



ANALYSIS OF THE NORDIC MODEL

Study on the Nordic Council

elaborated within the framework of the project

'Legal accessibility among the V4 countries'

funded by the Visegrad Fund

The logo for the Visegrad Fund, featuring the text "Visegrad Fund" in a teal sans-serif font. To the left of the text are four teal dots arranged in a square pattern.

• Visegrad Fund

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Executive summary

The study aims at analysing the model of the Nordic Council launched in 2014 with a purpose of permanently tackling legal and administrative obstacles in the nordic countries. The document aims to give an overview on the structure, the operation, the procedures and the means of communication of the Freedom of Movement Council of the Nordic Council of Ministers in order to draft a proposal on an obstacle management system within the so-called Visegrad region.

Based on the lessons learnt at a study tour to Copenhagen and Malmö to the actors of the obstacle management procedure within the Nordic Council; and a desk research, the study presents the Nordic Council (the „parliament“ of the nordic states), the Nordic Council of Ministers (the „Commission“) and the Freedom of Movement Council, the organ responsible for enhancing border permeability and facilitating the mobility of the people among the member countries including its set-up, structure and the procedures of elimination of the obstacles.

The Nordic Council, the inter-parliamentary consultative council was initiated in 1952 by Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden with the aim of cooperating in fields where working together is more beneficial than pursuing things alone. Finland joined the initiative in 1955. Besides the five states, further members of the cooperation are three autonomous provinces: Greenland, Faroe Islands and Åland Islands. The related intergovernmental institution, the Nordic Council of Ministers was set up in 1971. The NCM has permanent and ad-hoc councils out of which one is responsible for the nordic cooperation (Ministers for Nordic Co-operation, MR-SAM). The Freedom of Movement Council operates within the framework of this organ since 2014 based on the Declaration by the Nordic prime ministers on the work against border barriers concluded on 29 October 2013. The council's main missions are the breaking-down of existing border obstacles, the prevention of new border obstacles to occur and the enhancement and improvement of information services to citizens and companies.

The FMC's competences consist of gathering and analysing border obstacles, and drafting proposals on the elimination thereof. The council monitors the steps and achievements made by the member states.

The procedure includes the stages of identification and reporting; analysis and registration; prioritisation and elimination. The obstacles are identified and reported by the local and regional partners of the council, including the local information offices of the so-called Hello Norden network operating at each member states, the so-called regional committees which

are cross-border structures; and some professional organisations involved in cross-border activities. The identified and reported obstacles are first analysed by the Secretariat of the Freedom of Movement Council. The analytical procedure contains four steps according to an internal checklist. The redacted and standardised version of the description of the obstacles is registered in the Freedom of Movement database. Then the obstacles are prioritised by the FMC in a way that priority is given to the topics of labour market, social security, business community and education.

At the very beginning, the aim was to eliminate 5 to 10 obstacles per year, the mandate for the period of 2018-2021 envisages 8 to 12 obstacles to abolish on a yearly basis. The elimination of the registered obstacles is implemented according to the prioritisation made by the council. On the one hand, the Secretariat informs the relevant ministries about the problem and suggests a solution if the stakeholders during the identification process drafted any. On the other hand, the members of the council organise preparatory meetings at national level involving the officials of the ministries affected. The decisions on elimination and the relevant amendments of the legislations are made at national level, at the ministries involved. The FMC follows and evaluates the steps taken by national governments.

In mid-2018 there have been 100 obstacles registered in the database out of which 34% were already solved, 54% remained unsolved and 12% of the obstacles were dismissed. All nordic countries together have been affected 376 times by all of 100 obstacles. The most affected nordic country is Sweden with 79 obstacles, then comes Norway, Finland and Denmark with around 50, and more isolated locations like Iceland, Åland Islands, Faroe Islands and Greenland are affected by fewer obstacles, which are mainly those ones affecting all 8 entities. It is therefore possible to generalise that the continental part of the nordic countries is to higher extent affected by bilateral and trilateral obstacles resulting from higher mobility and interaction across borders.

