



Nordic Council
of Ministers

PROGRAMME FOR THE FINNISH
AND ÅLANDIC CO-PRESIDENCY

THE NORDICS IN 2025: STRONG AND UNITED



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FOREWORD BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF FINLAND AND PREMIER OF ÅLAND



Prime Minister of Finland Petteri Orpo and Premier of Åland Katrin Sjögren. Photo: Lauri Heikkinen

We have deep historical, cultural, and economic ties here in the Nordic Region. We share common values based on democracy, gender equality, and respect for human rights and the principle of the rule of law. We are ardent defenders of the rules-based world order. The basis for Nordic co-operation is the close relations between our populations, direct contact between citizens, and active civil society organisations. Using the Nordic prime ministers' Vision 2030 as our guide, the governments of Finland and Åland are propelling efforts within the Nordic Council of Ministers to make the Nordic Region the most sustainable and integrated region in the world.

Nordic co-operation is more relevant than ever. Russia's brutal war of aggression against Ukraine is a gross violation of international law. It has caused the Ukrainian people great suffering and is a threat to European and global security. The Nordic countries are supporting Ukraine in many ways. Through continued co-operation, we are strengthening the security of society in the Nordic Region, including preparedness and resilience. There are also a number of other crises and challenges that we are preparing for together in the best way we can.

In a just and inclusive society, we actively combat discrimination and inequality. In the Nordics, we are building a society in which everyone can participate.

Here in the Nordic Region, we see the benefits of open markets and functioning competition. Our global economic position and competitiveness are crucial for ensuring the development of the business sector and the welfare of society. Our presidency promotes competitiveness, such as by stepping up co-operation in the areas of innovation and sustainable solutions. Digitalisation and high-quality education and training are central elements in the creation of a competitive economy that can hold its own in a globalised world.

The situation requires further efforts also in the Nordic countries. We need to step up Nordic co-operation in order to further develop preparedness. We need more forward thinking in the Nordic Region and in Europe in order to significantly boost our competitiveness. We need even more focused measures to safeguard the trust that is a cornerstone in building a successful and prosperous Nordic Region. Together we can take big steps forwards.

Finland and Åland are jointly leading the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2025. Finland is also chairing the N5 co-operation of Nordic ministers for foreign affairs and the Nordefco co-operation of the Nordic ministers of defence. During the year, we are also chairing the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE. The importance of closer Nordic co-operation on a broad front is greater than it has been in a long time.

We're looking forward to working together during our presidency to continue building a Nordic Region for all.

FOREWORD BY THE MINISTERS FOR NORDIC CO-OPERATION



Ministers for Nordic Co-operation of Finland, Anders Adlercreutz (right) and Åland, Annika Hambrudd (left). Photo: Katarina Koch

During the Finnish and Ålandic co-presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2025, efforts to deliver Vision 2030 and its three strategic priorities will continue. The political priorities of each administrative area have now been identified in the sectoral co-operation programmes and associated work plans. It's important that we get well and truly stuck into the efforts needed to reach our 2030 finish line.

The last few years have seen fundamental changes in society and the security situation in our local area. The challenges brought about by climate change and the loss of biodiversity are also especially important. We don't know when the next pandemic will come. Hybrid impacts are becoming increasingly common.

The Nordic countries stand out in global terms as equal and inclusive societies. Our strong freedom of the press and freedom of expression, in combination with a media-literate population and a strong rule of law, gives us a sound foundation for resisting external influences. The Nordic Council of Ministers encompasses a large number of administrative sectors making it well-suited to working with civil preparedness and overall security. The Finnish and Ålandic co-presidency wants to help ensure that the entire Nordic Region is as well-prepared as it can be for any possible crises.

We will focus our attention on the Nordic Council of Ministers' priority area "Children and Young People". Furthermore, we want to see a strong and wide-ranging commitment to this area going forwards.

The planning phase for the renewal of efforts relating to obstacles to freedom of movement is now complete. We must continue these efforts, as individual nations and as a region, to ensure that it's easy to live, study, work, and do business in another Nordic country.

Regional efforts in neighbouring areas are being continuously intensified. It is pleasing to see that the Baltic countries are also becoming increasingly involved in Nordic co-operation. At the same time, efforts to profile the Nordic Region internationally are continuing, especially through the Nordic embassies' joint initiatives around the world.

