



THE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT COUNCIL FACTS & FIGURES

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Summary

The Freedom of Movement Council is an independent body tasked by the Nordic governments with promoting freedom of movement in the Nordic Region for the benefit of both individuals and businesses.

The aim of the Freedom of Movement Council is to encourage national political and administrative systems to remove obstacles to freedom of movement between the Nordic countries. The work on resolving cross-border obstacles takes place in close co-operation with stakeholders such as the Nordic Council, information services, cross-border committees, labour market partners, ministries, public authorities, civil society, and business organisations.

Ensuring favourable conditions where residents can easily work, move, study, and start businesses across borders in the Nordic Region is a high-priority issue in Nordic co-operation. This is a key aspect for achieving the vision of making the Nordic Region the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030.

The Freedom of Movement Council has been given a special mandate by the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation to promote mobility, free movement, and growth in the Nordic Region by: *resolving existing cross-border obstacles, preventing the emergence of new cross-border obstacles and increasing and enhancing the effectiveness of information efforts.*

Vision 2030

On 19 June 2019, the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation agreed on a new vision for the Nordic Council of Ministers. The vision was adopted by the prime ministers on 20 August 2019.

Vision 2030 states that the Nordic Region will become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. In order to realise this, the Nordic Council of Ministers will prioritise three areas: a **green Nordic Region**, a **competitive Nordic Region** and a **socially sustainable Nordic Region**.

<https://www.norden.org/en/declaration/our-vision-2030>

An action plan describes how the Nordic Council of Ministers will work to achieve the objectives of the vision through a series of initiatives. There are 12 objectives linked to the strategic priorities. The strategic priorities and objectives govern all the activities of the Nordic Council of Ministers over the next four years. The action plan is divided into 12 sections, each one linked to one of the 12 objectives.

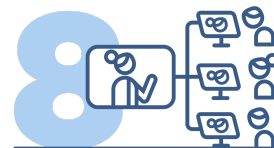
The work of the Freedom of Movement Council is tied to several of these objectives, especially numbers **6**, **7**, and **8**



Objective 6: 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.



Objective 7: 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.



Objective 8: leverage digitalisation and education to bind the Nordic countries even closer together.

In June 2020, the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation decided that in the period 2021 to 2024, the Nordic Council of Ministers should strengthen its co-operation with civil society in the Nordic Region. At the same time, a decision was also taken on the integration of three interdisciplinary perspectives in all work within the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The interdisciplinary perspectives that will touch on all activities in the Nordic Council of Ministers are:

- Sustainable development
- Gender equality
- Children's rights and young people

A key objective of the action plan is to increase cross-sectoral co-operation within the Nordic Council of Ministers. In this way, the aim is to improve the quality and effectiveness of co-operation.

<https://www.norden.org/en/information/action-plan-vision-2030>

The Nordic Region in numbers



28 million
inhabitants
(2023)



1.6 million
companies
(2022)*



13.4 million
employees
(2022)



45 000
commute
across a Nordic
border
(2015/2017)*



1 810 trillion
Euro in GDP
(2022)



18th largest
economy in the
world, PPP
(2024)



7th largest
economy in
Europe, PPP
(2024)



228 000 live in
another Nordic
country (2022)



The world's
second highest
degree of
freedom (2023)



The world's
most
democratic
region (2022)



The world's
happiest
population
(2023)



36 000 moved
to another
Nordic country
(2022)

**Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden only*

**Statistics are available for Sweden and Denmark for 2021, but since the statistical model is based on register data instead of microdata, the figures are not comparable. See the table in the appendix for more information.*

[Sources](#)

Freedom of movement in the Nordic Region

A common labour market

A common labour market has been a feature of the Nordic Region since the 1950s. By sharing labour, the Nordic countries have been able to even out imbalances between countries with higher levels of unemployment and those with labour shortages. The common labour market has enabled the Nordic countries to overcome economic fluctuations and facilitated more positive development than would otherwise have been the case. The sharing of labour remains important, especially in the border areas of the Nordic Region.

Nordic business

Nordic businesses have become increasingly integrated. Neighbouring countries make up a disproportionately large share of each Nordic country's import and export markets. Studies have shown that the single biggest obstacle to doing business across Nordic borders is the lack of accessible, relevant information about regulations and the like in the other countries. Several tax-related issues and dual administration have also been identified as problematic.

It is in the interests of all the Nordic countries that businesses are able to operate across borders with as few restrictions as possible. Projects are therefore being launched on a regular basis that seek to identify and remove obstacles to freedom of movement in the field of business.

The Nordic Region in the world

All of the Nordic countries have strong links to the European Union, either as members or because they are part of the EEA.

The Nordic Region is therefore part of the EU's internal market in most sectors. Through their links to the EU, the Nordic countries are also obliged to follow the various regulations and directives that are drawn up at the European level.

Several of these directives address people's right to freedom of movement within the EU/EEA and the common European market. For this reason, the Nordic goal of an open region harmonises well with the European ideal.

The Freedom of Movement Council

Background

During the 65th Session of the Nordic Council in October 2013, the Nordic prime ministers signed a joint declaration to combat obstacles to freedom of movement in the Nordic Region. This declaration was linked to a dedicated strategy and action plan aimed at removing obstacles to mobility between the Nordic countries. To further strengthen this work and streamline efforts in tackling these cross-border obstacles, the Nordic governments established the Freedom of Movement Council on 1 January 2014.

[Read the Nordic Prime Ministers' Declaration from 2013 here.](#)

Role

The Freedom of Movement Council's primary role is to influence the national political and administrative systems with the aim of ensuring favourable conditions for those wanting to work in, move to, study in, or start or run a business across borders in the Nordic Region. The work of the Freedom of Movement Council should support the Vision 2030 goal of making the Nordic Region the most sustainable and integrated region in the world.

The Freedom of Movement Council works on *resolving cross-border obstacles* between the Nordic countries and focusing on overarching thematic areas, *preventing the emergence of new cross-border obstacles*, and *increasing and enhancing the effectiveness of information efforts* aimed at residents and businesses in the Nordic Region.

