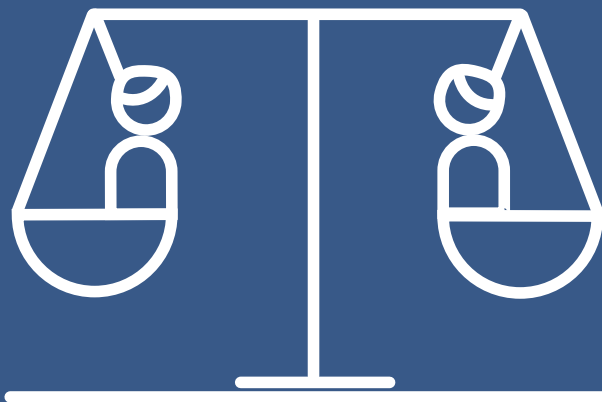


# Co-operation Programme for **Justice Affairs** 2025–2030

Legal Unity, Legal Security and the Fight  
Against Crime and Terror in the Nordic  
Region



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## Foreword



Justice Gunnar Strömmer, Swedish Minister for Justice and Karen Ellemann, Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Nordic co-operation around justice affairs contributes towards realising the vision of the Nordic prime ministers for the Nordic Region to be the world's most sustainable and integrated region by 2030.

Judicial co-operation within the justice sector can contribute towards the promotion of fundamental common principles within Nordic legislation, in conformity with the Nordic community of values which is based on principles such as democracy and trust in the institutions of state. Co-operation is also an important element of European lawmaking and of the implementation of EU/EEA legal acts and other international obligations.

Furthermore, co-operation within the sector also has a particular focus on promoting the principles of the rule of law, and on preventing and combating extremism, terrorism and organised crime. Nordic co-operation thus promotes security and resilience within Nordic society.

This co-operation contributes primarily towards the strategic priority of a Socially Sustainable Nordic Region in line with the vision of the Nordic prime ministers, but also to the priority of a Competitive Nordic Region.

Handwritten signature of Gunnar Strömmer in black ink.

**Gunnar Strömmer**  
Swedishminister for justice

Handwritten signature of Karen Ellemann in black ink.

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

# Introduction

## The Vision and the three strategic priorities

On 20 August 2019, the Nordic prime ministers adopted a vision of the Nordic Region to be the world's most sustainable and integrated region by 2030 – "Our Vision 2030". All work undertaken within the framework for the Nordic Councils of Ministers must seek to realise this vision and the strategic priorities for a green Nordic Region, a competitive Nordic Region and a socially sustainable Nordic Region

Co-operation around justice affairs, moreover, is focused on three strategic focus areas – Nordic Legal Unity, Legal Certainty in the Nordic Region and the Prevention and Combating of Criminality. Within the framework of these focus areas, the justice sector can contribute towards the attainment of the strategic priorities for a competitive Nordic Region and a socially sustainable Nordic Region which form a part of Our Vision 2030 for the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The justice sector works to promote legal unity in the Nordic Region, in conformity with the provisions of the Helsinki Treaty pertaining to Nordic co-operation, the prevention of unnecessary border obstacles and the creation of an integrated region. This focus area contributes to the vision's strategic priority of a socially sustainable Nordic Region and of a competitive Nordic Region.

The purpose of the rule of law focus area is to secure and reinforce the principles of the rule of law in the Nordic countries and their neighbouring areas and, in so doing, to contribute towards creating and upholding a socially sustainable Nordic Region.

Both preventing and combating crime, including organised crime and terrorism, are key elements of Nordic co-operation within the justice sector. Among other things, the justice sector has set up working groups to coordinate efforts against human trafficking and digital crime. This contributes towards the objective of a socially sustainable Nordic Region.

## The co-operation programme

The co-operation programme for the justice sector describes political priorities and goals for the 2025–2030 period.

The sector's priorities are to co-operate within the following focus areas: Nordic Legal Unity, Legal Certainty in the Nordic Region and the Prevention and Combating of Criminality.

The Nordic Council and other relevant stakeholders have been involved in the drafting

of the co-operation programme.

The co-operation programme is the governing document for all activities undertaken by the Council of Ministers for the justice sector. The co-operation programme was approved by the Council of Ministers for Justice Affairs on 20 September 2024 and shall apply through until 31 December 2030.