There is now a stronger momentum for Nordic co-operation than there has been in a long time. This is true not only in the traditionally large fields of Nordic co-operation such as culture and education, but also in other areas. A willingness to do more has spread across the board. Nevertheless, it's important not to take Nordic co-operation for granted. The presidency is seeking co-operation that is more ambitious and robust, that delivers Nordic solutions and new and sought-after knowledge, and that establishes platforms for Nordic co-operation. The Nordic advantage and Nordic added value must benefit us all. Our Nordic Region is strong and united, and accessible to all of us.

In 2025, we're entering the final decisive phase of the implementation of Vision 2030. The whole of the Nordic Region is working towards the same goals. We can deliver results and promote relevant priorities through focused and effective co-operation.

We wish you all the best for Nordic co-operation in 2025.

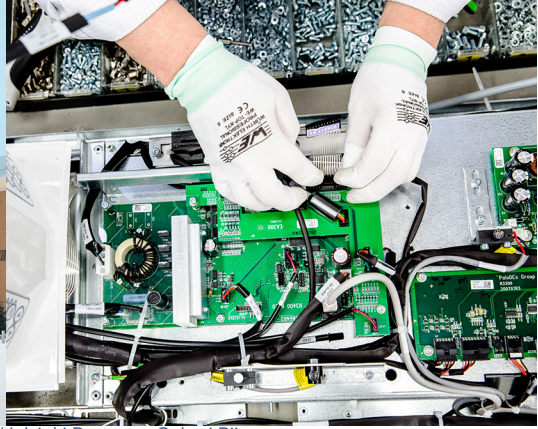


Photo: Julia Kivelä/Finnish Lakeland/Jyväskylä Region. Tuomas Uusheimo/Helsinki Partners. Sakari Piippo

TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED, COMPETITIVE, AND SUSTAINABLE NORDIC REGION

The Nordic Council of Ministers is governed by the Nordic prime ministers' shared vision for the Nordic Region to be the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. The vision has three strategic priorities: a sustainable Nordic Region, a competitive Nordic Region, and a socially sustainable Nordic Region. Sustainable development, gender equality, and children's rights and young people are central themes that permeate the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Finland and Åland's co-presidency marks the start of a decisive period for the vision in the run-up to 2030. All of the individual ministerial councils have their own co-operation programmes for 2025 to 2030 which set objectives and sub-objectives for their activities. To ensure the best possible outcomes, each sector also has a working plan for specific measures.

During the presidency, we are undertaking to deliver on the vision in a way that is effective and safeguards the Nordic advantage. The working methods and measures of the Nordic Council of Ministers must be results-oriented and consistent. The Finnish government supports the development of the secretariat's administration and proposes that those of the secretariat's employees with Nordic agreements be proficient, orally and in writing, in at least two Nordic languages, at least one of which must be a Scandinavian language.

The focus on both the green and digital transitions has proven to be the right choice in the promotion of a sustainable, equitable, and interoperable Nordic Region. The presidency is promoting sustainable and fair **digitalisation** as well as the effective and secure handling of information across borders, with the aim of better assessing the impact on the climate and environment, as well as to implement changes by way of effective and technology-neutral measures that reduce emissions. The Nordic and Baltic countries can be exemplified as models for the transition to a digital society. The changes sought require measures that strongly support the secure use of digital technologies, such as 5-7G,

artificial intelligence, and data-driven solutions. Furthermore, these measures must safeguard equal access to these and ensure technology neutrality.

A functioning, democratic, and equitable digital society requires digital skills, the ability to use digital tools and services, and accessibility within digital services and products. Digital security and preparedness are becoming increasingly important as digitalisation changes society. Citizens' digital skills and stakeholder preparedness are crucial for the security of society.

It should be easy to live, study, work, and run companies across borders in the Nordic Region. During the presidency year, we are promoting **freedom of movement** in the Nordic Region and working across all the ministerial councils and the Freedom of Movement Council to remove obstacles to freedom of movement. There shall be a seamless start to the new mandate period for the Freedom of Movement Council, which runs from 2025 to 2030. Our focus areas include progressing the exchange of public registration information and continuing to evaluate possible reforms in the area of taxation, taking the guidelines of the previous presidency as our starting point. Cross-border operational co-operation is also pursued by the cross-border co-operation committees, which play an important role in the development of an integrated, sustainable, and competitive Nordic Region.

It is in the interests of the Nordic countries to pursue improvements to the European Union and how it functions. In many **EU matters**, it is possible to exercise a constructive influence in advance in different constellations of like-minded Member States. We want the Nordic Region to inspire and actively offer up its experience, standards, and solutions, taking into account the conditions and structures of the partner countries. We can also achieve a Nordic advantage by co-ordinating the way in which EU decisions are implemented in the Nordic countries. It is in the interests of the Nordic countries to influence these issues together.