The national members

The Freedom of Movement Council consists of ten members. Eight are national members from Denmark, Finland, the Faroese Islands, Norway, Iceland, Greenland, Sweden and Åland. The members are a unique group of individuals with backgrounds in Nordic politics, public administration or business.

Additionally, the Council includes a representative of the Nordic Council and the Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Mission

The Freedom of Movement Council has been given a special mandate by the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation to promote mobility, free movement, and growth

in the Nordic Region by:

1. Resolving existing cross-border obstacles
2. Preventing the emergence of new cross-border obstacles
3. Increase and enhance the effectiveness of information efforts.

These main tasks are broadly divided into eight objectives that form the core of the Freedom of Movement Council's work:

1. Contribute to Vision 2030, specifically by elevating issues of cross-border obstacles and Nordic mobility on the Nordic agenda, in order to foster a more integrated Nordic Region.
2. Conclude five to eight cross-border obstacles per year and strive to ensure that the cross-border obstacles are concluded within five years. If necessary, prioritise these obstacles or other issues on an ad-hoc basis outside the standard process to enhance Nordic integration.^[1]
3. Collaborate with the responsible sectors at the Nordic Council of Ministers on overarching issues that represent common cross-border obstacles in the Nordic Region, as a means to promote Nordic integration and mobility.
4. Conclude cross-border obstacles linked to a specific sector through cross-sectoral co-operation with the sectors in the Nordic Council of Ministers.
5. At least once a year, engage in discussions about cross-border obstacle efforts with the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation and when necessary, with other relevant ministerial councils and officials. Additionally, the Secretary General acts as a liaison to the ministerial councils.
6. Initiate necessary and relevant reports and analyses, and contribute to solution-oriented seminars to support efforts to eliminate and prevent cross-border obstacles within the Nordic Region.
7. Enhance co-operation with the information services^[2] which are essential in identifying cross-border obstacles and promoting mobility through targeted information efforts.
8. During crises, to enhance the knowledge base for more efficient Nordic coordination concerning mobility issues. This is achieved by alerting national governments, relevant ministerial councils, and sectors to problems emerging in the Nordic Region, particularly in border areas, and offering their expertise and network.

The national members are tasked with concluding 5–8 cross-border obstacles annually. In addition to this quantitative goal, the Freedom of Movement Council has qualitative goals aimed at resolving cases that have the greatest impact on Nordic mobility. Therefore, it also works within various thematic areas.

As an intergovernmental collaboration, Nordic co-operation places the primary responsibility for resolving cross-border obstacles on governments, departments, ministries, national parliaments, agencies and other national bodies. Additionally,

1. The complexity of the cross-border obstacle plays a crucial role in how quickly it can be resolved. If it is determined that the obstacle cannot be resolved, it is given a "not resolved" status, and the Council generally discontinues further work on it. However, if there is political will, the obstacle can be reprioritised.

2. Info Norden, Grensetjänsten Norge–Sverige, Øresunddirekt, Gränstjänsten Sverige-Finland-Norge

efforts to enhance freedom of movement necessitate collaborative engagements with a range of stakeholders, including the Nordic Council Freedom of Movement Group, information services, border committees, labour market parties, and business organisations.

Countries are also essential in providing legal and specialised expertise. Each country designates contact persons within their departments to assist their national member in identifying, researching, and solving cross-border obstacles. Additionally, countries are tasked with reviewing and validating the quality of cross-border obstacle reports in the Freedom of Movement Database, from initial entry to any updates. To uphold their commitment to support seamless Nordic integration, countries should also aim to prevent the emergence of new cross-border obstacles, particularly when enacting national laws or implementing EU/EEA regulations.

Individually or collectively, the national members prioritise a number of cross-border obstacles they believe need to be resolved in order to achieve the vision's goals and to promote mobility. The Freedom of Movement Council prioritises cross-border obstacles that arise mainly in the labour market, social affairs, education, and business sectors, and which primarily consist of laws, public regulations, or practices that hinder individuals' mobility or companies' opportunities to operate across borders in the Nordic Region.

The Freedom of Movement Council primarily deals with cross-border obstacles identified at the grassroots level, i.e., obstacles identified by Info Norden, Grensetjänsten Norge-Sverige, Øresunddirekt, and Gränstjänsten Sverige-Finland-Norge, as well as border committees in their contacts with Nordic residents and businesses.

The national members monitor, push forward, and work with their prioritised obstacles until they have been resolved or the relevant minister/department has indicated that it cannot be resolved.

The chairperson of the Freedom of Movement Council also has the opportunity to participate in various ministerial meetings and committee meetings of officials to raise issues central to Nordic mobility.

Meetings

The Freedom of Movement Council holds an annual kick-off meeting during the first quarter of the year, with a special focus on planning and developing the year's work on cross-border obstacles. In addition to the kick-off meeting, the Freedom of Movement Council normally conducts three annual operational meetings at which members review and report on their achievements in their national work on cross-border obstacles and the challenges they face. The Freedom of Movement Council also has a joint review and dialogue meeting with the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation every year.

