

Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Estonia in 2012

After a year of much publicity, the Council of Ministers' Office in Estonia continued its activities with fair winds in 2012. The programme of the Norwegian presidency focused on Nordic welfare. The theme of welfare thereby became the common thread throughout the year. As such, it was natural to begin with a **round-table conference on the theme of welfare** in March. The conference, which was organised with the Norwegian Embassy in Tallinn, was well-attended and inspired a discussion about welfare in working life and the need for quality during leisure time. May saw the continuation of the Council of Ministers' 'Nordic Look' series, which this year focused on sustainable urban planning and the importance of well-planned urban environments. The events were organized over two weeks at the Kumu Art Museum in Tallinn in cooperation with the Estonian Centre for Architecture and Creative Estonia.

During autumn activities continued with a **creative forum** for Estonian and Nordic educationalists as well as the heads of education at the local level in Estonia. The forum led to a welcome discussion on the need for more creativity in education. A follow-up will be arranged in 2013.

During autumn the environment forum **Rohevik/Green Growth** continued, based on the model from previous years. Conferences on sustainable energy and sustainable construction were organized in Tartu and Tallinn. In addition, traditional activities were pursued in fruitful cooperation with Nordic embassies, Estonian ministries and other local partners.

In association with the Council of Ministers' Offices in Vilnius and Riga, the book 'More is better: Nordic-Baltic cooperation 1991-2031' was also published. The aim was to contribute to a discussion on the policy of the Council of Ministers' Offices in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania from 2014, when new guidelines will apply.

A selection of events in 2012:

1. Sustainable development, energy and environment

- a. Green Growth Festival – *Rohevik* (18-19.10 & 25-26.10, www.rohevik.ee). The overall aim of Rohevik/Green Growth is to make a Nordic contribution to the ongoing advancement of sustainable development in Estonia. For the second year in a row energy efficiency, smart solutions and renewable energy were on the agenda. The year's event consisted of two conferences, in Tallinn in the Riigikogu (parliament, designed in NB8 format with the title 'Policy Challenges on Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy') on 18-19.10 and in Tartu on 25-26.10 ('Smart Energy Solutions'). Approximately 335 experts, entrepreneurs and decision-makers attended the conferences. Key persons: the president of the Nordic Council, Kimmo Sasi; Krzysztof Gierulski, DG Energy, EU Commission; Robert Tromop, International Energy Agency.

2. Culture and creative industries

- a. Nordic Look 2012 – urban planning and architecture (15-30.5, www.nordiclook.ee). The purpose of this year's Nordic Look was to focus on urban environments in order to support public well-being. The Council of Ministers wanted to create the conditions for dialogue between architects, politicians, officials, activists and civic organizations, together with representatives from the other Baltic States, north-west Russia and the Nordic countries, so as to reflect on solutions (or the lack thereof) for functioning urban environments. Nordic Look does not constitute a single seminar but rather a series of conferences and seminars over time – in this case from 15-30 May. The opening international conference had the title 'Living city – city of dreams', at which Estonian president Toomas Hendrik Ilves was one of the speakers. The Estonian Centre of Architecture and Creative Estonia were co-organizers and partners. After the opening conference there were three themed seminars for professionals: Architecture and architectural competitions; Copyrights for architects; Joint marketing on the international market. In connection with Nordic Look, Kumu was visited by the exhibition 'Newly Drawn – Emerging Finnish Architects'. Approximately 350 people also watched four films on the theme of architecture: 'The Desert Castle' (NO); 'Bruno is Back' (SE); 'A Time of Roses' (FI); 'My Playground' (DK). Radio and television covered the events on main newscasts and in separate reports. The culture magazine Sirp published several pages in

response to the events, and raised the topic in prime time on one of the most popular discussion programmes on Estonian TV. And finally, Nordic Look was selected as one of the most important architectural events in Estonia in 2012. All in all, about 1250 people participated in Nordic Look in 2012.

- b. Seminars to support creative entrepreneurs (8-23.3). Creative Estonia arranged five separate local seminars in spring, sponsored by the Council of Ministers: in Valga (8.3), Viljandi (9.3), Rakvere (15.3), Jõhvi (16.3) and Haapsalu (23.3). Four of the seminars were attended by speakers from the Nordic countries. The topics were sales and marketing, the need for cooperation and the need to focus on attention in the media. A total of 551 creative entrepreneurs participated in the local workshops.
- c. Creative Forum: Creativity changes the world (28-29.8). The aim of this two-day forum for officials, teachers, school directors and researchers was to discuss ways of making better use of creative approaches in school education. Around 100 people from the Estonian school system, 23 lecturers and 6 workgroup leaders took part. The forum also attracted media attention – the organizers were interviewed on the radio, while the largest newspaper Postimees interviewed experts in Hjalli pedagogy. The creative forum will have a follow-up in 2013 in the form of a new forum. It will form the first step towards new networks.
- d. Nordic library week (12-18.11). Nordic library week in Estonia was arranged for the 15th time. This year's theme was 'Diversity in the Nordic countries'. A total of 135 libraries participated in the events. Professional actors participated in readings and performances, with authors and translators as guests and lecturers. The Tartu City Library played host to librarians from across the country, who gathered for a one-day seminar. The 'Fabulous Iceland' exhibition, which included 23 posters picturing contemporary Icelandic authors, circulated between the seminars during the week. The International Strindberg Conference in Tartu on 15-16.11 was conducted in cooperation with the Department of Scandinavian Studies of the University of Tartu.
- e. Film portal (December). The Council of Ministers' Office took the initiative to start up a virtual Nordic library for Nordic films in Estonia. The platform is a pilot project for one year and to start with it is only possible for film and language students in Tallinn and Tartu to access the material. A total of 58 (mostly classic) Nordic films are available on the platform.

3. Health and equality and human rights

- a. Seminar on Nordic welfare (21.3). In total ca 50 invitees, experts, NGOs and policy-makers took part in the programme. In this way, the topic of Nordic welfare became a common thread in the work of the Council of Ministers' Office throughout 2012.
- b. Fight against trafficking in human beings. The project was launched in October. The need for an effective cross-border network of police, border guards, border police, volunteers, and experts in north-west Russia, the Nordic countries and the Baltic States is clear. The intention is to create and strengthen this network as a knowledge project focussing on the identification of victims of trafficking. The project is being carried out with the Nordic-Baltic Network of Policewoman (NBNP) as a partner. Three visits to Helsinki, Stockholm and Oslo are planned. 20 people will take part in each study visit, creating a total of 60 participants. The project will end with a major conference in Tallinn in May 2013.

4. Communication

- a. The book 'More is better: Nordic-Baltic cooperation 1991-2031'. The Council of Ministers' offices in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania wished to contribute to the development of work in the Baltic States by creating new visions for activities. The issue is now on the agenda of the Council of Ministers as a result of work on new guidelines for offices from 2014. A number of specialists from the Baltic States submitted their personal views on what cooperation should be like in future. Several important issues were raised, for example the need for a coordinated

approach to the demographic challenges in the Baltic Sea region. This issue is already moving forward through a Nordic-Baltic two-year project which will begin in Tallinn on 07-08.03 during the Swedish presidency.