Finland is emphasising the importance of continued support for Ukraine. The Nordic Council of Ministers should continue to support **Ukraine** in its reconstruction and in strengthening the rule of law and civil society in Ukraine, such as in the education sector, and support those receiving temporary protection.



Vision 2030 governs Nordic co-operation, which is the responsibility of the Nordic prime ministers. They are each represented by a Minister for Nordic Co-operation for each country. The Nordic governments work together in 14 different sectors, each represented by its own ministerial council. These are administratively supported by the Secretariat to the Nordic Council of Ministers, which is led by the Secretary General.



Photo: Harri Tarvainen/Visit Finland. Business Finland. Eeva Anundi/Business Finland.

FOCUS ON THE SECURITY OF SOCIETY AND ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

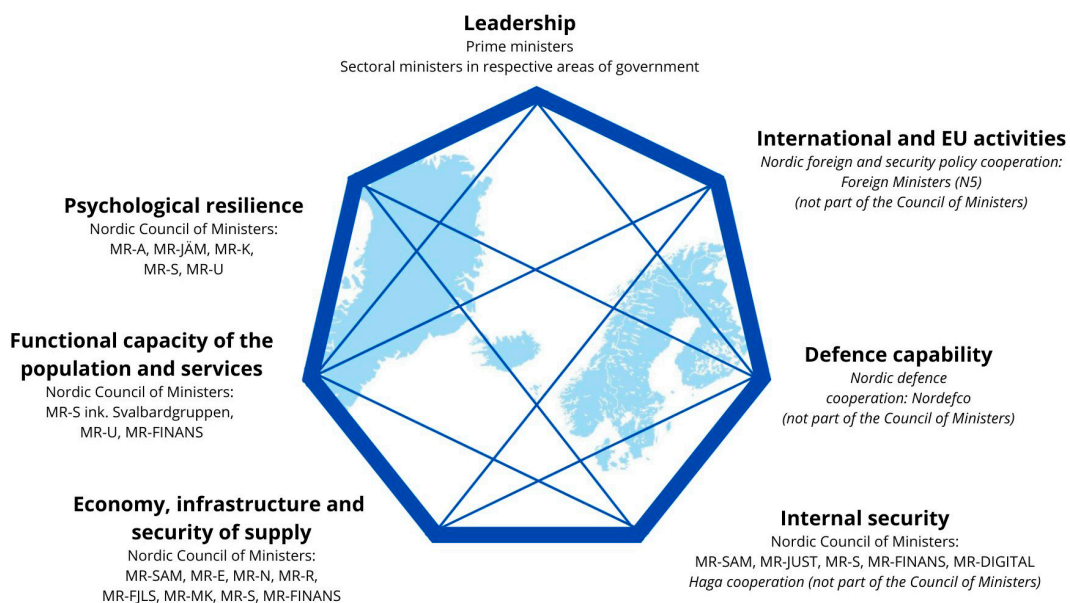
During its presidency, Finland will pay particular attention to the security of society, including crisis preparedness and resilience, as well as to children and young people.

During the presidency, we will stress the need to improve the resilience of the Nordic countries and promote **comprehensive and extensive preparedness** for various crises and hybrid threats. The Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland must be given the opportunity to participate in this work. The development of the Nordic countries' resilience and capacity to act in the event of crises must be consistent, and all policy sectors must be taken into account in a co-ordinated manner in order to step up preparedness. Nordic governmental co-operation in the ministerial councils provides an effective framework for this. The Nordic Region must be a strong player in Europe that can quickly and efficiently react to crises such as natural disasters, pandemics, and organised crime. In the EU, Finland is pursuing its proposal for the drafting of a strategy for an emergency preparedness union.

In a changing environment, it is important that the authorities give consideration to guaranteeing the continuity of key societal functions, the handling of disturbances such as cyberthreats, security of supply, and emergency preparedness. National co-operation models are in place in all the Nordic countries for how stakeholders share and analyse security-related information, as well as for how they plan, practise, and act together. The COVID-19 pandemic taught us how important it is that all sectors of society act in crisis situations in order to safeguard civic resilience, participation, and recovery. The stability of Finnish society is based on its operational model for overall security, i.e. the ability to maintain society's vital functions whatever the circumstances, which requires flexible co-operation between the authorities. Finland is prepared share with other countries its know-how and the lessons it has learnt regarding general security and general defence.