The Freedom of Movement Council also collaborates with the [Nordic Council Freedom of movement Group](#) and participates in meetings with the Nordic Council's parliamentarians 1-2 times per year. The Freedom of Movement Council normally

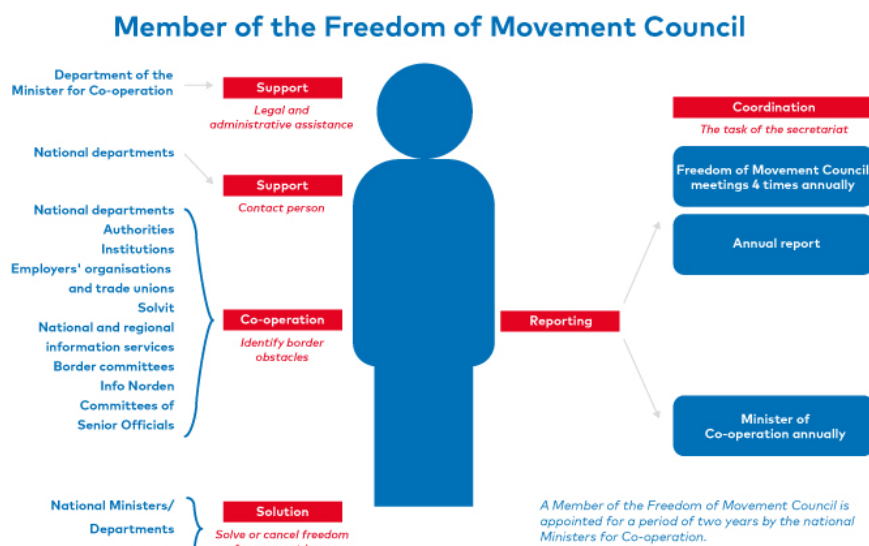
attends the Nordic Council's annual session in the autumn, at which it also holds a meeting with the information services.

Some members of the Freedom of Movement Council also hold their own national meetings where the member meets their national network, which can consist of department officials, agency representatives and information services.

National work and co-operation

The members of the Freedom of Movement Council primarily work nationally through their national networks. However, a majority of the prioritised cross-border obstacles are prioritised by two or more members, and the mission therefore also requires co-operation and joint advocacy efforts on cross-border obstacles and challenges that affect several countries, both among the members themselves but also between the national administrations.

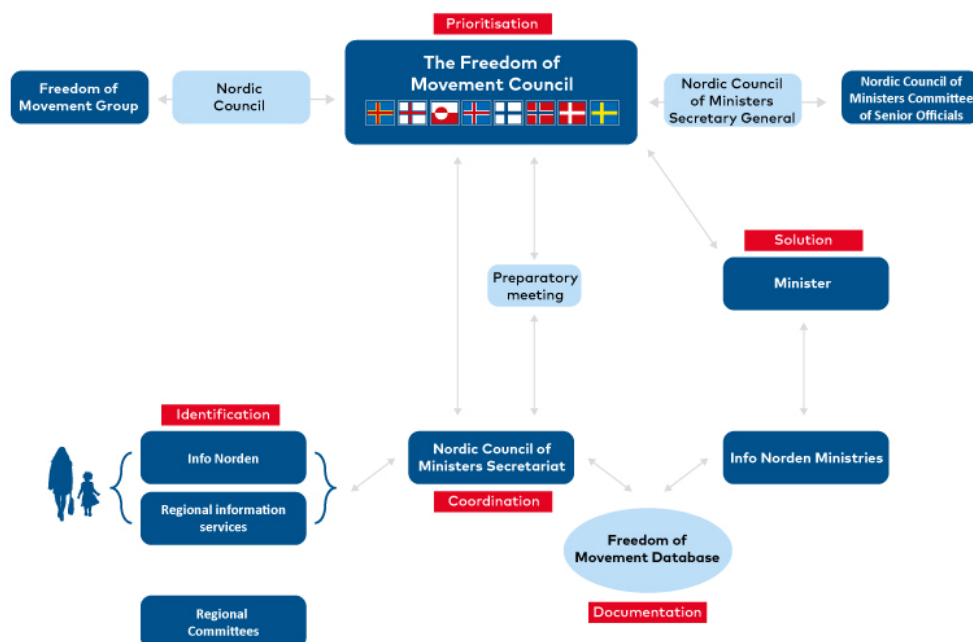
Below is an illustration of the Freedom of Movement Council's broad network, support functions and coordination functions.



Organisation of the work of the Freedom of Movement Council

It is important that the work of the Freedom of Movement Council, both regionally and nationally, is linked to the relevant Nordic Council of Ministers and to the relevant national ministries and parliaments. This is to create transparency and participation in the Nordic work to remove the cross-border obstacles identified by individuals and businesses throughout the Nordic Region.

The illustration shows how the work of the Freedom of Movement Council is organised.



Identification

The information services, Info Norden, Øresunddirekt, Grensetjänsten Norge-Sverige, and Gränstjänsten Sverige-Finland-Norge, are in daily contact with citizens and businesses inquiring about cross-border matters. It is through these interactions that potential cross-border obstacles are often identified. The information services then report descriptions of these obstacles, and in some cases, propose solutions to the Secretariat of the Freedom of Movement Council.

Definition of cross-border obstacles

In the Nordic co-operation regarding freedom of movement, obstacles are "laws, statutory regulations or practices that restrict the mobility of the individual or the ability of businesses to operate across Nordic borders." The different levels of wages and taxes in the Nordic countries are not cross-border obstacles. However, it is regarded as an obstacle if a person, on account of their mobility, is treated differently to other people in a comparable situation, both in the country of residence and the country of work.

The Freedom of Movement Council also works on issues and challenges that do not fall directly under the above-mentioned definition of obstacles but are considered to hinder intra-Nordic mobility and integration. These efforts include working on specific thematic areas related to mobility and integration, aiming to further enhance seamless movement and cooperation within the Nordic Region.

Documentation

The Secretariat of the Freedom of Movement Council, in collaboration with relevant national departments, processes and assures the quality of the materials received from the information services. These national departments, staffed with experts in the field, play a crucial role in ensuring the accuracy and quality of reported issues. Following this, the cross-border obstacles are documented in the Freedom of Movement Database.

To provide the Freedom of Movement Council members with reliable information for prioritising new cross-border obstacles and addressing previously prioritised cases, it is essential to regularly update the Database's descriptive texts. The Freedom of Movement Council also functions as a critical information resource for the Nordic Council of Ministers' sectors, information services, and the Nordic public. Therefore, maintaining accurate and current descriptions of cross-border obstacles is a fundamental aspect of this comprehensive update process. The database is updated once every two years.

The most up-to-date information on each cross-border obstacle is always available in the [Freedom of Movement Database](#).

