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SECTORAL PROGRAMME

Education and Research

The Finnish Presidency in
the Nordic Council of Ministers 2016



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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, and 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. Common Nordic values help the region solidify its position as one of the world's most innovative and competitive.

**Nordic Council of
Ministers**

Ved Stranden 18

DK-1061 Copenhagen K

Phone (+45) 3396 0200

www.norden.org

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Foreword

The Finnish presidency programme in the Nordic Council of Ministers is built on three cornerstones; water, nature and people.

The Nordic countries are united in understanding the importance of nurturing people and nature. Social and ecological responsibility and caring provide a solid foundation for building our future.

Education, research and innovation must respond to changes in society and act as the driving force for future development. This is particularly important in economically difficult times.

By joined efforts among the Nordic countries in developing education, high-level expertise and research we can utilise our strengths even more efficiently. Similar working environments and legislation, a long tradition of cooperation, and the numerous already existing networks are advantages in working together within the Nordic countries.

A functioning Nordic cooperation further reinforces our unity in the EU and global contexts.

The main themes of the Finnish sectoral programme for education and research are digitalisation, participation, competence building and open science. Promoting digitalisation and competence building is a challenge for all Nordic countries. We must be on the forefront in utilising new pedagogy and learning environments in order that the Nordic countries continue to be among the top countries in learning and quality education. Next year our particular focus will be on the pedagogy of early childhood education and care, teacher education, and supplementary education for teachers.

The growing numbers of asylum seekers are a challenge to our education system as well. Support for active citizenship, language education, recognition of knowledge and skills, and promoting the transition into working life are key issues with regard to integration to a new homeland.

It is very important to share best practices among the Nordic countries in this work.

Even stronger cooperation between the different sectors in our societies is needed. Finland will launch a cross-sectoral priority project “An Open and Innovative Nordic Region with Healthy People 2020 – Equal opportunities for Welfare, Culture, Education and Work” to be implemented in 2016–2018.

In recent decades significant development has been made in education cooperation and student mobility within the EU. Agreements between the Nordic countries are being updated and we will discuss the particular Nordic added value in the efforts to further promote student mobility and cooperation in education issues.

It is important to take care of the key structures in our Nordic cooperation: the Nordplus-programme, Nordic Master’s programme and the organisation for Nordic research cooperation NordForsk.

Other means to strengthen cooperation between universities are also needed. Good examples of this include the cooperation between Arctic universities and strategic partnerships between universities in the Nordics.

In science, special focus during our Presidency will be on enhancing the role and impact of open science and research. The harmonisation work

and strategic outlines within the EU will be taken into account in the Nordic dialogue.

Nordic research cooperation has a lot to offer to all of the main themes of the Finnish Presidency; water expertise, Arctic research, health and wellbeing, and education studies. Nordic eScience cooperation continues from Finland's previous presidency.

Let us all cherish joy in learning and have courage to grasp new opportunities!



Sanni Grahn-Laasonen
Minister of Education and Culture

The sectoral programme for education and research include three entities. The first covers the whole competence chain, with a special focus on digitalisation, participation and development of competencies. The second entity is about enhancing the mobility in the Nordics and the Nordic agreements and the third about topical issues within the Nordic collaboration in higher education and research.

1 Mending the competence chain

Education should answer to the new knowledge and skills requirements created by societal development and change. Digitalisation is affecting our competence requirements, our activities, the way we interact with each other, and challenging our ability to interpret different sources of information. In the world of young people in particular, new, media-based interaction and networking possibilities both strengthen some competence areas and weaken others at the same time. As a result, we need new competences and ways of upholding young people's and children's interest in and motivation for learning.

Signs indicating that our competence base is eroding are visible in all the Nordic countries. For example, the share of young people who possess weak basic skills has increased in all age groups. During the Finnish presidency, we will examine the entire continuum of competence, from early childhood education to university education, the life-long learning of adults, the upholding of working life readiness and the basic and continuing education and training of teachers.

High-quality basic and continuing education and training of teachers is the very foundation of our education system. In 2016, a Nordic group of experts will publish its report on the current state of teacher training and the possibilities of Nordic co-operation. The report will serve as the basis for future discussions concerning Nordic co-operation in the field of teacher training.

