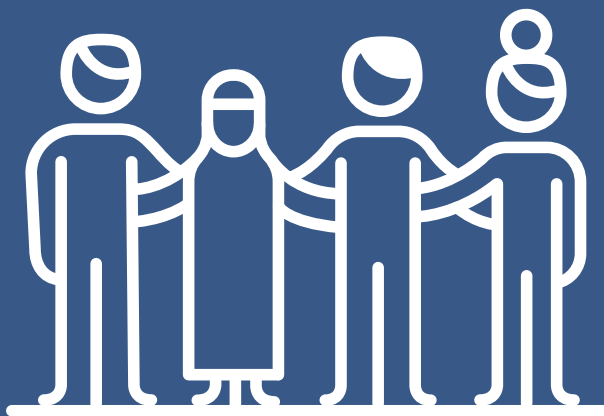


# Co-operation Programme for **Gender Equality and LGBTI 2025–2030**

For Gender Equality and Equal Rights of  
LGBTI People in the Nordic Region



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This publication is also available online in a web-accessible version at:  
<https://pub.norden.org/politiknord2024-733>

# Foreword



**Paulina Brandberg, Swedish Minister for Gender Equality and Working Life  
and Karen Ellemann, Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers**

For more than 50 years, the Nordic governments have co-operated with one another to promote gender equality.

This Nordic co-operation has been strengthened and developed continuously over time, and since 2020, it has also encompassed the equal rights of LGBTI people.

We share fundamental values in the Nordic Region, such as a belief in the equal value of all people and the universal applicability of human rights. We also share a societal model that promotes gender equality and equal rights, and which is thus often seen as an ideal archetype by many.

We are a region of stable democracies that promote peace and freedom, not least the freedom of the individual to make their own decisions and to give shape to their own lives as they wish. Freedom from negative gender stereotypes and traditional gender norms is thus a shared core value in the Nordic Region.

In the Nordic Region, all inhabitants should be able to feel secure and that they belong, and nobody should be subjected to discrimination, abuse or violence as a result of their gender, sexual orientation or gender identity.

It is important that we protect and nurture this common set of Nordic values on which our societies are built. At a time when gender equality and equal rights for LGBTI people are being questioned the world over, in the Nordic Region we stand up for gender equality, equal rights and the equal value of all people.

These human rights must not be taken for granted. We must continue to defend the advances we have made in the Nordic Region. It is precisely for this reason that we will tirelessly continue our Nordic co-operation in the interest of gender equality and the equal rights of LGBTI people in the run up to 2030.

**Paulina Brandberg**  
Swedish Minister for Gender Equality and  
Working Life

**Karen Ellemann**  
Secretary General of the Nordic Council  
of Ministers

# Introduction

The Nordic Region has come a long way in its work to promote gender equality and equal opportunities for LGBTI people both through legislation and political initiatives. However, the region still has a long way to go to reach a situation in which all inhabitants have the same influence and the same opportunities to give shape to their lives and contribute to society's development on an equal footing, regardless of their gender. Similarly, there are still challenges to be overcome in terms of making sure that LGBTI people in the Nordic Region have the same rights and opportunities as the population at large.

In 2019, the Nordic Prime Ministers adopted a shared vision<sup>[1]</sup> for the Nordic Region to be the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. The work of the Nordic Council of Ministers must therefore contribute towards the realisation of this vision through initiatives that support the three strategic priorities: a green Nordic Region, a competitive Nordic Region and a socially sustainable Nordic Region.

It is important that Nordic co-operation even within the area of gender equality and LGBTI for the 2025–2030 period contribute towards making the Nordic Region greener, more competitive and more socially sustainable. Beyond being central Nordic values, gender equality and equal rights for LGBTI people are also important prerequisites in order for the goals to be met.

The green transition will require the Nordic societies to undergo major changes. If these changes are to be meaningful, effective and beneficial to all Nordic inhabitants, then they must be based on gender equality and equal rights.