In general, there are 34 obstacles that have already been solved since 2014 concerning labour market (29%) tax and finance (15%) and education (9%). Majority of them were those that were the easiest to fix, however 7 of the solved obstacles were of a more complex character and applied to all 8 members of the cooperation. These were problems related to social and health services.

As it seems, the nordic states have created good opportunities for mobility between countries, but the Nordic Council of Ministers and Freedom of Movement Council still scope for improving the conditions for crossing the border. Prior to 2018, the Freedom of Movement Council has received an extended mandate by the Nordic Council of Ministers. Now the

Council's national representatives have greater opportunities to arrange meetings and receive support from relevant ministers and other actors that can help solve the border obstacles.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the work of the Freedom of Movement Council is continuously monitored mainly by external auditors such as the Oxford Research. One of the evaluations points out that nordic cooperation is currently more relevant than ever before. The organisation works better and reacts more quickly, and the content of the cooperation is more clearly linked to the current policy agenda in the region than before.

Taking into account the degree of organisation of the stakeholders of the network and the whole system, it is not a coincidence that the mechanism facilitating the internal cohesion of the nordic states is operating with an exceptional and exemplary effectiveness.

The experiences persuaded the project team that regardless of the challenge caused by cultural and political differences between the nordic and Visegrad countries, it is worth preparing the proposal and following the nordic model.

1. Introduction of the project and the research

Since its establishment in 1991 and mainly during the last few years, V4 became a regional brand known worldwide. At the same time, regardless of the efforts made by the V4 Fund, the cooperation hardly influences the population's daily life: it is not simpler to work, to live, to study, to do business, to get married, etc. in other V4 countries.

During recent years, several initiatives have been taken in Europe with a view to diminishing or even eliminating the legal-administrative barriers still existing among the European countries. In this respect, the major project was the Cross-Border Review implemented by the DG Regio in 2015-2016. The project ended with a Communication of the European Commission (titled: *Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU Border Regions*) published in September 2017, which will give a new impetus to the efforts in this field, where good examples exist at regional level, too. The most advanced regional cooperation can be detected at the Benelux cooperation and the Nordic Council. At the same time, at Visegrad Group no similar initiatives exist, while internal mobility and cohesion should be strengthened.

The nordic states set up the Freedom of Movement Council in 2014, which every year identifies several legal obstacles hampering internal cohesion and selects some of them to be eliminated by the member countries, systematically. This model does not only strengthen regional cohesion by easing the regional mobility of workers, students, entrepreneurs and goods, but in parallel, provides concrete content for regional identity and regional brand building.

Similarly to the Benelux and Nordic cooperation, the project partners aim at laying the basis for permanent intergovernmental mechanisms enabling V4 governments to detect and eliminate those legal-administrative barriers hampering or making difficult to work, to study, to do business, to get married, to purchase goods, etc. in either countries of the V4 cooperation.

For this purpose, the partners elaborate a study on the model of the Nordic Council to adapt, a proposal on the V4 Mobility Council as a permanent mechanism facilitating cross-border mobility, and an information and cooperation handbook describing the concrete steps and measures to be taken until the council is set up.

The project objectives and results will be popularised through two conferences, an online campaign and a printed brochure. The European decision-makers will be informed on the new initiative by an English summary of the project.

As first step of the process, the present study aims to give a comprehensive picture on the operation of the Freedom of Movement Council (FMC) of the Nordic Council with regard to the application of the model at V4 level. To this end, between 21 and 23 May, 2018 experts of

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Analysis of the nordic model

the partners and V4 country governments travelled to the Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat for a 2-day study tour in order to get well-based knowledge on the FMC. The study tour was followed by a desk research using the primary and secondary sources on the Nordic Council, available in English, in the V4 languages, in Finnish and in Swedish (the vast majority of the annual reports of the Nordic Council have been published in Swedish). In addition, project partners have used the documents and information materials shared by the representatives of the Council at the study tour. During the research and the elaboration of the study the internal and external experts of each project partner have worked together in close cooperation.

Partners of the project:

- ❖ Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (HU)
- ❖ University of Szeged (HU),
- ❖ Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives Carpathia (SK)
- ❖ Masaryk University Faculty of Science – Department of Geography (CZ),
- ❖ University of Warsaw – Centre for European Regional and Local Studies (PL).