Prioritisation of obstacles

To create long-term continuity and structure in the work on cross-border obstacles, each member of the Freedom of Movement Council selects relevant cross-border obstacles to be prioritised in the Council's work. The selection is made based on the cross-border obstacles documented in the Freedom of Movement Database. Members may choose to prioritise certain cross-border obstacles jointly. A crucial aspect for the long-term effectiveness of the work is that when a national member is

replaced, the previous priorities are always carried forward by the new member.

Under certain circumstances, e.g., if the matter is urgent or affects many people, it may be possible to prioritise ad-hoc cross-border obstacles that are not yet in the database.

The Secretary General, who is the Nordic Council of Ministers' representative on the Freedom of Movement Council, is responsible for coordinating the work on cross-border obstacles carried out in the relevant ministerial councils. The Nordic Council's representative on the Freedom of Movement Council coordinates the Freedom of Movement Council's work on cross-border obstacles carried out in and through the Nordic Council.

Solution

The Freedom of Movement Council operates under the mandate given by the Nordic prime ministers, emphasising collaboration and open dialogue with departments and authorities responsible for managing the cross-border obstacle.

Each year, the Freedom of Movement annual report includes updates from its members and the relevant departments. In this way, the work on cross-border obstacles becomes transparent, and everyone can follow the process around the prioritised cross-border obstacles.

Efforts persist until a cross-border obstacle is resolved or considered unsolvable by relevant departments or authorities. The Freedom of Movement Council plays a facilitative role, with actual resolution resting with decision-makers and national authorities in the Nordic countries, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland through necessary changes in agreements, regulations, or practices.

However, the Freedom of Movement Council can address cross-border obstacles to mobility and growth in the Nordic Region by providing detailed problem analyses, suggesting solutions and, when it is possible, cost analysis.

Coordination

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat is responsible for coordinating the work of the Freedom of Movement Council. Additionally, the Secretariat coordinates the Freedom of Movement Council's work with the efforts to address cross-border obstacles carried out in the sectors of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat. Furthermore, the Secretariat collaborates with the Secretariat of the Nordic Council to coordinate the co-operation between The Nordic Council Freedom of Movement Group and the Freedom of Movement Council.

The Secretariat also has a coordinating role regarding the activities of the information services, particularly concerning the co-operation between the information services with the aim of streamlining the work on cross-border obstacles and information.

Members of the Freedom of Movement Council 2024



Anders Ahnlid
Sweden
(oct - dec)



Bertel Haarder
Denmark



**Fredrik
Karlström** Åland



Karen Ellemann
Nordic Council
of Ministers,
Secretary
General



**Siv
Friðleifsdóttir**
Iceland



**Vibeke Hammer
Madsen** Norway



Jens Heinrich
Greenland



**John
Johannessen**
Faroe Islands



**Kjell-Arne
Ottosson**
The Nordic
Council

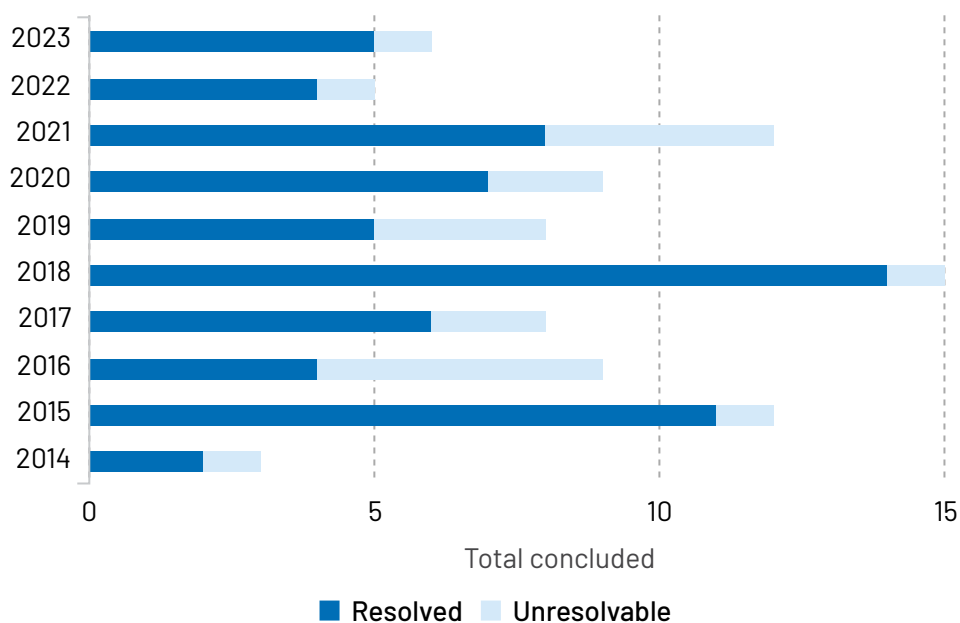


Kimmo Sasi
Finland

Cross-border obstacles concluded 2014–2023

Since the Freedom of Movement Council was established by the Nordic prime ministers in 2014, the Council has contributed to the resolution of 91 cross-border obstacle cases between the Nordic countries.

When a cross-border obstacle case is considered "concluded", it means that the obstacle has either been resolved or that the Freedom of Movement Council, in consultation with the national departments, has determined that the cross-border obstacle is unresolvable.