If the Nordic Region is to remain competitive, then all of its inhabitants must have the opportunity to contribute towards Nordic society. Enabling all Nordic inhabitants to have genuinely equal opportunities to contribute their talents and competencies is only possible if the region's educational institutions and labour markets are based on gender equality and equal rights for all.

Not all Nordic inhabitants are the same, but if the Nordic Region is to be socially sustainable, then gender equality and equal rights must form the foundation for all of the work undertaken to achieve an inclusive society with stronger levels of cohesion and shared values.

The Co-operation Programme describes the political priorities and goals of the Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI for the 2025–2030 period and how these relate to the Nordic Council Of Ministers' Vision 2030<sup>[2]</sup>.

Both the Nordic Council and the Nordic Civil Society Network have provided input on the goals contained within the co-operation programme.

The co-operation programme is the governing document for all activities undertaken by the Council of Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI.

The co-operation programme was approved by the Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI on 30 August 2024 and shall apply through until 31 December 2030.

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1. <https://www.norden.org/da/declaration/vores-vision-2030>  
2. <https://www.norden.org/da/vores-vision-2030> 4

# 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.

All activities in the Nordic Council of Ministers will contribute to fulfilling our vision that the Nordic Region will be the world's most sustainable and integrated region in 2030. The co-operation programme describes how the sector will work with the three strategic priority areas.

# Political Priorities 2025–2030



## Gender equality

The gender equality co-operation between the Nordic countries, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland must concretely and effectively work to promote gender equality in the Nordic Region.

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## Equal rights for LGBTI people

The LGBTI co-operation between the Nordic countries, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland shall seek to achieve equal rights and opportunities for LGBTI people in the Nordic Region.

## Goal 1: The labour market of the future must promote economic equality between the genders in the Nordic Region



Historically, gender equality has been central to the development of the strong welfare societies that exist in the Nordic Region. High employment rates among both men and women and good gender-equality policy investments have helped make the Nordic labour markets among the most gender-equal in the world.

However, Nordic education systems and labour markets remain both horizontally and vertically gender segregated, with men overrepresented in leadership positions and both men and women considerably under and overrepresented respectively within the traditionally gendered professions. In addition, Nordic labour markets are still characterised by unequal pay and women are still more likely than men to be working part time. Unpaid care work also continues to be disproportionately carried out primarily by women, and women still take the lion's share of parental leave.

The green transition of the Nordic societies and labour markets is of particular relevance here, as there is a risk that existing inequalities will be exacerbated unless an active effort is made to ensure that the transition is fair and equal. The gender-segregated labour market must not become a barrier to the green transition as all talents will be needed in order to develop good solutions.

Legislation in the Nordic Region affords good protections to LGBTI people against discrimination both within and outside of the labour market, and many companies in the Nordic Region work actively to boost inclusion and diversity. Even so, many LGBTI people still experience prejudice, discrimination and harassment in the education system and at work. This results in fewer opportunities and lower levels of well-being at work, as well as greater levels of economic vulnerability among young LGBTI people in particular, and lower incomes amongst trans people compared with cis people.

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**Unpaid care work continues to be disproportionately carried out primarily by women, and women still take the lion's share of parental leave.**



**Sub-goal 1.1: Gender segregation in the labour market must be mitigated.**

**Sub-goal 1.2: Gender-equal income and wealth distribution must be promoted and more people must become financially independent.**

**Sub-goal 1.3: There must be an ambition for unpaid care work to be shared equally between men and women, and to promote gender equality in parenthood.**

**Sub-goal 1.4: The green transition of the Nordic societies must help contribute towards greater equality between the genders.**

**Sub-goal 1.5: The discrimination, harassment, bullying and exclusion of LGBTI people in the education system and the workplace must be counteracted.**

## Goal 2: The Nordic societies must be free of discrimination and the distribution of power and influence must reflect the diversity of the Nordic populations at large



The Nordic countries have historically been pioneers when it comes to promoting the equal representation of the genders in politics. Even so, women remain underrepresented in the governing bodies of society, in politics and in business, and many women refrain from participating in social debates on social media or within politics for fear of gender-based attacks or discrimination.

