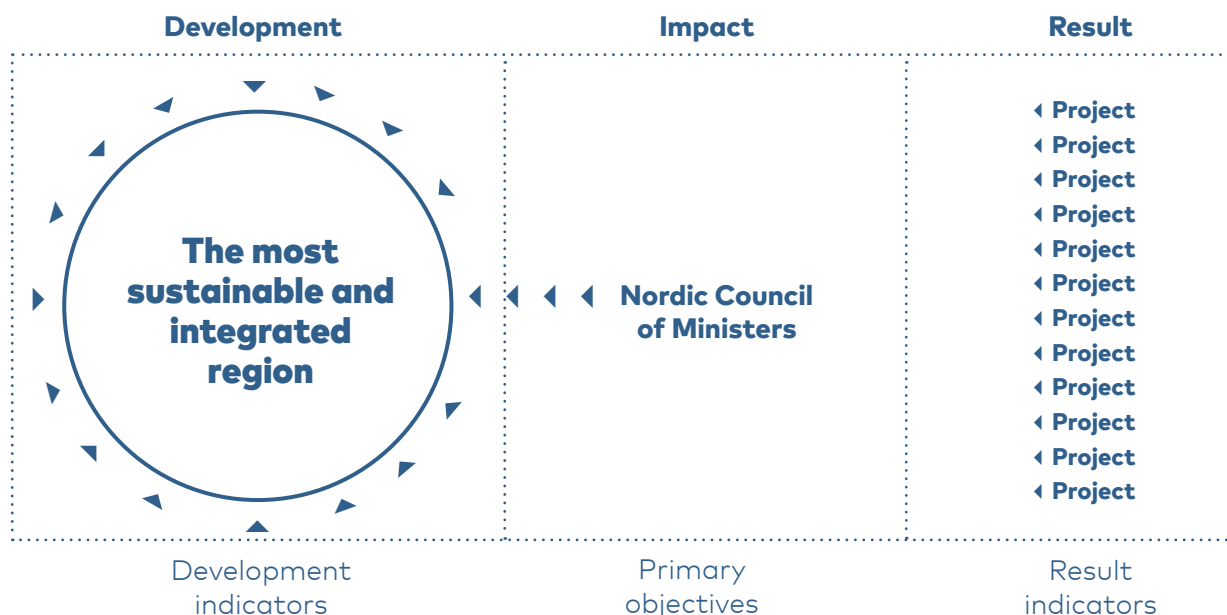
## Strengthened efforts relating to sustainable development, gender equality, and a children's rights and young people's perspective

Sustainable development, gender equality, and a children's rights and young people's perspective

are overarching areas that are important for the Nordic Council of Ministers' work as a whole. Everyone who works in or on behalf of the Nordic Council of Ministers, regardless of their policy area, has a responsibility to take these into account in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers. By strengthening our efforts in this regard, we ensure that the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers is sustainable, equal, inclusive, representative, and accessible, which is a prerequisite for realising our vision.

## Increased involvement of civil society

The Nordic Council of Ministers will work to involve civil society in efforts relating to our vision for 2030. This will be achieved by way of a new model for involving civil society, consisting of a Nordic civil society network and public consultations. The purpose of these efforts is to contribute to the involvement of Nordic civil society in Nordic co-operation and efforts relating to our vision for 2030.



**The Nordic Region – towards being the most sustainable and integrated region in the world**

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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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