Concluded: resolved

2023

- Taxation of contractors in staffing enterprises (temporary employment agencies)
- Danish company car in Sweden
- Group contributions across borders in the Nordic Region
- Recognition of professional qualifications (also a thematic area)
- Difficulties in using a phone number from another Nordic country when purchasing a ticket for public transport

2022

- Recognition of parenthood for families with same-sex parents (regarding Sweden and thereby for the whole Nordic Region)
- Right to leave of absence for political duties for a person living in one country and working in another (resolved in Sweden)
- National restrictions on research funds (resolved in Finland)
- Additional financial support for retirees to ensure a minimum income

2021

- Payments of social benefits in cases of doubt about which country is responsible for payment
- Customs and deposits in connection with the transfer of goods
- Long case-processing in EU-related matters
- Truck transports in the Nordic Region
- Co-ordination numbers for foreign owners of holiday homes in Sweden
- Housing allowance supplements provided due to children living or staying in the household (such as special contributions and access contributions) are discontinued during periods of working abroad
- Compensation for patient travel between Norway and Finland/Sweden
- Icelanders moving to Norway with Icelandic documentation of custody cannot register as sole providers due to Norwegian registration requirements

2020

- Norwegian confidentiality regulations complicate the establishment of estate inventories in Finland and Sweden
- E-identification with the highest security level for logging into NAV
- Guide dogs when traveling
- Faster information to those living abroad
- Faroese tachograph cards
- Collection of child support in Denmark
- Recognition of Faroese driving licenses (resolved for SE)

2019

- Documentation requirements for national registration in Norway
- Right to leave of absence for political duties from work in another Nordic country (resolved in Norway)
- Recognition of Greenlandic driving licenses (resolved in Denmark)
- Nordic nursing assistants in Denmark – granting of qualification/authorisation as a social and healthcare assistant. Resolved for Norwegian home helps
- Reduced parental leave compensation due to educational support from the "wrong" country

2018

- Requirements for exchanging foreign driving licenses in Denmark
- Requirement to maintain continuous coverage under unemployment insurance in different countries to avoid the risk of receiving lower unemployment benefits
- Age limit for joining Swedish unemployment insurance (A-kassa)
- Internship in Finland for doctors educated in Sweden
- Compensation for patient travel between Norway, Finland, and Sweden
- Guide dogs during travel, Finland
- Mobile food unit as the first place of arrival in Finland
- Recognition of parenthood for families with same-sex parents (when moving to Finland)
- Application to Norwegian upper secondary education
- Import of Norwegian salmon fry to Sweden
- Regarding requirements for travel documents for air travel in the Nordic Region
- Difficulties for third-country nationals to commute across borders regarding the European Spallation Source (ESS)
- The Finnish four-month rule
- Applying to the wrong unemployment insurance fund (A-kassa) can lead to loss of entitlement to compensation

2017

- EU mobility programme, Sweden
- Limited opportunity for Swedish doctors to carry out their internship on Åland
- Lack of information for small and medium-sized companies when operating in other Nordic countries
- Norwegian regulations for helicopter traffic make it difficult to maintain reindeer fences in Norway
- Norwegian customs regulations make it difficult to maintain reindeer fences in Norway
- Guide dog when travelling, resolved in Norway

2016

- Right to unemployment benefit after work assessment allowance from Norway
- EU mobility programme, Iceland
- State educational support for employees on study leave
- Recognition of Greenlandic educational qualifications
- Norwegian customs and VAT regulations for Nordic companies
- Commercial passenger vessel traffic across the border between Sweden and Norway
- Regional statistics
- Authorisation for Swedish drivers of snowmobiles to drive in Norway

2015

- Work rehabilitation in the country of residence
- Processing time regarding social insurance in Norway
- No right to educational support after work abroad
- Students' social insurance in another Nordic country
- Dual taxation Greenland and Sweden/Finland
- Taxation of Danish capital pension
- Procedures regarding tax affairs for genuine cross-border commuters (Norway)
- Taxation of foreign pensioners in the country of residence
- Payment of value-added tax when importing a work machine from Norway to Sweden
- Finnish safety requirements regarding temporary import of caravans, snowmobiles, etc.
- Arjeplog Agreement

2014

- Language requirements for Danish occupational qualifications
- Problems when moving to Iceland with the qualification period of 6 months when the E-104 form is lacking

Concluded: Unresolvable

2023

- Norwegian citizens who have not lived in Norway lack the right to vote

2022

- Creditworthiness, for example, for cross-border commuters in the Nordic Region

2021

- Danish citizens living in another country are deprived of the right to vote
- Calculation of benefits for incapacity to work after working in several Nordic countries.
- Difference in when Swedish parental benefit must be claimed to avoid losing the entitlement
- Loss of parental benefit for temporary work

2020

- Students in Danish apprenticeship programme cannot apply for internships in Sweden
- Recognition of Greenlandic driving licenses

2019

- Norwegian internal tax practices complicate the execution of assignments in the construction industry
- Time-consuming formalities in connection with the cross-border transfer of samples from marine mammals
- Psychologist internship in Åland

2018

- Temporary import of horses between Norway and Sweden

2017

- Right to income-related unemployment benefit in Sweden after work assessment allowance from Norway
- Movement with disability vehicle in Norway

2016

- Limited possibilities for cross-border workers to commute to Norway
- Problems relating to permanently employed cultural workers in Sweden
- Procedures for tax payments relating to genuine cross-border commuters
- Electricity tariffs for Åland
- Obstacles deriving from the Nordic tax agreement:
 - Problems relating to permanently employed cultural workers in Sweden
 - Procedures for tax payments relating to genuine cross-border commuters
 - Taxation of payments from foreign pensioners in the country of residence and payments according to a country's social legislation
 - Taxation of student grants

The Nordic Council of Ministers for Finance has decided to take these cross-border obstacles into account in the work on reviewing the Nordic tax agreement, should the Nordic countries decide to do so. For this reason, the Freedom of Movement Council decided to write off the cross-border obstacles concerning employed cultural workers and routines for tax payments for genuine cross-border commuters. The cross-border obstacles concerning taxation of foreign pensions and taxation of study grants have already been written off by the Freedom of Movement Council, as the prerequisites for solving them were lacking.

2015

- The paternal quota in Norway

2014

- Work placement in another Nordic country

Preventing the emergence of new cross-border obstacles

Efforts to ensure freedom of movement in the Nordic Region include initiatives to prevent the emergence of new cross-border obstacles.

All ministerial councils are responsible for ensuring the consistent application of EU legislation across the Nordic Region within their areas of expertise. The nations are committed to preventing new Nordic border obstacles that could emerge from new national laws or EU/EEA regulations.