Gender equality benefits all inhabitants within Nordic society as both individuals and society as a collective can benefit when everyone is able to participate to the best of their ability, regardless of gender. Even the gender-equality challenges of tomorrow can be resolved so long as popular support for gender equality as a fundamental Nordic value is maintained.

To effectively reach gender equality in the Nordic countries, other perspectives such as age, disability and ethnicity must also be taken into consideration.

At a time of great change and rapid technological developments, gender equality and equal rights must stand firm as fundamental principles of the Nordic societies. This is particularly relevant in view of the increasing digitisation of the Nordic societies and the rapid developments within artificial intelligence, which have the potential to cause major upheaval on the Nordic labour markets.

In order for the Nordic countries to remain competitive within the areas of digitisation and technology, the sector will need to be able to attract a diverse range of employees. Correspondingly, it is essential that women have access to jobs and influence within this growing sector. Finally, the sector can also make a positive contribution to gender equality and diversity by training artificial intelligence to eliminate rather than reproduce preconceived biases, and to promote gender equality.

In order to meet the challenges of the future, it is essential that all inhabitants in the Nordic Region be given the best conditions to contribute towards the development of Nordic society. This means that everyone must be able to be themselves, and that everyone must be entitled to respect and dignity. Unfortunately, many LGBTI people refrain from being open for fear of how others may react, and they are subjected to discrimination and hate crimes to a greater extent than the population at large.

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**Gender equality benefits all inhabitants within Nordic society.**

**Sub-goal 2.1: Work must be undertaken to promote an equal gender balance in the governing bodies of politics and business.**

**Sub-goal 2.2: Developments within digitisation and artificial intelligence must contribute towards promoting gender equality and equal rights.**

**Sub-goal 2.3: The Nordic populations must be involved and engaged in the development of solutions to the gender-equality challenges of the future, especially in regards to those that concern the green transition.**

**Sub-goal 2.4: LGBTI people must be able to live openly in the Nordic countries and feel secure and included in society, and they must have opportunities to influence and participate in society without the risk of discrimination or harassment.**

### **Goal 3: The Nordic Region must be free of gender-based and sexual violence, sexual victimisation and harassment and hate**



Gender-based violence is an offence against the integrity of the individual and an expression of historically unequal power dynamics between men and women. Gender-based violence has serious negative consequences for the individual, the family and other close relations, and for society.

It is first and foremost women who are subjected to gender-based violence, however men are not immune. Gender-based violence can take the form of: Physical, psychological and economic intimate partner violence, honour-related violence, digital violence and abuse, sexual violence, rape and human trafficking for sexual exploitation. In extreme cases, and if action is not taken in a timely manner, domestic violence can lead to intimate partner homicide. Men are the main perpetrators of physical and psychological intimate partner violence. There is a need to expand effective efforts within the police and judiciary, and to deploy early preventative social measures which are aimed at both victims and perpetrators.

From 2017 onwards, the #MeToo movement has been leaving its mark all across the Nordic Region, and all Nordic countries have adopted initiatives to combat sexual harassment and victimisation as a result of this. Despite these efforts, both phenomena nonetheless continue to pose a challenge to gender equality at the individual, institutional and structural levels.

Women in particular are vulnerable to sexual harassment and sexual victimisation in public spaces, at the workplace, at school and in other public settings – both offline and online. Intersectional perspectives on vulnerability are needed in order to better prevent and counteract sexual harassment and abuse.

Gender-based violence, sexual harassment and sexual victimisation also affect people who do not conform to traditional norms relating to gender, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation, and many LGBTI people are disproportionately affected. In addition, many people also experience hate, threats and violence as a result of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or gender characteristics which are perceived as transgressing against the prevailing norms.