Measures at the national level need to be supplemented with Nordic co-operation. During the presidency, efforts relating to preparedness and resilience will be pursued within the various sectors of the Nordic Council of Ministers. These efforts include skills development, foundation studies, research, and progress towards joint preparedness, such as in the form of risk mapping. Finland stresses the importance of a clear overall picture to improve preparedness and develop co-operation. The efforts within the Nordic Council of Ministers help to make the Nordic Region as strong, prepared, and resilient as possible.

NORDIC CO-OPERATION Societal security, including civilian crisis preparedness and resilience; *The functions vital for society*



Trust plays an important role both when it comes to preventing and dealing with crises. Training and culture-based services support the civic knowledge and skills needed in a changing society. Civic welfare, health, and action, alongside the prevention of marginalisation and an equitable and democratic society, underpin social stability and a sense of justice. Activities within civil society organisations, churches and other religious communities, and other agencies give a country's inhabitants a social frame of reference that establishes trust and a just society for all.

Security of supply is the basis for a society's overall security. Finland is strengthening Nordic co-operation on emergency preparedness and security of supply. The security of food and energy supplies is an essential aspect of the security of supply. Finland is pursuing the creation of a Nordic network for the security of supply. The initial steps of the network are to evaluate Nordic issues regarding the security of supply and the preparations that can be made at the Nordic level, and to draft an action plan.

Together with Åland, Finland is promoting **the rights of children and young people and welfare and participation in the Nordic Region**. The Nordic Council of Ministers' work with children and young people should be systematically followed up on. Children's rights must be protected by putting children's best interests first, which also means strengthening the participation of children and young people. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guides the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers, is exceptionally comprehensive and detailed. Children have the right to the protection and care they need, which obligates adults to ensure that children's rights are exercised and to protect children from their rights being neglected.



The focus of Finland's and Åland's presidency is on the security of society, inherent preparedness and resilience, and children and young people.



Photo: Ari-Pekka Darth. Tim Bird. Riitta Supperi/Keksi/Team Finland.

A SUSTAINABLE NORDIC REGION

Climate change, loss of biodiversity, and pollution are some of the biggest challenges that humanity faces. We must find common Nordic solutions by pursuing the technology-neutral production of clean energy, carbon neutrality, biodiversity, strong ecosystems, the circular economy, and a sustainable bioeconomy. The Nordic countries must continue to be world leaders in an innovation-driven and competitive clean transition.

The clean transition is enabling a transition to an environmentally sustainable economy and growth that is not based on the overconsumption of natural resources and fossil fuels. The transition to sustainable growth may involve increased investment in clean energy, the utilisation of circular economic solutions, a transition to low-emission transport in a technically and economically sustainable way, and the protection and strengthening of biodiversity. New technology and innovation in the field of energy are needed alongside increased production to cater for growing demand and to facilitate the transition to clean energy. Digitalisation, skills, and research play a key role in this.

The clean transition is a significant opportunity for Nordic rural and urban areas. Rural and remote areas can leverage the development opportunities that come with this transition. The conditions for the transition may be affected by both area utilisation and regional development. Clean energy facilitates industrial renewal and new investment, along with the new jobs that these entail. The possibility of transition varies from region to region, which is why considerations such as regional justice and acceptance are important.

Demographic changes pose challenges for both growing **city regions and areas that are losing their population**. There are, however, prerequisites for a good life and pull factors in every kind of area. Smart adaptation is needed in areas that are losing population or in remote areas, which may mean abandoning the goal of continuous population growth. Although it is necessary to identify and strengthen pull factors and the conditions for a good life in all regions, this is crucial for regions that are in a development trap.

The importance of industrial carbon capture, utilisation, and storage (CCUS) is likely to increase in the next few years, alongside forest carbon sinks and sequestration. There is a need to promote the development and utilisation of solutions for industrial CCUS,

including solutions based on the separation, storage, and utilisation of bio-based carbon dioxide. During its presidency, Finland will deepen Nordic CCUS co-operation and promote the exchange of information between authorities, research institutes, and other stakeholders in the field.