2. Introduction of the Nordic Council

2.1 The history of the Nordic Council

The nordic countries including Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden have a long, common historic heritage; in addition, they share many characteristics in respect of politics, culture and language (with notable exception of Finland) and these countries have naturally been seeking for some format of regional cooperation.

The formation of the Nordic Council began after World War 2, when the nordic countries sought for the establishment of cooperation on a regional basis. Due to the diverse development models of individual countries, some options of regional cooperation had to be rejected and were not implemented, such as cooperation in the field of collective defense and security. In defense matters Sweden pursued the policy of neutrality, Norway and Denmark opted for membership in the NATO and Finland remain neutral due to specific relationship with the former Soviet Union and later on with Russian Federation.

Approach of the nordic countries differed also in respect of the European integration. Initially all Scandinavian countries were part of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). In 1973, Denmark joined the European Communities, followed by Sweden and Finland in 1995. Norway also applied for membership, however the accession of Norway to the European Communities and the European Union had been rejected twice by referenda. Recently Norway together with Iceland remained members of the EFTA (other members are Switzerland and Liechtenstein), and as such are part of the European Economic Area that led to harmonisation with the European Union in many aspects of politics and law.

Some members of the Nordic Co-operation are not sovereign states, however they possess special autonomous constitutional status and relationship with the sovereign states. These are the Åland Islands belonging to Finland; the Faroe Islands and Greenland. Moreover, there is a special status of Greenland and the Faroe Islands that are part of the Kingdom of Denmark, however the European Union treaties are not applied upon them, thus they are not regarded as part of the European Union.

The regional cooperation in the Scandinavian region was initiated by the common Nordic Labour Market (1954) and the Nordic Passport Union (1958) that allowed citizens of the nordic countries to travel and reside in another nordic country (excluding Greenland and Svalbard) without any travel documentation (e.g. a passport or national identity card), or a residence permit. Recently, all five nordic countries are participating in the Schengen Area. The Faroe Islands are part of the Nordic Passport Union, but not the Schengen Area, while Greenland

and Svalbard are outside both. Greenland has an open border with all nordic countries, and allows nordic citizens to enter, settle and work without requiring a passport or permits. Svalbard allows nordic citizens to settle and work without permits, as a result of the Svalbard Treaty (Svalbard Treaty of 1920 declares sovereignty of Norway over the archipelago, however it creates specific international legal regime e.g. in respect of demilitarisation, coal mining etc.). Valid travel documentation is required to enter Svalbard, with the exception of citizens of Norway.

The Nordic Council was initiated in 1952 by Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden with the aim of cooperating in fields where working together is more beneficial than pursuing things alone. This is called "Nordic synergy". After several attempts to build up the nordic cooperation failed, the Danish prime minister, Hans Hedtoft proposed the creation of an inter-parliamentary consultative council. Denmark, Iceland, Sweden and Norway agreed, and the first session was held in 1953 in Denmark. In 1955, Finland joined and in 1957 on its fifth session, the Statute of the Nordic Council¹ was adopted. The Statute was recommended to the Governments for adoption, to become effective from 1 January 1958.

Under the terms of Article 1 of the Statute, Nordisk Råd (The Nordic Council) is a body formed for the purpose of consultation among the national parliaments: the Folketing of Denmark, the Eduskunta-Riksdag of Finland, the Althing of Iceland, the Storting of Norway and the Riksdag of Sweden; as well as the Governments of these countries, in matters involving joint action by any or all of these countries.

The Helsinki Treaty² formalised the nordic cooperation on the level of international public law. The Treaty entered into the force on 1 July 1962 and after its adoption, it was amended and updated several times (1971, 1974, 1983, 1985, 1991, 1993, 1995). The most recent amendment entered into force on 2 January 1996. The Helsinki Treaty provides basis for the cooperation between the nordic countries in the legal, cultural, social and economic fields, as well as in those of transport and communication and environmental protection. The parties should hold joint consultations on matters of common interest, which are dealt with by European and other international organisations and conferences.