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**Gender-based violence has serious negative consequences for the individual, the family and other close relations, and for society.**

**Sub-goal 3.1: Gender-based, sexual and honour-related violence and oppression, as well as intimate-partner homicide, must be prevented, counteracted and combatted. Victims must be offered support and perpetrators must be helped to stop their violent behaviour.**

**Sub-goal 3.2: Sexual victimisation and harassment must be prevented, counteracted and combatted.**

**Sub-goal 3.3: Hate crimes and hate speech against LGBTI people must be prevented, counteracted and combatted.**

## **Goal 4: All Nordic inhabitants must have the opportunity to give shape to their own lives without being restricted by stereotypical norms and expectations relating to gender, gender identity and sexual orientation**



In the Nordic Region, value is attached to the freedom of all inhabitants to live their lives in accordance with their own dreams and wishes. However, Nordic inhabitants are negatively affected by stereotypical norms and expectations relating to gender. These gendered norms and expectations can limit young people in their choice of studies and career paths, while gendered stereotypes and expectations around appearance can negatively affect wellbeing.

Men and boys are also negatively affected. For example, norms relating to masculinity can prevent men in crisis situations from seeking the help and support they need, while the pressure to embody traditional masculine roles can impair relationships with partners and children and lead to poor levels of mental well-being. Despite this, men have historically been underrepresented and underprioritised in work to attain gender equality.



At their most extreme, traditional and stereotypical gender norms can lead to negative forms of social control and honour-related oppression. This primarily affects girls and women, but young men can also be subjected to this.

Many LGBTI people are also limited by gender stereotypes and expectations both from their family and in their encounters with public authorities, where heterosexual and cisgender norms have a restrictive and alienating effect in relation to things such as family formation.

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In the Nordic Region, value is attached to the freedom of all inhabitants to live their lives in accordance with their own dreams and wishes.

**Sub-goal 4.1: Gender equality work must promote nuanced understandings of gender, femininity and masculinity.**

**Sub-goal 4.2: Honour-based violence and oppression and negative forms of social control based on stereotypical concepts of gender and sexual orientation must be counteracted.**

**Sub-goal 4.3: Nuanced rather than heteronormative understandings of sexual orientation and gender identity should be promoted in society in order to give LGBTI people better opportunities to participate in society and to start families.**

## Goal 5: Inequality in health, wellbeing and quality of life must be counteracted and prevented



All Nordic inhabitants are entitled to the best possible levels of mental and physical health, and access to health and social care services. Moreover, equal access to health is a prerequisite for equal participation in society.

In the Nordic countries, life expectancy is increasing for people of all genders, but major health inequalities still exist in relation to gender: Women generally perceive their own health as poorer compared to men, and young women in particular suffer from poor mental health. Men live shorter lives, are more likely to commit suicide and less likely to seek help (e.g. medical attention) than women. They are also more likely to fall into some kind of abuse or addiction. Men are more likely to be the perpetrators of violence, and they are also more often the victim of arbitrary violence and violence perpetrated by strangers. Women are more likely to be subjected to sexual violence, sexual victimisation and intimate partner violence.

In many parts of the world, women and girls' right to bodily autonomy and to access safe abortions are being curtailed at the present time. The right to self-determination over one's own body and to access safe abortions remains a key prerequisite for achieving gender equality – both in the Nordic Region and globally.

When it comes to health, LGBTI people are more vulnerable compared to the population at large. For example, rates of substance abuse are higher among LGBTI people, as are the rates of self-harm, suicide, and levels of stress. Moreover, health and care services are generally designed for the mainstream population.

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The right to self-determination over one's own body and to access safe abortions remains a key prerequisite for achieving gender equality.