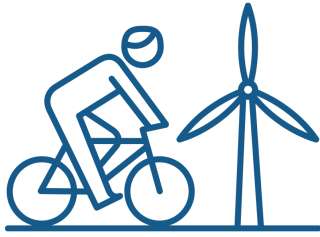
The global green and digital transitions are expected to increase demand for **mineral raw materials**, and the industry sees great opportunities going forwards. The strength of the Nordic Region is its abundant mineral resources in the bedrock and its knowledge about these minerals. The Nordic mineral sector can help to overcome global challenges while supporting the Nordic Region's economic development. Taking environmental considerations into account provides opportunities to develop and utilise more sustainable solutions, both in the Nordics and around the world.

Stepping up the sustainability, resilience, and competitiveness of Nordic **food production and the bioeconomy** is an important goal. The presidency will promote the sustainable management and use of bio-based natural resources. Adapting to climate change and reducing climate impact are key areas of co-operation within this sector. The development of bio-based industries, agriculture and forestry, and fishing and water use are playing a key role in society's adaptation to climate change. The transition in relation to energy solutions for the fishing industry is a central theme of the presidency. Co-operation to develop new protein sources both creates opportunities for competitive and sustainable production and improves resilience.

Nordic co-operation is identifying ways to promote the healthy and sustainable consumption of food with regard to national circumstances. This concerns, for example, efforts to implement the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations, improve consumer information, and reduce food waste. These themes are closely related to improving the environmental, economic, cultural, and social sustainability of the food system, which is a central issue in efforts to achieve the goal of sustainable development.

The strengthening of bioeconomic resilience and food supply has been given a more prominent role in Nordic co-operation. A competitive bioeconomy that adapts to a changing climate also helps to improve social security overall. Together, the Nordic countries can find solutions to maintain and bolster sustainable agricultural production in the face of global challenges.

The promotion of **international co-operation on the environment and climate** will continue under Finland's presidency. Current environmental and climate challenges are largely cross-border, requiring solutions by way of international co-operation and global partnerships. The Nordic countries are effective international negotiators and assist in the implementation of ambitious environmental and climate agreements. In recent years, the Nordic countries have been active in the negotiation of a new international plastic agreement, for instance.



The Nordic Region shall continue to be a global leader in an innovation-driven and competitive clean transition.



Photo: Visit Åland. Harri Tarvainen. Riitta Supperi/Keksi/Team Finland.

A COMPETITIVE NORDIC REGION

The Nordic Region's global economic position and competitiveness are crucial for ensuring the development of the business sector and the welfare of society. Going forwards, Nordic companies must have the capacity and ability to innovate and compete in global markets. A competitive Nordic Region requires intersectoral co-operation. The Nordic countries should step up their co-operation in relation to export markets.

The presidency will promote the competitiveness of Nordic companies by stepping up co-operation in the areas of innovation and sustainable solutions, which will strengthen the Nordic Region's position as an attractive investment object for a resource-efficient transition to clean energy. Effective competition in the Nordics will help businesses to innovate. The Nordic countries see the benefits of open markets and functioning competition. Functioning markets can be promoted by highlighting the importance of competition and by pursuing predictable regulation that ensures conditions of equal competition and does not create unmotivated obstacles to entering or operating in a market.

A **skilled and well-educated** population creates the conditions for sustainable economic growth and strengthens social resilience in a changing world. There cannot be societally pivotal and sustainable innovations without a skilled population. It is also important that Nordic education systems deliver sufficient skills in critical industries to ensure security of supply and cater for the needs of the circular economy. Vocational training and higher education must therefore satisfy the skills requirements of critical industries.

Research plays a prominent role in the Nordics. Through interdisciplinary research that transcends collaborative structures, we find practical solutions to major societal challenges. The work of the Nordic Council of Ministers and its decision-making should consistently be based on research and research-based knowledge.

Finland and Åland will continue to pursue **the free movement of people and companies** and remove obstacles to freedom of movement that hinder economic growth. A digitally borderless Nordic Region is a prerequisite for sustainable growth and a sustainable Nordic Region. The presidency will promote a digitally borderless Nordic Region. Mobility is an

important tool for improving the quality of education and training while easing the shortage of skilled labour. Mobility also strengthens collaboration within the arts and culture sector and supports networking and project creation among civil society stakeholders. Mobility in the Nordic Region and Europe more widely has decreased in recent years, so the presidency will promote high-quality mobility between the Nordic countries.

It is important to promote the transition to clean energy and the use of renewable energy sources, which is a particular focus for Finland and Åland during their co-presidency. **The energy security** of the Nordic countries is an important factor for economic stability and social welfare. Although our energy profiles are different, our common goal is to ensure a reliable, affordable, and sustainable supply of energy. The Nordic diversity of energy sources reduces the risks of excessive dependence on a single energy source and improves resilience.