¹ https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/the_statute_of_the_nordic_council_helsinki_22_february_1957-en-d4904999-b567-42f8-bd25-5f9411c0097b.html

² <https://www.norden.org/en/om-samarbejdet-1/nordic-agreements/treaties-and-agreements/basic-agreement/the-helsinki-treaty>

Articles 2 to 7 provide framework for the legal cooperation of nordic countries. When designing and adopting laws and regulations in any of the nordic countries, citizens of all the other nordic countries shall be treated equally with those of the particular country. The rule shall apply within all those areas, falling within the application of the Treaty. Exceptions to the first paragraph may, however, be made if a requirement of citizenship is constitutionally stipulated, or is necessary because of other international obligations, or is necessary due to particular reasons.

2.2 The functioning of the Nordic Council

The cooperation between the nordic countries has a long tradition. Since 1957, the citizens of the partner countries are allowed to enter other states without passport, since 1982 a fully integrated labour market makes it possible to commute and work in any of the member countries and since 1996, there is a free access to higher education for any of the citizens of the cooperation. The main coordination body of the cooperation is the Nordic Council facilitating the cooperation of the 5 states and 3 autonomous regions.

The Nordic Council

"The Nordic Council works for everybody who lives, works, studies or runs a business in the Nordic region."³ "First and foremost, the Nordic Council's politicians are driven by the desire to make the Nordic region one that people want to live and work in. This is also the primary objective of the ideas and proposals for cooperation that are borne out of the Nordic Council."⁴

The main organs of the Nordic Council are the followings:

- ❖ the Plenary Assembly;
- ❖ the Presidium;
- ❖ the standing committees.

³ <http://www.norden.org/en/search?SearchableText=runs+a+business>

⁴ <http://www.norden.org/en/nordic-council/bag-om-nordisk-raad/the-nordic-council/about-the-nordic-council>

The Plenary

The Plenary Assembly is the supreme decision-making body of the Nordic Council, which includes 87 members from the respective national parliaments. There is no direct election procedure for Nordic Council membership, the party groups of the national parliaments appoint delegates as follows:

- ❖ The Danish Parliament: 16
- ❖ The Finnish Parliament: 18
- ❖ The Icelandic Parliament: 7
- ❖ The Parliament of Norway: 20
- ❖ The Parliament of Sweden: 20
- ❖ The Parliament of the Faroe Islands: 2
- ❖ The Parliament of Greenland: 2
- ❖ The Legislative Assembly of the Åland Islands: 2

The mandate of the members lasts for one year, together with the corresponding number of substitute members, who are elected the same way.

The members and substitute members of the Nordic Council form international party groups, which must bring together at least four deputies from at least two different member countries. Recently, there are five political party groups in the Nordic Council: the Left-wing Socialist Green group, the Social Democratic group, the Centre group, the Conservative group, the Nordic Freedom; and there are Unaffiliated Political Parties (outside the main Party Groups).

The Plenary makes its decisions within the framework of its meetings, chaired by the President or a member of the Presidium (see the next subchapter). As a main rule, any member participating in the debate on an item of business, cannot be the chair. Regarding the decision-making procedure, it can decide by a two-thirds majority on the item of businesses proposed by the chairperson or five elected members. It is the chairperson, who makes the proposal towards the members in a way to answer either 'Yes' or 'No'. In case the outcome is unclear, the chairperson calls the members for an open vote done by roll call or by means of the electronic voting system. It is possible to vote 'Yes', 'No' or 'Abstain'. Decisions are made within the framework of Ordinary and Theme Sessions.

The Presidium

The Presidium, as the political leadership of the Nordic Council, is the highest decision-making body of the cooperation between the Sessions of the Plenary. They decide on overall political matters, foreign and security policy cooperation issues, future plans and budgets among others. It includes a maximum of 11 elected members, the President and the Vice-president. The office holders are elected at the Plenary Sessions (see below) in each autumn. The presidency rotates between the member countries annually. As a major rule, the President and the Vice-president are delegated by the same country in a particular year.