A significant part of the preventive work takes place within the framework of Info Norden's and the three cross-border regional information services' information assignments. By guiding and informing Nordic residents and companies about cross-border laws and regulations, it becomes "easy to do the right thing" and fewer problems arise for Nordic citizens. In contact with residents, the information services can also detect potential cross-border obstacles and other problems that residents and companies encounter at an early stage. Within the framework of the established network between the Secretariat of the Freedom of Movement Council and the information services, there is also an exchange of knowledge and co-operation with the aim of further streamlining the work on border obstacles and detecting potential border obstacles before they affect residents and companies.

The Freedom of Movement Council's preventive work

As part of its preventive efforts, the Freedom of Movement Council has, for example, highlighted potential mobility issues that could arise if ID and border controls were introduced in border regions.

- [Read the news about the Freedom of Movement Council's consultation response](#) regarding the memorandum temporarily banning transportation of passengers without ID documents (October 2023)

Information activities

Information provides reassurance

The Nordic Council of Ministers' information service, Info Norden, and the three regional information services - Grensetjänsten Norge-Sverige, Gränstjänsten Sverige-Finland-Norge, and Øresunddirekt - play a crucial role in promoting freedom of movement within the Nordic Region. These services are essential to achieving the Nordic vision of becoming the world's most sustainable and integrated region by 2030.

As the strategic frontline of Freedom of Movement Council, these services are in direct contact with residents and businesses in the Nordic countries. They form an essential part of the Nordic Council of Ministers' efforts to promote mobility and overcome cross-border obstacles.

Their work provides daily reassurance for individuals and companies wishing to move between the Nordic countries, offering assistance in finding cross-border adapted information about regulations and the appropriate government agency contacts.

Organisation

Info Norden is the information service of the Nordic Council of Ministers and falls under the responsibility of the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation.

The three cross-regional information services operate and are funded differently, involving contributions from various authorities and regional stakeholders, and in some instances, municipal entities also contribute. A commonality among them is their partial financing by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

These information services maintain both individual and shared networks, comprising experts from authorities, embassies, labour market entities, border committees, and interest organisations, among others.

Mission

The information services share three missions: Information, integration, and cross-border obstacle work. In addition to these, Info Norden has a broader mission, and the three cross-regional information services have additional commitments to the other bodies that fund them.

Information work

The information services guide residents and businesses in the Nordic Region by providing and helping them find cross-border adapted information about legislation and regulations. They also facilitate contacts with authorities when needed. An example is a cross-border commuter whose life cycle typically begins with seeking a job in another country and ends with retirement in the country of residence. In between, several life events often require specific knowledge to navigate between the regulations and practices of two or sometimes several countries.

Communication is made through websites, contact forms, and personal guidance. The information services' websites are available in several Nordic languages.

Work promoting mobility

The information services organise and participate, to various degrees, in mobility and cross-border obstacle conferences with authorities, politicians, and other relevant actors to highlight the opportunities and challenges of being a cross-border commuter, commuting between Nordic capitals, moving to another Nordic country, and so on. They are also part of the Freedom of Movement Council's effort to put mobility issues on the political agenda.

The information services also participate in and organise job and recruitment fairs and other events to increase awareness of the opportunities the common labour market offers for workers, businesses and students in the Nordic Region.

Additionally, they organise special information meetings for individuals, businesses, and politicians to varying degrees. Some of these are tailored, such as special tax declaration days for cross-border commuters, and others are more general in nature.

The work on freedom of movement

In their daily contacts with individuals and businesses, the information services register potential cross-border obstacles, and analyse how they can be resolved locally, regionally or nationally. The identified cross-border obstacles are then reported to the Secretariat of the Freedom of Movement Council, and after a quality review in co-operation with national ministries, they are entered in the Freedom of Movement Database.

The information services, alongside department officials, participate in the national meetings of the Freedom of Movement Council members. In this way, the experience of the information services and their link to the Nordic residents are utilised.

The Freedom of Movement Council and representatives from the information services meet annually in connection with the Nordic Council's session.

Nordic information network

The cross-border obstacle work and information efforts have been made more efficient through the collaboration within a shared network between the Secretariat of the Freedom of Movement Council and the information services. In addition to an annual joint meeting between the secretariat and the information services, co-operation continues based on common needs and focus areas.

The collaboration among the information services enables knowledge exchange and streamlines the information and border obstacle work at large.

The Secretariat of the Freedom of Movement Council is included in the steering groups of the cross-regional information services and has regular coordination meetings with Info Norden. This ensures regular information exchange and gives the Nordic Council of Ministers insight into the daily operations, as well as the opportunity to contribute the Nordic perspective, and participate in strategic decisions.

The role of the information services during crises

Just as the Freedom of Movement Council plays a special role during times of crisis, so do the information services. During the coronavirus crisis, the information services were particularly crucial in compiling information about corona-related disruptions that arose as a result of entry restrictions and national decisions. A total of 21 reports were compiled and sent to the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation, the Nordic Council, and several other actors.

The efforts of the information services were particularly crucial in people's everyday lives by assisting, among other things, in the interpretation of entry restrictions and national decisions.

The information services also contributed to focusing on the problems on the political agenda by highlighting these issues in various contexts; in newsletters, at conferences, in panel debates, in newspapers, and in TV and radio interviews.

Through their social media channels, they also provided information about mobility and cross-border obstacles, not least in relation to the entry restrictions that were current at the time.

About the information services

Info Norden

Info Norden, which celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2023, is the Nordic Council of Ministers' information service and falls under the responsibility of the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation. It is coordinated by the Nordic Council of Ministers' Communications Department.

Info Norden has a presence in all eight Nordic capitals and targets individuals seeking information about moving, working, studying, or starting a business in the Nordic

Region. It also provides information about Nordic support schemes and Nordic co-operation.

Info Norden's websites are available in the main Nordic languages as well as in English. Info Norden aims for residents to primarily find answers to their questions on its website.