The Nordic countries are closely connected through the internet and common markets. Cross-border interconnections help us balance variations in energy production and demand, streamline resource use, and improve preparedness and the security of supply. The security of **the energy infrastructure** is of the utmost importance in ensuring the reliable and uninterrupted supply of energy, protecting critical societal functions, and preventing various threats and interruptions.

Ensuring sufficient **electricity production capacity** even in crisis situations is crucial. A low-emission and sustainable energy future requires technical innovations and co-operation.

The bioeconomy plays an important role in industry innovation and as an enabler of valuable business activities and new jobs. Through Nordic co-operation and the sustainable management and use of resources, we can improve the Nordic Region's competitiveness in relation to other regions and support industry's opportunities to leverage the full potential of the bioeconomy. By promoting opportunities for collaboration on bio-based products and finding solutions for the circular economy, we can improve resource efficiency and create economic growth.

Nordic co-operation should promote the cohesive development of policy and legislation related to the bioeconomy, as well as facilitate and accelerate the approval of and market access for bio-based products. It is essential to ensure a flexible value chain, sufficient research initiatives, and industrial scalability. Nordic co-operation will also promote joint research and innovation and attract investment.

The new geopolitical reality poses challenges for the Nordic countries, which depend on unrestricted international trade and investment. Together, the countries can leverage their strengths and counter the vulnerability of Nordic industry. Finland's presidency will promote a project examining Nordic industry's **international value chains** within selected critical sectors. When it comes to value chains, when working with risk management it is important to consider climate change and adaptation to it, as well as environmental deterioration. Solutions within the circular economy play a key role in reducing vulnerability in industrial value chains.

The transport systems of tomorrow are safe, knowledge-based, and sustainable. They consist of networks and services for passengers and freight, and make use of all available information. In the future, people and goods must be able to move more safely, more sustainably, more flexibly, and more cost-effectively, all with fewer emissions. During its presidency, Finland will tackle transport system planning at the strategic level, with an emphasis on overall safety. It is necessary to work together, based on the perspective of the transport system as a whole.

The conditions should be established to transition to alternative fuels in the transport sector, especially in heavy goods traffic, while taking into account technical neutrality. During the transition, citizens' purchasing power and companies' competitiveness must be protected. The presidency will promote a Nordic co-operation project exploring alternative fuels for heavy goods vehicles.

Nordic co-operation to improve transport, logistics, and communication links and to promote preparedness and preparation is crucial. Security of supply and preparation for the development of digital and physical contacts and services have become increasingly important. Similarly, co-operation and the identification of interdependencies between sectors are becoming increasingly important. Critical infrastructure must be protected so that markets can continue to function and citizens can go about their day-to-day lives as usual under all circumstances.

Shipping and ports are crucial for transport as part of the Nordic countries' overseas trading and to guarantee the availability of supplies. In 2024, the Nordic countries have been affected by the situation in the Red Sea and its impact on international shipping, the growth of the so-called shadow fleet, and the situation in the Baltic Sea, among other things. Functioning transport routes are essential for the survival of Nordic business and, consequently, for the competitiveness of society as a whole. Therefore, it is in the interests of the entire Nordic Region that safe winter shipping and icebreaker vessels be taken into account in the regulation of shipping emissions.

As part of Nordic **co-operation on tourism**, Finland and Åland will promote the implementation of the tourism co-operation plan drawn up in 2024 and explore funding opportunities with the Nordic tourism working group, Nordic Innovation, and the secretariat to the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Participation at **Osaka Expo 2025** with a joint Nordic pavilion is a good example of cross-border co-operation and an excellent opportunity to highlight a competitive Nordic Region and the Nordic countries as a common investment market, as well as Nordic values, culture, innovation, and sustainable development, all at an international level.

Cultural co-operation between the Nordic countries unites Nordic residents across borders and is pivotal for people's welfare and participation. The creative sector and cultural scene play a key role in bolstering the competitiveness and international draw of the Nordic countries. The ability of the arts and culture sector to address societal challenges should be strengthened further.



A competitive Nordic Region requires inter-sectoral co-operation. The Nordic countries should also step up co-operation around the promotion of Nordic exports.



Photo: Majja Astikainen/Helsinki Marketing. Mikael Ahlfors/Keksi/Team Finland.

A SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE NORDIC REGION

The Nordic welfare societies are largely built on trust, but several development trends are now challenging both the Nordic welfare model and social cohesion.