The President (or in his absence the Vice-president) is responsible for designing the annual action plan, for keeping in touch with the national parliaments, the Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers (see the next subchapter) and further relevant institutions from inside and outside the nordic area. In addition, it is also the President who represents the Nordic Council in public events and occasions.

The Presidium makes its decisions during its meeting organised and prepared by the President, except for those special occasions when the Presidium may be deemed quorate if the members are able to contact each other without physically meeting. According to the 'normal procedure', the Presidium has a quorum if at least half of all members, or in matters, which concerns only certain countries (under the terms of the Helsinki Treaty), half of the representatives from these countries are represented. In the event of a tied vote that is the chairperson who decides.

Standing committees

The ongoing political work within the Nordic Council is done by committees. Each committee must consist of maximum 18 members, including the chairperson and the vice-chairperson appointed by the Plenary. The committees are responsible for considering and preparing the proposals of the Plenary with a view to submitting them to the Presidium or to a Session. In order to be able to stand for or against the proposal, the committees may request the input of national agencies or external experts.

As of now, the following committees are in operation: Committee for Growth and Development in the Nordic Region, Committee for Knowledge and Culture in the Nordic Region, Committee for Welfare in the Nordic Region, Committee for a Sustainable Nordic Region, Control Committee, Election Committee.

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The Nordic Council of Ministers

*"The Nordic countries have a strong tradition of democracy ... characterised by cooperation. The continuous exchange of knowledge and culture serves as a basis for the Nordic prime ministers' vision of the Nordic region as the most integrated in the world."*⁵

The major intergovernmental cooperation body of the nordic states is the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM). In the Council, the Governments of the nordic countries, the Home Rule Governments of the Faroe Islands and Greenland and the Regional Government of the Åland Islands work together. The Council, established in 1971, operates through several, currently 10 permanent and one ad-hoc councils of ministers (see Annex 1) and the Ministers for Co-operation. The members of the councils dedicated to specific policy areas are delegated by the relevant ministries and they meet 2 to 6 times a year.

