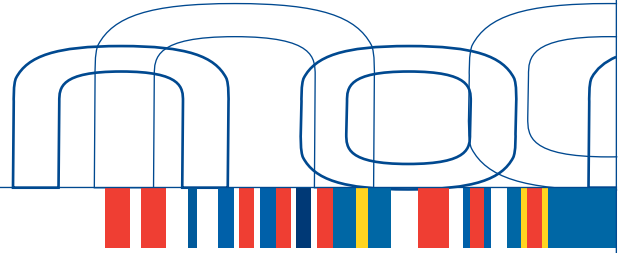




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Nordic Council of Ministers



The Nordic Council of Ministers and the EU Baltic Sea Action Plan

The Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) supports the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and in particular the efforts set out in the Action Plan to promote sustainable growth, development and regional cohesion.

The NCM believes that existing regional collaboration structures and partnerships in the Baltic Sea Region offer a number of unique opportunities for the fast and effective implementation of the EU Baltic Sea Action Plan.

The NCM has supported regional cooperation between the five Nordic countries and three self-governing areas since 1971. Through its offices in Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius, St Petersburg and Kaliningrad, the NCM has been developing close collaboration with the Baltic countries and partners in Northwest Russia since the early 1990s. In addition, NCM increasingly works with partners in Germany and Poland.

As well as providing a platform for intergovernmental cooperation, the NCM supports a number of Nordic institutions, many of which run concrete activities that could help accelerate implementation of the EU Baltic Sea Action Plan. For example, the Nordic Innovation Centre (NICe), Nordic Research Board (NordForsk) and Nordic Energy Research (NEF) all support collaboration activities that develop and deploy existing knowledge and new research in order to secure long-term sustainable growth. In addition, NordRegio works to improve spatial development and regional cohesion in the Nordic countries and in the Baltic Sea Region.

With reference to the four thematic pillars of the EU Baltic Sea Action Plan:



To make the Baltic Sea Region an environmentally sustainable place, NCM works with HELCOM, among others, and implements a number of activities aimed at conserving and improving the Baltic marine environment.

To make the Baltic Sea Region a prosperous place, NCM works to remove barriers to the single market; to ensure the free movement of knowledge (the so-called “fifth freedom”); and to strengthen knowledge and competitiveness through the ambitious Top-Level Research Initiative. The promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation is also high on the Nordic agenda.

To make the Baltic Sea Region an accessible and attractive place, NCM works to develop a free, fair and efficient electricity market that benefits both producers and consumers. NCM also collaborates with other regional partners, e.g. BASREC, on important issues such as energy efficiency and renewable energy.

To make the Baltic Sea Region a safe and secure place, NCM works to increase responsiveness to health

threats; to pre-empt human trafficking; and to fight other serious forms of cross-border crime.

For these reasons, the NCM has actively contributed to the European Commission’s preparation of the EU Baltic Sea Action Plan. NCM will support the Action Plan by taking the lead in some flagship projects, and by active participation in other actions. The NCM believes that it would benefit the whole of the Baltic Sea Region, if the implementation of the Action Plan builds on NCM’s experiences of cross-border cooperation and utilises existing networks and collaboration platforms in the region.



The role of the Nordic Council of Ministers in specific activities included in the Action Plan

A core objective of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the corresponding Action Plan is that existing regional co-operation structures and mechanisms support and reinforce each other. The Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) supports this objective.

To ensure that the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region remains high on the political agenda and to promote partnership-building and co-operation, NCM works both with other regional stakeholders and with the EU Commission to organise meetings, seminars and conferences aimed at sharing good practice and identifying efficient measures to realise the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

NCM and Nordic institutions will also function as *project leaders* in several projects under the Action Plan for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The current project status as of summer 2010 is as follows:

The Nordic Forest Research Co-operation Committee (SNS) and the Nordic Genetic Resource Centre (NordGen) will together lead a project on forest research and forest genetic resources, under the title *Management and conservation of forest tree genetic resources in the Baltic Sea Region under changing climate conditions*. SNS will lead the part of this project that focuses on evolutionary genetic pockets for broad-leaved tree species, while NordGen will lead the part that focuses on co-operation on breeding Norway spruce.

In addition, SNS will lead the Action Plan project *Creating a Nordic-Baltic information service for forests and forestry*. This project will develop a re-



gional website and knowledge base, and in doing so, it will actively contribute to the project *Create a network on forest research in the Baltic Sea Region (EFINORD)*. SNS has been heavily involved in getting this project up and running. Its objective is to forge closer links between the Region and the EU, and to add a European dimension to the well-established Nordic and Baltic co-operation on forest research.

NordGen will also lead the Action Plan project *Network of institutions for management and conservation of plant genetic resources in the Baltic Sea Region under changing climate conditions*. The objective is to secure sustainable conservation and the use of plant genetic resources.

The Nordic Working Group on Microbiology, Animal Health and Animal Welfare will lead the project *Reinforcement of animal health and disease control*. Building on Nordic experiences with veterinary contingency planning, this project will facilitate joint training and simulation exercises in the Baltic Sea Region as a tool for testing contingency plans to control and eradicate the rapid spread of animal diseases.

In addition to project-leading roles, the NCM and Nordic institutions are assessing opportunities to act as partners in a number of other projects under the Action Plan, including:

The flagship project *Remove remaining single-market barriers*, where NCM, via the Nordic Innovation Centre (NICe), could possibly fertilize Action Plan co-operation efforts. As one of its priorities, NICe works to reduce trade barriers and enhance the free movement of goods and services in the Nordic countries and the EU.

The project *Create a Baltic Sea fund for innovation and research and the project Knowledge infrastructure for the Fifth Freedom*, where the NCM, via Top-Level Research Initiative, eScience and infrastructure activities, could possibly fertilize Action Plan co-operation efforts.

As the Action Plan unfolds, NCM and the Nordic institutions are likely to function as project leaders or partners in projects other than those mentioned above, including in sectors such as innovation, energy, social affairs and culture.

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