A socially sustainable society guarantees all its members equal opportunities for a good life while protecting the environment and resources for future generations. In a just and inclusive society, discrimination and inequality are actively fought against. Healthier and more sustainable food consumption also contributes to better public health. Rapid technological development and the use of artificial intelligence offer new opportunities for all population groups, especially young people. At the same time, the use of technology also comes with the risk of threats, such as cyberthreats, and the exclusion of certain groups from the opportunities that such new technology offers. The presidency will also discuss the rise in concentration difficulties and anxiety disorders among children and young people as digital tools become more and more prevalent.

Confidence in **the rule of law, democracy, and gender equality** is a cornerstone of Nordic society, which must be protected and strengthened. Robust social cohesion contributes to the creation of a safe and supportive environment for individuals and groups. In such a society, people are better off and society is more resilient to various crises and challenges.

The presidency will focus in particular on close co-operation and the exchange of information and experience in combatting and preventing youth and gang crime, and in combatting cross-border organised crime. The identification of criminal activities and behaviours that contribute to such crime is continuing, and discussions are in progress to further develop co-operation within the prison system.

The presidency will also promote the resilience of democracy. The opportunity for people of all ages to act and participate is necessary for a pluralistic society and for the development of democracy. The fight against corruption strengthens the structures for the rule of law, the high level of trust, and the stability of Nordic economies, while weakening the foundations of organised crime. Consequently, during the presidency, we will promote the identification of methods for combatting corruption and sharing best practices between the Nordic countries.

A high level of knowledge and education has an impact on social welfare. Studies in recent years have shown that learning outcomes have deteriorated in the Nordic countries. Competence in literacy, mathematics, and science has fallen and learning differences have grown. During the presidency, we will pursue Nordic co-operation to identify the causes of the declining level of knowledge and identify solutions to reverse this trend in the Nordic countries.

Digitalisation and artificial intelligence can affect key democratic stakeholders and processes, but they can also contribute to societal innovation. The presidency will focus on **media competence and the safeguarding of democracy**. False or misleading information can intentionally undermine society and democracy. A good level of media competence and the ability of citizens of all ages to recognise disinformation strengthen active citizenship and also improve societal resilience.

The presidency of Finland and Åland will pursue Nordic co-operation in **the field of disability** and the integration of disability issues. The aim is to increase awareness and strengthen the knowledge base on rights for persons with disabilities and thereby support the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in different sectors and at different levels.

Digitalisation and preparedness are important topics with regard to the rights of people with disabilities. By taking into account the rights of people with disabilities in these areas, we support a socially sustainable Nordic Region in which no one is left out. Co-operation in the field of disability also brings a Nordic perspective to debates on disability policy at the European and global levels. In addition, Nordic co-operation in the field of disability in 2025 will have a focus on human rights, taking into account an intersectional approach – in other words, how different factors such as age and gender affect the position of a person with a disability.

Although the Nordic countries are world leaders in the promotion of **gender equality**, there's a lot for them still to do. During the presidency year, co-operation will be focused on the fields of gender equality, equal pay, gender-related violence, and the welfare of people belonging to gender minority groups and sexual minority groups. Finland is continuing its long-term human rights policy to promote and defend rights for women, girls, those with disabilities, indigenous peoples, gender minority groups, sexual minority groups, and other particularly vulnerable people, among other groups.

2025 marks 30 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and its action programme, which is among the most important international documents on gender equality. During the presidency year, we will examine the significance of the action programme from a Nordic perspective and look at what remains to be implemented.

Cultural diversity, inclusion, and equality are fundamental Nordic values. In order to address the challenges of the future, it is vital that every Nordic inhabitant feels well and has the best possible opportunities to participate in the region's cultural life and societal development, regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, appearance, disability, language, or ethnic origin.

During the presidency year, we will work together to look at how we can strengthen cultural and linguistic diversity in the Nordic Region, increase participation, improve inclusion and equality in cultural life, and ensure good and proactive co-operation going forwards. At the same time, Finland and Åland want to further discussions on how to promote mobility and the exchange of experiences between Nordic practitioners of art and culture and practitioners from the Arctic, Baltic, and Nordic regions.

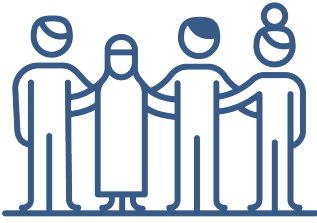
Finland is continuing to share its experiences in preparedness issues and is seeking joint Nordic solutions to the major challenges faced by the culture sector, especially in terms of changes in the operating environment, the structures in the field of art and culture, and funding prospects. A central issue is the impact of new technology on the development of Nordic cultural policy, including the use of creative works and Sami culture in the feeding of generative artificial intelligence.