Personal contact with residents mainly occurs through a web form. Inquiries to Info Norden are answered with references to information on the websites of authorities and contact details of the relevant authorities. Info Norden works to ensure that inquiries from citizens and businesses primarily concern more complex questions and potential new cross-border obstacles. Info Norden is continuously in contact with authorities, departments, embassies, and other actors to facilitate mobility within the Nordic Region as part of the official Nordic co-operation.

Web and social media

Web: www.norden.org/sv/info-norden

Facebook: www.facebook.com/infonorden

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/info-norden/>

X (formerly known as Twitter): [@infnorden](https://twitter.com/infnorden)

Grensetjänsten Norge-Sverige

Grensetjänsten Norge-Sverige is a cross-regional information service aimed at individuals and companies seeking information about moving, working, studying, or establishing businesses in Norway and Sweden.

It is located at the Morokulien Infocenter, right on the border between Sweden and Norway.

The website of the Norway-Sweden Border Service is aimed at both individuals and companies. The website features regionally adapted information in two languages; in Norwegian about Swedish conditions for those based in Norway, and in Swedish about Norwegian conditions for those based in Sweden.

Residents and businesses can get answers to their questions through the website as well as through personal guidance at the information center.

Potential cross-border obstacles and mobility issues received by the Norway-Sweden Border Service are investigated and addressed in simplification groups available for both individuals and businesses. Cross-border obstacles are also reported to the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Web and social media

Web: www.grensetjansten.com/sv/

Facebook: www.facebook.com/grensetjansten

Instagram: www.instagram.com/grensetjansten/

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/grensetjansten/>

Gränstjänsten Sverige-Finland-Norge

Gränstjänsten Sverige-Finland-Norge is a cross-border regional information service aimed at individuals and companies seeking information about moving, working, studying, or establishing businesses in Finland, Norway, and Sweden.

The information service has two offices, one in Tornio/Haparanda focusing on questions between Finland and Sweden, and one in Skibotn, Storfjord, Norway, which deals with Norway-Finland questions, as well as Sweden-Norway questions.

The website of Gränstjänsten Sverige-Finland-Norge caters to both individuals and businesses. It provides regionally adapted information in three languages; in Finnish about Swedish or Norwegian conditions for those coming from Finland, in Norwegian and in Swedish about Finnish conditions for those coming from Norway or Sweden, respectively.

Residents and companies can get answers to their questions through the website as well as through personal guidance at the information offices.

Web and social media

Web: www.granstjanst.se

Facebook: www.facebook.com/RajaneuvontaGranstjanst
Instagram: www.instagram.com/rajaneuvonta_granstjanst/
LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/nordkalottens/>
X (formerly known as Twitter): [@GranstjanstNord](https://twitter.com/GranstjanstNord)

Øresunddirekt

Øresunddirekt is a cross-border regional information service aimed at individuals and companies seeking information about moving, working, studying, or establishing businesses in Denmark and Sweden.

It consists of an information center in Malmö - Øresunddirekt Sweden - and a web editorial office in Copenhagen - Øresunddirekt Denmark. Øresunddirekt Sweden and Øresunddirekt Denmark share a brand, but are organisationally separate and have partially different funding bodies.

Øresunddirekt has two websites, one targeting individuals and the other targeting businesses. The websites provide regionally adapted information in two languages; in Swedish about Danish conditions for those coming from Sweden, and in Danish about Swedish conditions for those coming from Denmark. The website for individuals is also available in English.

Residents and companies can get answers to their questions through the website as well as through personal guidance at the information centre.

Web and social media

Web: www.oresunddirekt.com / www.oresunddirektbusiness.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/oresunddirekt
LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/Øresunddirekt/>
X (formerly known as Twitter): [@oresunddirekt](https://twitter.com/oresunddirekt)

Your border problem – A resident-friendly tool for cross-border obstacles

In 2019, the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation instructed the three cross-border regional information services to develop a joint digital reporting system for cross-border obstacles that arise in the Nordic border regions.

In November 2021, the website "Your Border Problem" was launched, where people can report experienced mobility obstacles in the Nordic Region through a digital reporting system. The reporter can be the general public, companies, authorities, organisations, and so on.

The reporting system is an accessible system that streamlines the joint work on cross-border obstacles and the co-operation between the cross-border regional information services, generates quantitative data, and improves the quality of reports to the Freedom of Movement Database.

www.dittgransproblem.com

Special efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic

Due to the direct and tangible effects that closed borders and various national restrictions caused in the border regions and in the Nordic countries during the period 2020 - 2022, the Freedom of Movement Council took an initiative in March 2020 to map out the problems that arose. Since 13 March 2020, the information services identified and reported covid-related disruptions to free movement and other consequences that arose in the Nordic border regions and in the Nordic countries.

The information services had a unique and strategic role in their dialogue with people and businesses during the crisis. They were particularly crucial in the work of identifying corona-related disruptions and carried out major and crucial information initiatives that facilitated everyday life for those who lived, worked or operated in more than one Nordic country.

Compilations of the information services' reports were regularly communicated to the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation, the Nordic Committee for Co-operation, the Nordic Council, and other relevant stakeholders. Up until and including January 2022, 21 reports had been delivered in which 121 corona-related disruptions were identified. The disruptions were alternately resolved and became active again as the countries' entry restrictions and national decisions changed during the period. As entry restrictions and other national decisions eased during the spring of 2022, the disruptions also ceased. However, some challenges remain as the labour market has changed, especially considering that remote work has become the new normal for many professions.

The purpose of the reports was to inform and raise awareness among decision-makers and authorities about the specific problems the corona crisis created for free movement in the Nordic Region and the consequences caused by the countries' entry bans. The reports were further communicated to, among others, the Freedom of Movement Council, the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation, the Nordic Committee for Co-operation and the Nordic Council. The reports also contributed to the discussions held in the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Freedom of Movement Council, and the Nordic Council regarding improvements to Nordic co-operation during times of crisis.

Although not exhaustive, the reports provided a situational overview and testified to how the crisis affected the lives and daily routines of individuals and businesses residing and operating in the border regions. Furthermore, the disruptions highlighted in the reports were not to be equated with formal border cross-border obstacles, as they were not examined in the same way as border obstacles published in the official Freedom of Movement Database.

