

Nordic Partnerships for the Arctic

– an introduction to ongoing
projects 2018–21



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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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Nordic commitment to a sustainable future in the Arctic

For over twenty years, the Nordic Council of Ministers Arctic Co-operation Programme has contributed to enhancing our knowledge about the Arctic region. The program has supported valuable research in the field of natural and social sciences in the region and enabled Nordic institutions and organizations to work on projects that focus on the Arctic, its environment and communities.

The program has supported hundreds of projects since it was established in 1996 and it has been instrumental in enhancing and broadening our understanding of how the Arctic is constantly changing and developing. As a result, we now have a better understanding of the changes in the Arctic environment and the development of the Arctic communities than ever before. This is important because we cannot take decisions regarding the



PHOTO: MATS BJERDE, NORDEN.ORG

future of the region without a sound scientific basis based on best available facts.

Another positive development is the increased focus on the Arctic. There is an international consensus on how important the Arctic is for our common future. Our commitment to the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals is fundamental for the future of the Arctic. With the new vision of the Nordic Council of Ministers with focus on a green, competitive and socially sustainable Nordic region towards 2030 we have a clear path forward on lowering emissions and ensuring sustainable Arctic development.

The Arctic has always been important for the Nordic Countries, for us it is not far away, it is a part of the geography and territory of the Nordics. As such, the Nordic countries share a special responsibility to make sure that developments in the region are sustainable. This cannot be achieved without active dialogue and co-operation both within the Nordic region and on the international level.



Paula Lehtomäki
*Secretary General,
Nordic Council of Ministers*

Nordic co-operation for a sustainable and prosperous Arctic region

Since it was established in 1996, the emphasis of the Nordic Arctic Co-operation programme has been on sustainable development and enhancing the prosperity and well-being of Arctic peoples and communities.

People, Planet, Prosperity, Partnerships

The current four-year Nordic Arctic Co-operation Programme 2018–2021 is focused on four overall themes: People, Planet and Prosperity as well as Partnerships as a cross cutting theme. Closely connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement, the programme supports international research projects and other collaborative efforts to support sustainable development in the Arctic.

These two major global agendas guide all activities within the programme. Projects on education, gender equality and the health and social welfare of the population fall under PEOPLE, the PLANET theme addresses the environmental aspects of the development, such as biodiversity and sustainable utilisation of natural resources, while PROSPERITY includes initiatives to promote innovation, entrepreneurship and economic growth. PARTNERSHIP is furthermore a crucial element of all projects supported by the programme.

Opportunities for local growth

In recent years, the focus of the Nordic Arctic Co-operation Programme has been increasingly placed on the inhabitants and their communities in the Arctic. A key objective is to empower the local and indigenous Arctic communities to sustain their lifestyle and culture – now and in the future.

To support this important objective, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Arctic Economic Council recently commissioned a comprehensive study in 2018 of the opportunities for people, businesses and investment in the region. This *Arctic Business Analysis* highlights four elements with great potential for sustainable growth: Entrepreneurship and Innovation; Creative and Cultural Industries; Public Private Partnerships and Business Co-operation; and Bioeconomy. These areas will be given increased priority in Nordic Arctic Co-operation in the coming years.

Projects funded as part of the Nordic Council of Ministers Arctic Co-operation Programme 2013–2019:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Projects	28	31	24	24	25	22	22
Support	6,2 m DKK	6,3 m DKK	6,1 m DKK	5,95 m DKK	6,5 m DKK	6,5 m DKK	6,9 m DKK

Part of the Arctic programme funding has gone to support projects within the Arctic Council and its six permanent working groups. Altogether the Programme has allocated around 8,3 million Danish Crowns to the work of the Arctic Council in the period from 2012 to 2019. This amount has gone to specific activities and projects under the Arctic Council working groups and its subsidiary bodies and in that way contributed to the Arctic Council agenda and priorities.