It is paramount that we keep investing in the starting end of the competence chain, and we must ensure that we can keep doing so under all circumstances. After all, high-quality early childhood education and basic education promote equality and social cohesion, and form the basis for future success. Research co-operation between the Nordic countries can strengthen our knowledge base on how the widespread participation and well-being of children and young people can best be promoted in our rapidly changing societies and learning environments.

In the future, learning to learn and the continuous updating of one's competence will become increasingly important. Another challenge

shared by all the Nordic countries will be figuring out how to increase the employment competence of the adult population.

In response to these questions, Finland will focus particularly on connections between the education sector and working life, as well as on digitalisation in education and working life in policy-level expert meetings.

Language skills and multiliteracy have a major impact on what kind of prerequisites children and young people have for growing into active adulthood and citizenship. During the year Finland will bring together Nordic expertise and, with the help of curricula, for example, examine what kind of language education objectives and practices are currently in place in the Nordic countries.

OBJECTIVES

- We will strengthen Nordic co-operation in early childhood education pedagogy and its international profiling.
- We will examine the effects of digitalisation on changing competence needs, continuing education and training needs, learning environments, pedagogy and curricula in the Nordic countries.
- We will compare the competence needs of working life from the perspective of the education sector in the Nordic countries.
- We will build cross-sectoral Nordic co-operation related to questions of participation and educational equality in collaboration with the Nordic Committee for Children and Young People (NORDBUK) and the Nordic Centre of Excellence (NCoE) Justice through Education in the Nordic Countries (JustEd).
- We will examine the importance of language skills and multiliteracy as key civic skills and compare language education and multiliteracy policies across the Nordic countries.
- We will continue Nordic co-operation in the work against radicalisation.
- We will develop Nordic co-operation in the field of teacher training based on the report of the expert group.



KEY EVENTS

- Nordic conference on early childhood pedagogy, 22 September 2016.
- Senior officials' meeting on Nordic co-operation, late summer 2016.
- Expert meeting on the competence needs and upholding of working life readiness of the working-age adult population.
- Bridges – Young people's participation and well-being in the Nordic countries. The event is part of the cross-sectoral *An Open and Innovative Nordic Region with Healthy People 2020* project, 26–28 September 2016.
- 21st century skills and the Nordic countries, Nordic@Bett2016, London 21 January 2016.
- Annual seminar of the Academy of Finland's The Future of Learning, Knowledge and Skills research programme, Tampere 6–7 June 2016.
- Seminar on language education in the curricula of the Nordic countries, Language Parliament, Helsinki 7 April 2016 and CoDesigns: Envisioning multi-sited language education policies conference in Jyväskylä 20–22 June 2016.

**An Open and Innovative Nordic Region with Healthy People 2020
Equal Opportunities for Welfare, Culture, Education and Work project
(2016–2018)**

The three-year priority project jointly co-ordinated the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland comprehensively highlights the theme of “people”, which is one of the three themes of the Finnish presidency programme in the Nordic Council of Ministers. The project seeks innovative solutions and operating models for preserving social well-being and equality amidst the challenges created by the ageing of the population, changes in the economy and working life, geopolitical crises and the developing international refugee situation.

Additionally, the project aims to form a shared political-level view of the prerequisites for the future preservation of the added value that expert co-operation offers to the Nordic countries. The project’s long-term results will strengthen the permanent structures of Nordic well-being policy co-operation and information sharing. The project’s pervading themes are well-being, diversity, equality, gender equality and culturally sustainable development. These themes will be explored with the help of and taking into account Nordic research and innovation activities. The project’s key priority area is children and young people.

2 Long-term strategy for mobility in the Nordic countries

It is imperative that we maintain, strengthen and create new prerequisites for functional mobility and educational co-operation within the Nordic countries' education and research system. Changing learning environments offer new opportunities for international co-operation.

Nordic co-operation can also expedite more widespread regional cooperation. Every year, the Nordplus programme facilitates the networking and mobility of thousands of schoolchildren, students, teaching staff and researchers in the Nordic countries and Baltic states. The Nordic Master programme provides the framework for creative joint Master's Degree programmes. Cooperation between the Nordic Council of Ministers and Russia is also continuing in accordance with the education and research cooperation agreement. The official co-operation between the Nordic countries is also increasingly taking into consideration Arctic co-operation.

