

Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Estonia in 2011

2011 passed under the sign of an anniversary. The Nordic Council of Ministers' 20th anniversary in Estonia was celebrated by looking forward. This was a self-evident choice given that the Finnish presidency had chosen to focus on sustainable growth. The sustainability theme was an anchor point for our visible activities throughout year. The two main activities were Nordic Look and Green Growth (the Rohevik Festival).

During the year, our office also took initiatives to deepen Nordic-Estonian contacts on different levels to strengthen and activate the network. The council's Secretary General and Office Manager had an audience with President Toomas Hendrik Ilves. As the first head of state to do so, the Estonian president made a return visit to the council's secretariat in Copenhagen. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Culture and the Minister of the Environment, together with other leading officials, have all participated in the office's activities. Contacts with universities in both Tallinn and Tartu, as well as other research institutes, have also been established.

Cooperation with the Nordic embassies in Estonia has been crucial to the implementation of these activities. Different partners from Estonia have participated in financing events to a large extent.

The anniversary year concluded with a reception in the office's garden attended by 150 guests. Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs Urmas Paet gave the main speech and a broad spectrum of Estonia's political and administrative elite was represented at the event.

A selection of events in 2011:

1. Sustainable development, energy and environment

- a. Green Growth Festival – *Rohevik* (15-17 September, www.rohevik.ee). The overall aim of this project was to initiate discussion about urban society's challenges for the environment from a global and regional perspective. The project was implemented as a 3-day festival and was related to three substantial concepts for urban life: 1) renewable energy; 2) sustainable transportation; and 3) sustainable city planning. Key people: Ville Niinistö, Finnish Minister of the Environment; Kaja Kallas, Chairman of the Estonian Parliament's Committee of Economic Affairs; and Keit Pentus, Estonian Minister of the Environment. Nordic institutes: Nordic Innovation; NIB; and NEFCO. Over the 3 days, more than 400 experts, decision-makers and entrepreneurs from the sector met to discuss the latest technical developments in sustainable energy solutions. A public event for a wider audience on 17 September brought together an estimated 2000 visitors on Freedom Square in Tallinn.

2. Culture and creative industries

- a. Creative Hotspots (24-25 March). The office participated as a partner (with the British Council) in a conference about new creative ideas for entrepreneurs and investors. The conference brought together 162 participants from the Baltic States, Nordic countries and Russia. From the Nordic countries, two lecturers took part: Ville Heijari (Angry Birds, Finland) and Stein Bjelland (Great Moments, Norway).
- b. *Nordic Look* – Month of Nordic Design (2-29 May, www.nordiclook.ee). The aim of the exhibition was to draw attention to sustainable Nordic design and create cooperation opportunities between the Estonian and Nordic markets within the fashion industry. The intention was to provide people within the industry with possibilities to meet Nordic designers and to enable ongoing business contacts. Nordic Look was opened by Secretary General Halldór Ásgrímsson. During the month, 14 different seminars with ca 600 participants were held. The general public had the chance to visit a pop-up boutique in the heart of Tallinn. Altogether an estimated 2000 people participated in activities related to the project.
- c. Creative entrepreneurship (19-21 October). This conference for decision-makers and entrepreneurs as the target group brought together 180 participants. Enterprise Estonia, Creative Estonia, the Ministry of Culture and the

Ministry of Economic Affairs served as co-organizers. Discussions focused on creative talent, the creative economy, creative infrastructure, creative society and regions and creative leadership.

- d. Nordic Library Week (14-20 November). The motto in 2011 was 'Nordic Humour'. Altogether 163 libraries in Estonia turned their attention to Nordic humourists. The office was responsible for the coordination of a well-attended event in Kuressaare on Saaremaa with the Estonian writer and translator Jan Kaus as reader and commentator.
- e. Other cultural events at which the office served as a partner: the 'Unprecedented Cinema' festival; a movie and photo exhibition with a Nordic theme in connection with the Nordic Twin Town Conference in Tartu; the PÖFF film festival; and the 'Leka Skogen' ('Playing Forest') project by NiFin and Nordic House on the Åland Islands.

3. Health and equality

- a. Battling human trafficking. A Nordic-Baltic-Russian cooperation project to fight human trafficking has been initiated with the St. Petersburg office as the project leader. This is an inter-sectorial project for police, border guards, social authorities and legal experts. A plan for the continuation of this work has already been launched, with a programme aiming to identify victims of human trafficking.
- b. Equality. The Danish children's book *Dagen då Rikke blev Rasmus och Fredrik var Frida* ('The Day that Rikke became Rasmus and Fredrik became Frida') will be translated into Estonian, and 20 elementary school teachers will complete a programme on how to use the book in education.

4. Mobility programme

- a. Public administration. The NCM office in Estonia is the administrative body for the Nordic-Baltic mobility programme for public administration 2009-2013. During 2011, the program registered 79 applications and granted 64 stipendiums for seven individual internship projects, 52 group study trips and four network meetings, to a total value of €349,493. Altogether 460 people participated in the project (162 men and 298 women) from the Nordic countries and Baltic States.
- b. Business and industry. The office is responsible for coordinating and consulting on applications from Estonia. 11 applicants from the country (from 48 in total) were supported by the programme, which allocated a total of 685,000 DKK (31% of the total amount) in support.
- c. Culture. The office is responsible for coordinating and consulting on applications from Estonia – both within the mobility programme for culture and art and within the culture programme, which is administered by Kulturkontakt Nord in Helsinki. The amount of applications has been stable in recent years, while the amount of projects supported has increased. 31 Estonian projects were granted mobility support; two projects received long-term network support; and four projects were approved as part of the art and culture programme. Altogether, the programme handed out €242,796 in support to applicants from Estonia.
- d. NGOs. The mobility programme for small NGO organizations in Estonia is also administered by the NCM office. In 2011, seven project applications were received and five were granted support. The total sum amounted to more than €330,000.

5. Other

- a. As part of the 20th anniversary celebrations, on 22 February the office held a reception in cooperation with Nordic chambers of commerce at its office at Lai 29 for ca 150 guests.
- b. Another activity that attracted a lot of interest was the Wikipedia writing competition held in spring. 170 articles from 52 writers in five categories with

Nordic themes were produced. The categories were Energy & the Environment, Culture & Tradition, the Economy, Research & Education and NB8 cooperation.