PHOTO: UNSPLASH.COM



PHOTO: LENEISJA JUNGSEBER

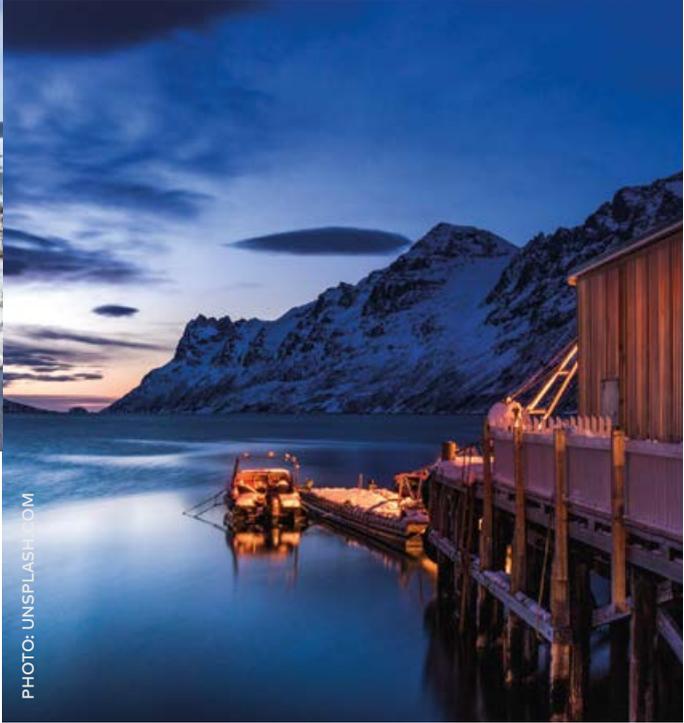


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People, Planet, Prosperity and Partnerships

The ongoing Nordic Arctic Co-operation Programme is focused on four themes: People, Planet, Prosperity and Partnerships. The following section will give examples of projects under each of the four main categories, from the period of 2015–2019.

PEOPLE – Sustainably balanced Arctic communities

Empowering Arctic communities to respond to demographic, social and environmental change is a prominent element of the Nordic Arctic Cooperation Programme. Under the headline PEOPLE, the programme supports research, education and competency building projects in the Arctic, as well as initiatives promoting the health, social wellbeing and prosperity of the Arctic peoples.

Local opportunities in sustainable tourism

Partnership for Sustainability: Arctic Tourism in Times of Change explores the effects of tourism on Arctic communities, many of which rely on the sector as an important source of income. The research is focused on seasonality, urban tourism and overtourism, i.e. destination with so many visitors that it is not sustainable.

"Arctic destinations often have one strong tourist season, either winter or summer," says tourism researcher Outi Rantala of the University of Lapland. "The high season puts strain on the local environment and population, whereas in off-season, these communities may struggle to provide sufficient services."

“Many of these people have lived in their natal community for their entire lives, surrounded by family, so moving them into the larger towns might not be the right solution. To ensure quality of care, we recommend that the state should remain responsible for elderly care provision in the remote and rural areas of the Arctic.”

While typically promoted as a wilderness area, much of the tourism in the Arctic takes place in its urban centres. The researchers will therefore be studying the linkages between urban tourism and nature-based tourism in peripheral areas, before engaging with the complex issues of overtourism.

“Overtourism in the Arctic is limited to certain places and certain seasons. It can be dealt with in many ways, for instance by expanding the season or guiding visitors to other destinations. Our objective is to build knowledge on the issue to ensure sustainable development of Arctic tourism.”

Elderly people's agency and inclusion

Arctic communities face significant demographic challenges, such as outmigration of youth from rural areas and the ageing of the remaining population. Meanwhile, health services are increasingly being privatised, which can create challenges for elderly care provision in sparsely populated areas.

“Our objective has been to study the health and wellbeing of this growing population segment,” says Päivi Naskali, project leader of *Advancing Elderly People's Agency and Inclusion in the Changing Arctic and Nordic Welfare System*. “With these changes, it's important to ensure that elderly people's voices are heard and that they're offered the right type of care and support.”

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PLANET – Respect for the Arctic ecosystem

Preserving the Arctic ecosystem has long been a priority for Nordic cooperation, and in recent years, the accelerating impact of climate change has constituted an overarching issue in all Nordic activities in the region. PLANET addresses everything from biodiversity conservation and sustainable utilisation of marine resources to new energy solutions, less polluting ship traffic and sustainable cities.

Extensive data on marine tourism

The Nordic Arctic Cooperation Programme has supported a large number of projects by the Arctic Council's working groups, including *Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME)*. One of the notable outcomes is PAME's Arctic Ship Traffic Data (ASTD), which provides data about all shipping activities in the Arctic, including the type of ships and vessels, their routes and destinations, and detailed data on fuel consumption and emissions.