Measures to combat work-related exploitation aim to guarantee adherence to minimum conditions in the employment relationship and other obligations, regardless of the employee's background. Similarly, these measures aim to ensure that competition between companies is fair and that everyone follows the same rules. The presidency will continue efforts within this sector by promoting measures to prevent work-related exploitation, especially with regard to co-operation between different authorities.

The psychosocial work environment is a central issue in the Nordic labour market and one of the priorities in occupational health and safety regulation. Constant changes pose challenges for the labour market, while a good work environment is a prerequisite for a sustainable working life. The importance of the psychosocial work environment has grown in the contemporary labour market due to changes in the work environment and the cognitive demands of work. Many Nordic residents feel that mental wellbeing challenges have affected their ability to work. Psychological problems have become a common cause of inability to work throughout the Nordic Region.

It is crucial to prevent and manage psychosocial risks in the workplace in order to achieve a good work environment. Proactive initiatives relating to the psychosocial work environment have a clear impact on people's stamina and capacity to act, perceived wellness, and ability to stay in work. This issue is also important for the EU and forms part of the pillar for social rights.

Language plays an important role in establishing communities, fostering trust, strengthening democracy, and improving participation. The Nordic language community is important for the continued development of a common Nordic identity and thus helps to make the Nordic Region the most integrated region in the world. During the presidency year, implementation will commence of the new declaration on Nordic language policy, which was co-adopted by the ministers for education and culture in 2024. The presidency is seeking to promote a long-term and effective Nordic language policy that develops in step with the times, such as in relation to digitalisation, artificial intelligence, and internationalisation.



A socially sustainable society guarantees all its members equal opportunities to enjoy a good life while also protecting the environment and resources for future generations.



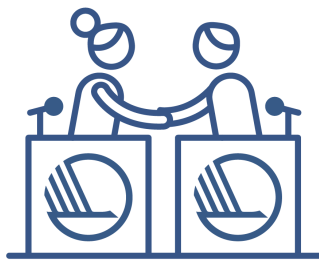
Photo: Daniel Eriksson/Visit Åland. Pasi Markkanen. Pasi Markkanen.

WE'RE WORKING TO BUILD A **SUSTAINABLE, CAPABLE, AND INTEGRATED NORDIC REGION IN 2025**

This programme presents our priorities and joint objectives for our presidency year, 2025. Finland's and Åland's co-presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers is an expression of our deep commitment to Nordic co-operation. Similarly, it is another link in the chain, whereby each Nordic country takes its turn in holding the presidency.

The agreement-based intergovernmental co-operation of the Nordic countries brings many advantages to the inhabitants of the Nordic Region. Nordic co-operation as it stands was not a matter of course, but the result of a decades-long historical process in which the Nordic Council of Ministers, which was established in 1971, plays an important role. It is important that, during our presidency, we preserve and further develop this valuable tradition of co-operation based on mutual trust.

In recent years, the importance of Nordic co-operation has grown further and it is important that we highlight its concrete achievements in the public arena in the Nordic countries. In a rapidly changing international environment, it is crucial that the Nordic countries work together to find sustainable solutions to current challenges, as well as put forward a Nordic perspective globally. Together we are stronger.



The Nordics – strong and united

LINKS TO THE MINISTERIAL COUNCILS' CO-OPERATION PROGRAMMES



Nordic Council of Ministers for Nordic Co-operation
MR-SAM



Nordic Council of Ministers for Working Life
MR-A



Nordic Council of Ministers for Energy Policy
MR-E



Nordic Council of Ministers for Industrial Policy
MR-N



Nordic Council of Ministers for Regional Policy
MR-R



Nordic Council of Ministers for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Agriculture, Forestry and Food
MR-FJLS



Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI
MR-JÄM



Nordic Council of Ministers for Culture
MR-K



Nordic Council of Ministers for Justice Affairs
MR-JUST



Nordic Council of Ministers for the Environment and Climate
MR-MK



Nordic Council of Ministers for Health and Social Affairs
MR-S



Nordic Council of Ministers for Education and Research
MR-U



Nordic Council of Ministers for Finance
MR-FINANS



Nordic Council of Ministers for Digitalisation
MR-DIGITAL

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.

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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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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