**Sub-goal 5.1: Differences in physical and mental health between men and women and LGBTI people and the population at large must be prevented and counteracted.**

**Sub-goal 5.2: Gender-specific health challenges and needs must be addressed and gender-sensitive solutions must be expanded more widely.**

**Sub-goal 5.3: Healthcare professionals and care staff must have good knowledge of the LGBTI community and an understanding of the diversity that exists in regards to gender identity, gender expression, gender characteristics and sexual orientation in order to ensure equal and inclusive health services to all inhabitants of the Nordic Region.**

## Working Method



### Sector organisation

#### **Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI**

Co-operation between the Nordic governments in the area of gender equality and LGBTI is led by the Nordic ministers responsible for gender equality and equal rights of LGBTI people. These ministers make up the Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI. The ministers meet at least once a year to discuss relevant matters and take joint decisions within those areas in which Nordic co-operation is able to generate greater benefit than what the individual countries would be able to attain on their own. This is referred to as Nordic benefit.

#### **The Nordic Gender Equality Fund and the Nordic LGBTI Fund**

For the purpose of promoting Nordic co-operation among organisations, businesses and civil society, the Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI allocates funds each year to the Nordic Gender Equality Fund and the Nordic LGBTI Fund which can be used for the financing of projects that promote Nordic co-operation and Nordic benefit within the areas of gender equality and equal rights for LGBTI people.

## Committee of Senior Officials for Gender Equality and LGBTI

The Committee of Senior Officials is comprised of representatives from all of the Nordic countries, as well as Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland. As a general rule, it meets three times per year. The committee leads the practical work and prepares meetings between the ministers and implements their decisions. Each country can appoint two members with specific knowledge on gender equality and equal rights for LGBTI people.

## Nordic Information on Gender (NIKK)

NIKK is a co-operation body under the Nordic Council of Ministers for gender equality and LGBTI. NIKK gathers and communicates knowledge about policy and practice, facts and research in the area of gender equality and equal rights for LGBTI people with a Nordic perspective.

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## International responsibility

The Nordic vision for an outward-looking Nordic Region strives to strengthen the Nordic voice within the international community. Nordic co-operation works to strengthen international obligations that promote gender equality and equal rights for LGBTI people in the Nordic Region and across the world.

Each year, the Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI participates at the assembly of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in order to highlight Nordic solutions to gender-equality challenges and make the voice of the Nordic Region heard in an international gender equality policy context.

Similarly, the Nordic governments can also draw on Nordic co-operation within the area of gender equality and LGBTI in order to align and coordinate common positions under the auspices of the Council of Europe and the EU with a view to strengthening the common Nordic voice and promoting good Nordic solutions and outcomes.

Finally, since 2017, the Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI has been co-operating with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania within the area of gender equality in order to create a network, exchange experiences and pursue the common development of Nordic-Baltic solutions.

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## Operationalising the co-operation

Nordic co-operation in the area of gender equality and LGBTI must be seen in the context of the Nordic Council of Ministers' other governing documents, including its Vision 2030, and the work must be undertaken in accordance with the Nordic Council of Ministers' policy for the integration of sustainable development, gender equality and a child and young person perspective.<sup>[3]</sup>

Each year, the Nordic Council of Ministers reports to the Nordic Council on its work in relation to gender equality and the integration of equality perspectives across all areas of Nordic co-operation.

In addition, the work to achieve gender equality and equal rights for LGBTI people also takes an intersectional perspective with special focus placed on indigenous populations, inhabitants from an ethnic minority background and inhabitants with disabilities.

Co-operation must be based on relevant knowledge and facts, and it must include the exchange of experiences and discussion of how to create trans-Nordic platforms, the dissemination of positive examples, awareness-raising initiatives, the influencing of attitudes, research into the area at a trans-Nordic level and the development of information on national legislation.

The work must also involve the other sectors of the Nordic Council of Ministers to a relevant extent.

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## Evaluating the co-operation programme

The co-operation programme applies for the 2025–2030 period, which in turn is divided into two, three-year work plans for 2025–2027 and 2028–2030 respectively.

A mid-term evaluation may be carried out after the first work plan period.

In addition, on-going evaluations may also be carried out at the discretion of the General Secretary and the Council of Ministers.

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3. <https://www.norden.org/da/information/sammen-om-baeredygtig-udvikling-ligestilling-og-boern-og-unge>

# About this publication

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