The co-operation programme takes its starting point from the Nordic Council of Minister's mission to contribute towards attaining the vision to make the Nordic Region the world's most sustainable and integrated region by 2030. All of the councils work to achieve this vision through the three strategic priorities that have been established.

# 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

The co-operation places special focus on the fundamental conditions required for the upholding of democracy, trust and cohesion in the Nordic Region. A solid and well-functioning state of law is a central prerequisite for maintaining trust and cohesive power in the Nordic countries, and so continued focus must therefore be placed on this area.

In addition, it is also true that developments in the neighbouring areas of the Nordic Region are putting pressure on some of the fundamental rights and values of the region, and on its concept of legal certainty. There is an ambition here for the Nordic Region to counteract this development as a unified and cohesive region. The rule of law and the existence of a well-functioning democracy, in which active efforts are made to combat discrimination and uphold fundamental rights, constitute the foundation of a resilient society that can support a free and viable civil society.

The Nordic societies are well advanced when it comes to digitalisation. Digitalisation can increase the availability and effectiveness of the public administration and the courts; however, the digitalisation of the public sector also entails challenges which have implications for the legal certainty of both businesses and individuals. This is therefore an area in which the exchange of knowledge and experiences between the Nordic countries is of considerable importance.

Co-operation in the justice sector can also contribute towards strengthening efforts against discrimination and protecting fundamental human rights, including equality between women and men, the rights of children and young people, the rights of people with disabilities and LGBTI persons.

Crime knows no borders. This is true in both the physical and digital worlds. Cross-border crime is a common challenge for all of the Nordic countries. Greater co-operation between police forces in the Nordic Region to prevent and fight cross-border crime is therefore a priority area for co-operation within the justice sector.

Several Nordic countries face challenges relating to organised crime, gang criminality and sexual offences. The same is also true in regard to the fight against human trafficking.

In the fight against organised crime and gang criminality, it is especially important to prevent acts of aggravated violence, to combat the criminal economy and to prevent children and young people from being recruited into criminal gangs. It is also important to counteract infiltrations and other acts of undue influence over public authorities and decision-makers.

Radicalisation and violent extremism are other challenges that are common to the Nordic countries and which can constitute a threat against democracy and cohesive

power in the Nordic Region. The prevalence of anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic hate crimes is also a considerable challenge, and these form part of the patchwork of violent and extremist ideologies and world views that exist today. The justice sector will therefore continue its collaboration and exchange of experiences in order to raise further awareness around the prevention and combat of these phenomena.

Digital advancements have meant there is now a need for greater focus on types of criminality that occur online. This applies not only to the sexual abuse of minors, but also to digital offences and financial crime. At the same time, however, digitalisation also presents opportunities to develop new methods for the Nordic countries to investigate crimes. The Nordic nations can benefit greatly from working together to exchange knowledge around these issues, and so the justice sector has therefore established working groups to coordinate these efforts within areas such as the combating of human trafficking and cybercrime.

Domestic violence is a common challenge across all of the Nordic countries, and an issue on which the justice sector wishes to place focus as part of the co-operation. Preventing the occurrence of domestic violence is essential in order to ensure that the Nordic societies are secure and equal, and to ensure that the rights of both women and children are protected.

Differences in the laws of the Nordic nations create border obstacles and restrict the free movement of both families and enterprise within the Nordic Region. The justice sector is thus working to promote legal unity across the Nordic Region. In this context, the occurrence of regular meetings for the cross-border exchange of information within the justice sector, both between the justice ministers and in the Committee of Senior Officials, is a crucial precondition. The same also applies to the recurring meetings held by the expert groups on family law and criminal law, which take place as part of the existing co-operation in the justice sector.

As EU/EEA law continues to develop, there is also a considerable need for Nordic co-operation around the implementation of EU/EEA legal cases and judgements in the Nordic countries. The same applies to other matters within international contexts, such as those which concern the European Convention on Human Rights and other international instruments. In addition, the Nordic justice ministers are also responsible for co-operation on matters that in most Nordic countries generally fall under the purview of the justice departments.