"This is a major turning point, as the data enables us to produce detailed insights into ship traffic and marine tourism in the Arctic," says PAME Project Manager Hjalti Hreinsson. *Arctic Marine Tourism: Shipping Analysis and Best Practice Guidelines* will be utilising the data to analyse the latest trends in marine tourism in the Arctic.

"The data is very valuable with regards to monitoring ship traffic, developing infrastructure and addressing search and rescue issues. Also, we can calculate pollution from the shipping activities, which will help us regulate it and protect the Arctic environment."

“These community-based exchanges culminated in the Festival of Northern Fishing Traditions in 2018, which brought together indigenous and local fishermen from 120 villages across the Arctic to discuss cultural heritage, climate change and ecological restoration.”

Traditional knowledge for sustainability

The value of traditional knowledge in managing the Arctic ecosystem and responding to environmental and climate change has been demonstrated through numerous projects and research initiatives. *eXchanging Knowledge* has addressed this topic, aiming to establish direct knowledge exchange between local communities in Greenland, Finland and selected Sámi areas.

“eXchanging Knowledge builds on experience from previous efforts to document the observations by local and indigenous hunters, fishermen and reindeer herders,” says Tero Mustonen of the Snowchange Cooperative in Finland. *“These people possess knowledge and insights that are invaluable to Arctic ecosystem management.”*

The communities have shared their observations of the marine ecosystems, including changes in marine species, marine pollution and snow and ice conditions. One of the most drastic observations is the loss of sea ice in Greenland, severely limiting the possibilities for hunting, while in Finland, the project has focused on restoring salmon and trout habitats threatened by climate change.

“These community-based exchanges culminated in the Festival of Northern Fishing Traditions in 2018, which brought together indigenous and local fishermen from 120 villages across the Arctic to discuss cultural heritage, climate change and ecological restoration.”



PROSPERITY – Arctic entrepreneurship for sustainable growth

Although challenged by demographic development and climate change, there are vast opportunities for sustainable development in the Arctic. Projects funded under PROSPERITY promote innovation, entrepreneurship and local business development in relevant sectors, such as food and tourism. They also explore the benefits of digitalisation, especially for remote communities.

The legacies of mining in the Arctic

Mining is one of the major industries in the Arctic and has had significant importance for the establishment of entire settlements and infrastructure. However, due to lower prices, reduced demand and climate concerns, many of the mines have been closed or suspended.

Sustainable communities and the legacies of mining has explored the ways in which post-industrial mining communities deal with their legacy and the physical remains from the mining activities. Three sites have been studied: Kiruna, where mining is still ongoing, an abandoned coal mining settlement in Qullissat in Greenland, and mining towns in Svalbard.

"In Kiruna, old mining sites, buildings and infrastructure have been redefined as cultural heritage, making them an important resource for tourism development," says project manager Dag Avango of KTH Royal Institute of Technology. The mining communities in Svalbard are exploring similar opportunities. "We can conclude that it's quite possible to transform the legacy of abandoned mining towns into something useful for the future."



PARTNERSHIPS – Working together for a sustainable future

The partnership theme cuts across all projects funded by the Nordic-Arctic co-operation programme, but also stands as a category of its own. The bottom line is, however, that working for a sustainable future – in the Arctic and elsewhere – is not a one person show, but a task that requires all hands on deck.

A new generation of entrepreneurs

Supported by the Nordic Arctic Cooperation Programme, four universities in US, Greenland, Faroe Islands and Denmark have joined forces to develop competency building in innovation and entrepreneurship for Arctic students. The project is called Educating Arctic entrepreneurs – The next generation of sustainable pioneers.

“It’s well documented that millennial students in higher education are highly motivated to engage in meaningful change processes,” says Sune Nordentoft Lauritsen, Senior Adviser of Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the Technical University of Denmark.

The objective is to develop capacity for entrepreneurial ventures in the Arctic, not only in commercial start-ups but also in non-profit social enterprises, municipalities and public organisations. Hands-on experience is an important aspect of the programme – making real-life observations, identifying problems and developing sustainable solutions.



"To succeed as an entrepreneur, you need two sets of competences," says Lauritsen. "You need the mainstream entrepreneurial skills, and then you need to believe in your ability to change the world, even in the face of opposition. One of our most important tasks is to instil such an entrepreneurial mindset in our students."

Nordregio, an institution under the Nordic Council of Ministers, is handling project management and co-ordination of the programme, so you can find all projects at: nordregio.org/arctic-programme



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