The Freedom of Movement Council also identified four general challenges during the crisis:

- How far does the obligation to work extend if a country decides to completely close the border, thereby making it impossible for cross-border commuters

- residing abroad to travel to their jobs?
- There is a general need for clear information and a uniform interpretation of regulations within the individual countries.
- The Nordic countries have different national strategies for reducing and preventing the spread of infection.
- The lack of cross-border regional statistics.

During the crisis, the Freedom of Movement Council, in co-operation with the information services, conducted four digital surveys. These surveys targeted primarily individuals living and working in border regions with high levels of cross-border commuting. However, it was also possible to specify other combinations of regions, such as for example Denmark–Norway and Åland–Sweden.

In the latest survey, conducted in July - August 2022, the number of respondents was significantly lower compared to previous surveys. In June 2020, 1,669 people responded; in December 2020, 2,676 people responded; in June 2021, 2,105 people responded; and in July/August 2022, only 279 people responded. The low response rate in the last survey makes it difficult to compare the results with previous surveys. However, it is a clear indication that cross-border life at the time of the survey had returned to normal, something to which information services also testified.

A consistent finding from the surveys has been that respondents believe their mobility was restricted, that there is a need for coordination at the Nordic level, and that it is important for the authorities' information to be both up-to-date and adapted to the border regions.

Based on the reports received by the Freedom of Movement Council, the Council also approached responsible ministers with a series of letters that focused on specific challenges.



APPENDIX

The Nordic Prime Ministers' Declaration

The Nordic Prime Ministers' Declaration in response to the new strategy and action plan for removal of cross-border obstacles in the Nordic Region. The new strategy and action plan was discussed at the 65th Session of the Nordic Council in October 2013.

The Nordic Region as a forerunner for co-operation on freedom of movement, to create jobs and growth.

The Nordic Region as a pioneer for borderless cooperation with the aim of creating jobs and growth

We, the Prime Ministers of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, the premier of the Faroe Islands, the prime minister of Greenland and the premier of Åland agree that the removal of obstacles to freedom of movement, to create jobs and growth in the Nordic Region, is one of the key challenges facing Nordic co-operation. This applies not least in our common need to help young people into the labour market.

By creating optimal conditions for individuals and businesses to operate across borders in the Nordic Region, we are strengthening the global competitiveness of the region.

A strongly prioritised initiative is therefore the work to actively remove cross-border obstacles. These obstacles are costly, restrict development and growth, and reduce options for the individual.

The work of the Freedom of Movement Forum, set up by the Nordic Prime Ministers in 2007, has been valuable in removing obstacles to freedom of movement in the Nordic Region. To strengthen and streamline this work, we are now developing the organisation for a Freedom of Movement Council, with a new strategy and action plan that will come into force on 1 January 2014.

This means that:

- The work will be more closely linked to the political leadership in the Nordic Council of Ministers. The country holding the presidency in the Nordic Council of Ministers will also be the president of the Freedom of Movement Council.
- The Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers will have a stronger role in the work on freedom of movement on behalf of the Council of Ministers
- The national representatives on the Freedom of Movement Council will have a clear remit to collaborate with the parties that can help remove obstacles for individuals and businesses in the Nordic Region. This collaboration will include the ministries and public agencies in the countries, parliamentarians, and the regional information services in the border areas.

The new form of the work on freedom of movement in the Nordic Region will improve the efficiency of the work on removing obstacles, and increase cross-border movement in the Nordic Region.

In order to attain this, our goals should be:

- to work for an open and properly functioning common labour market.
- to create the best possible conditions for Nordic businesses to operate across borders in the Nordic Region.

- to ensure, as far as possible, similar implementation of EU legislation in the Nordic Region through continual dialogue between the Nordic countries.
- to ensure that the countries consult with each other, when necessary, when new or revised laws and regulations are introduced, to prevent the formation of new cross-border obstacles.

Sources: The Nordic Region in Numbers

28 million inhabitants (2023)

Source: [Nordic Statistics Database](#)

1.6 million companies (2022) (Only Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden)

Source: [Nordic Statistics Database](#)

13.4 million employees (2022)

Source: [Nordic Statistics Database](#)

Commuting across a Nordic border

Workplace/ Resident	Sweden	Denmark	Norway	Finland	Iceland	Total
Sweden		2 029 (2017)*	1 244 (2017)	1 324 (2017)	88	4 685
Denmark	14 275 (2017)*		532 (2017)	101	56	14 964
Norway	17 397 (2017)	3 309 (2017)		1 032 (2017)	694	22 432
Finland	1 854	179	184		12	2 229
Iceland	165	195	140	13		513
Total	33 691	5 712	2 100	2 470	850	44 823

The figures in the table above are from 2015, with the exception of the statistics available from 2017. *The statistics for commuters between Sweden and Denmark do not include the latest statistics from 2021, which are based on the exchange of a different kind of data than the rest of the statistics. In 2021, 18,600 commuted between SE and DK (from DK to Scania, respectively from SE to East DK (Bornholm and Zealand)). Source: [Örestat](#). In addition to these, 359 sailors between Sweden and Denmark commuted to the Öresund region. Source: [Nordic Statistics Database](#)

1 810 billion Euro in GDP (2022) (GL 2021)

Source: [Nordic Statistics Database](#)

18th largest economy in the world, PPP (2024)

Source: [International Monetary Fund](#)

7th largest economy in Europe, PPP (2024)

Source: [International Monetary Fund](#)

228 000 live in another Nordic country (2022)

Source: [Nordic Statistics Database](#)

The Nordic countries are the region in the world with the highest degree of freedom (2023)

Source: [Freedom House](#)

The world's most democratic state (2022)

Source: [The Economist](#)

The world's happiest population (2023)

Source: [World Happiness Report 2023](#)

36 000 moved to another Nordic country (2022)

Source: [Nordic Statistics Database](#)

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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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