Judicial co-operation takes the form of annual meetings between the ministers, meetings within the Committee of Senior Officials and in the permanent working groups. In addition, the sector also funds seminars and networks which enable the exchange of knowledge between experts and practitioners within a broad range of different disciplines. The sector also finances studies and investigations which can provide a basis for further work within the Nordic nations. These activities often also include Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and a Nordic-Baltic Contact Group has therefore been established, comprising of officials from both the Nordic and Baltic nations. This group meets annually in accordance with its own mandate. The Nordic and Baltic justice ministers meet every other year.

The Nordic Council of Ministers for Justice Affairs has adopted the following goals and sub-goals for the work to be undertaken in the 2025–2030 period. The political priorities guide all activities in the policy area of Nordic co-operation.



# Goal 1: Nordic legal unity

## A competitive Nordic Region

Legal unity in the Nordic Region is to be advanced. (This goal also contributes towards the strategic priority of a socially sustainable Nordic Region).



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Differences in the laws of the Nordic nations create border obstacles and restrict the free movement of both families and enterprise within the Nordic Region. The justice sector is thus working to promote legal unity across the Nordic Region

### **Sub-goal 1.1**

Contribute towards the prevention and combating of border obstacles in the Nordic Region which arise as a result of legislative conditions.

### **Sub-goal 1.2**

Ensure that, in their lawmaking, the Nordic nations share and obtain information on the legislation of the other nations.

## Goal 2: Ensure strong and well-functioning rule of law and democracy in the Nordic Region

### A socially sustainable Nordic Region

Legal certainty for all citizens and businesses in the Nordic Region must be ensured and the fundamental rights of all must be protected.



”

A solid and well-functioning state of law is a central prerequisite for maintaining trust and cohesive power in the Nordic countries, and so continued focus must therefore be placed on this area.

### **Sub-goal 2.1**

Generate greater knowledge on and understanding of the consequences of digitalisation efforts which are undertaken with a view to improving the efficiency of case handling by public authorities, courts and similar bodies through the use of AI, placing particular focus on securing and bolstering legal certainty for citizens and businesses in the Nordic Region.

### **Sub-goal 2.2**

Ensure legal certainty for all citizens in the Nordic Region and protect fundamental rights, including equality between men and women, and the rights of children and young people.

### **Sub-goal 2.3**

Support efforts to improve legal certainty and democracy, placing particular focus on the safeguarding of the legal system and the resilience of the Nordic democracies, and on strengthening the role of civil society in this work.

## Goal 3: Preventing and fighting criminality

Establish a strong degree of Nordic co-operation that can help in both preventing and fighting criminality in the Nordic Region.



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In the fight against organised crime and gang criminality, it is especially important to prevent acts of aggravated violence, to combat the criminal economy and to prevent children and young people from being recruited into criminal gangs.

### **Sub-goal 3.1**

Pursue work in this area via the provision of knowledge, fora for the exchange of experiences and the identification of development needs pertaining to the prevention and combating of criminality, terror and radicalisation, including through co-operation on research methods with due regard to developments in EU legislation and other international instruments.

### **Sub-goal 3.2**

Pursue greater co-operation aiming to prevent and fight organised crime and gang criminality, placing a special focus on combating the criminal economy, preventing the recruitment of children and young people into criminal networks and counteracting the undue influence of public authorities and decision-makers.

### **Sub-goal 3.3**

Further develop and strengthen Nordic co-operation within efforts to prevent and fight all forms of human trafficking.

### **Sub-goal 3.4**

Exchange knowledge and experiences regarding the transfer of enforcement and opportunities to address space shortages in domestic prisons.

### **Sub-goal 3.5**

Enhance focus on and contribute more greatly towards efforts to prevent and encumber domestic violence, including gender-based violence and child abuse.

### **Sub-goal 3.6**

Promote the exchange of experience and intra-Nordic co-operation relating to the combating of criminality online, placing particular focus on the combating of digital child abuse and ensuring the safety of children online, with due consideration to developments within EU legislation and other international instruments.

# Evaluating the Co-operation Programme

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

An evaluation will be performed in the middle of the period, on the basis of which the Council of Ministers can choose to make adjustments to the co-operation programme. The evaluation can also be used to provide input in regard to how the work plan for the last period should be formulated.

The Secretary General and the Council of Ministers will also conduct on-going evaluations of the work undertaken in the sector.



# About this publication

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**The Nordic Council of Ministers**

Nordens Hus, Ved Stranden 18, DK-1061 Copenhagen, [www.norden.org](http://www.norden.org)