OBJECTIVES

- We will decide on the new 2017–2021 operating period of the *Nordplus* programme.
- Agreements between the Nordic countries will be examined as a whole. In the field of education, we will review and decide what to do about Nordic agreements regarding the recognition of degrees (the Reykjavik Declaration), access to higher education and upper secondary school education.

KEY EVENTS

- Expert seminar on Nordic mobility, August 2016.
- New digital forms of educational co-operation, 26 May 2016.



3 Higher education and research as the developer of society and business

International competition and the tightened economic situation challenge universities to more clearly profile and strengthen their areas of expertise in both education and research, not only internally and in relation to other universities but also in relation to other research operators. The importance of the quality of Nordic higher education and research is growing and will increasingly become a future lifeline for the welfare state and international competitiveness. A Nordic expert group is currently reviewing the quality of higher education in the Nordic countries. The results of the group's work will be discussed during the Finnish presidency.

Digitalisation and the electronic usability and availability of larger data stores are changing research and the ways research is carried out. In response to these changes, Finland has launched the extensive Open Science and Research Initiative (ATT), which has garnered interest in other Nordic countries as well. Openly available electronic information materials provide an increasing number of users with access to information and enable the re-utilisation of various information materials. Furthermore, openness increases citizens' trust in science and the impact of research. As a result, all the Nordic countries are currently seeking national solutions for the promotion of open data and open research processes. During the presidency, Finland will promote Nordic dialogue on national-level measures, taking into consideration the related harmonisation work being carried out on the EU level and the EU's definitions of policy as well as the Nordic policy analysis of OA questions that NordForsk will submit to the Nordic Council of Ministers in early 2016.

The Nordic Council of Ministers for Education and Research will continue Nordic co-operation in the fields of higher education and research in 2016, focusing on Arctic co-operation, water expertise, the health and well-being sector and the humanities. Finland will explore these themes particularly from the perspective of open science and eScience.

Arctic co-operation touches upon all sectors of Nordic co-operation, including the climate, energy and environment sector, in which the Nordic countries have already carried out extensive research co-operation. In relation to this, in 2016 NordForsk will launch the Nordic Responsible



Development of the Arctic programme, which includes research on the water resources of Arctic areas. Finnish water expertise will also be connected to the Nordic framework through the Academy of Finland's AKVA programme, the Baltic region's and the EU's joint BONUS programme and Tekes' Arctic Seas programme.

There has been a sharp increase in co-operation within health and welfare sectors and in the joint development of health services in the Nordic countries. Extensive analysis has been carried out on the possibilities for public health, register research and biobanks in Nordic co-operation, while NordForsk's *Nordic Programme on Health and Welfare* has brought together expertise and research environments to strengthen Nordic co-operation within this area. In addition to this, joint clinical research between the Nordic countries is being supported and developed with the help of the ongoing Nordic Trial Alliance (NTA) project. Furthermore, health and health related research is also being promoted through several science policy guidelines.

In 2016, the Committee of Senior Officials will review NordForsk's analysis of NordForsk's work and potential role in relation to biobanks, register research and clinical research, as well as Nordforsk's concrete plans for continuing Nordic co-operation in eScience questions based on the Nordic eScience Action plan 2.0.

During Finland's presidency, we will also examine how digitalisation is changing research in the fields of the humanities and social sciences within the framework of the Academy of Finland's Digital Humanities programme.

OBJECTIVES

- We will utilise the results of the report compiled by the working group on the quality of Nordic higher education in the development of the quality of Nordic higher education.
- We will review the possibilities of preparing joint guidelines for open data in research.
- We will consolidate Nordic co-operation in the education and research of Arctic areas.
- We will strengthen Nordic education and research co-operation in the health and welfare sector.

KEY EVENTS

- Seminar on the quality of higher education in the Nordic countries, June 2016.
- Annual seminar of the Open Data and Research (ATT) project, November 2016.
- Nordic seminar on public health in collaboration the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Helsinki 16–17 November 2016.
- Programme co-operation in main themes for the Finnish presidency programme in collaboration with the Academy of Finland and NordForsk.



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Ved Stranden 18
DK-1061 Copenhagen K

www.norden.org



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Nordic Council of Ministers
Finnish Presidency 2016



Secretariat
for Nordic Co-operation
Ministry for Foreign Affairs

www.norden2016.fi

Laivastokatu 22 H
FI-00160 Helsinki
Telephone: +358 295 350 000

**SUOMI
FINLAND**

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