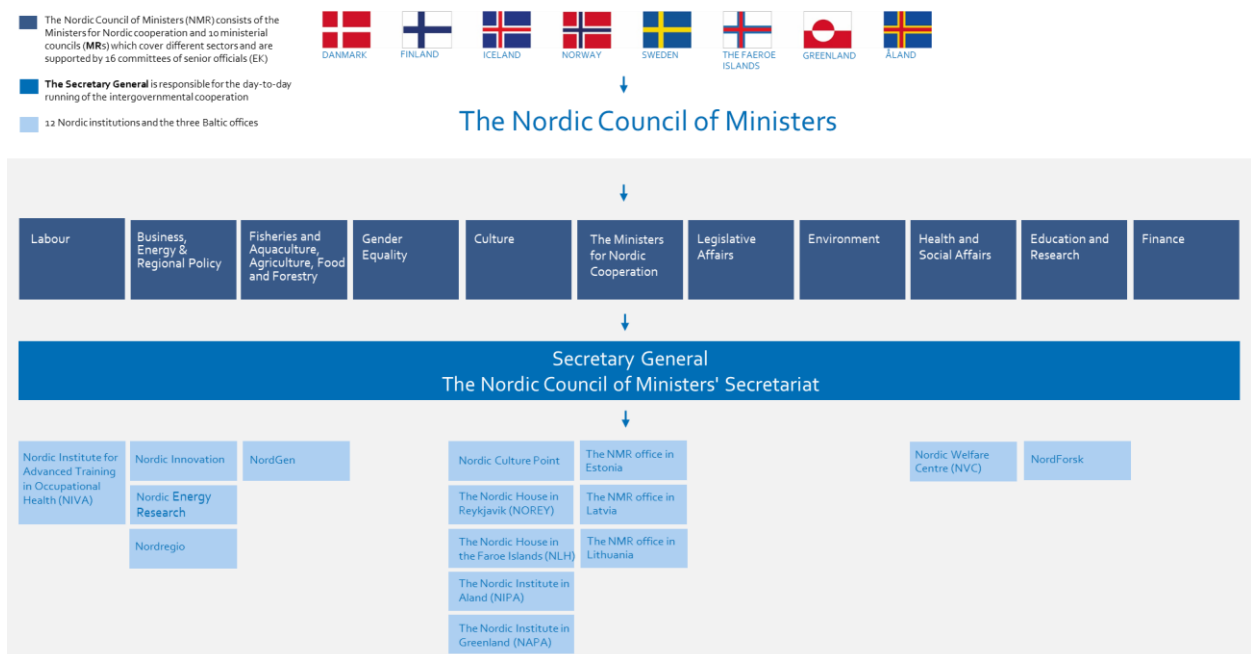


Figure No1: The organigram of the Nordic Council of Ministers

Source: www.norden.org

The Ministers for Nordic Co-operation (MR-SAM) is composed by the prime ministers of the nordic states. Consequently, the Nordic Council of Ministers consists of one or more members

⁵ <http://www.norden.org/en/nordic-council-of-ministers/regeringssamarbejdet/presidency-of-the-nordic-council-of-ministers/sweden2019s-presidency-2018>

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of each country's government (ministers in charge of the relevant policy field and/or of cooperation). Each country has one vote in the Nordic Council of Ministers.

In terms of the decision-making procedure, quorate in the Council of Ministers may be reached by the participation of each members except for those matters, which does not concern all states. All decisions are made by consensus and unanimity. Procedural matters may, however, be settled by a simple majority of those votings.

According to the Helsinki Treaty, the decisions of the Council of Ministers are binding on all nordic states, except for the topic of businesses, which requires the approval of the national parliaments according to constitution of the particular state. However, in these cases, the Council of Ministers must be informed beforehand.

The main organ of the Nordic Council of Ministers is the Presidency, which rotates between the member states on an annual basis. As a main rule, the presidency of the Nordic Council and that of the Nordic Council of Ministers is never held by the same state in a particular year. The country holding the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers also holds the chair for the meetings of Ministers for Nordic Co-operation.

The Presidency of the NCM is responsible for the coordination of the intergovernmental cooperation by defining priority themes. For the current planning period, three themes have been selected:

- ❖ sustainable development in rural areas
- ❖ innovative and resilient regions
- ❖ sustainable cities and urban development.

In line with the general philosophy of the nordic model, some cross-cutting issues are always taken into account. These are:

- ❖ gender equality
- ❖ children and youth
- ❖ economic, social and environmental sustainability.

In addition, cooperation itself is in the centre of the activities, which has its cross-cutting themes as follows:

- ❖ The Arctic
- ❖ Integration
- ❖ Administrative reforms.

The work of the council is supported by various committees of senior officials (see Annex 2) and working groups (see Annex 3) consisting of civil servants from the nordic states. Furthermore, the administrative duties of the NCM are undertaken by the Secretariat operating in Copenhagen (with approx. 130 employees) that shares its premises with the Secretariat to the Nordic Council. The Secretariat is led by the Secretary General.

The Council itself has an extended network of institutions including 12 institutions being present in each member state, employing approx. 300 people altogether.

The Plenary Sessions

The politicians of the Nordic Council and the government members of the Nordic Council of Ministers meet within the framework of the Plenary sessions two times a year. During the Ordinary and Theme Sessions politicians, prime ministers, ministers for cooperation and those of the concerned policy areas discuss the most important issues of the nordic cooperation, and the 87 parliamentary members with voting rights decide on the matters that they call on the government members to implement.

The Ordinary Sessions are organised in every autumn in the country holding the Presidency of the Nordic Council. During these events, the Council of Ministers reports on its activities performed according to the Council's recommendations, and submits an account of the plans for future cooperation. In addition, the prime minister of the nordic state holding the Presidency in the forthcoming year presents their program regarding the content of the cooperation. The Theme Session is held in the country holding the presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers every spring.

Financing

The operation of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers is financed from tax revenues by the member states. The contribution of Greenland and the Faroe Islands are part of that of Denmark, as is Åland part of the Republic of Finland. National contributions are calculated on the basis of each country's proportion of the Nordic regions' total gross domestic product at factor cost for the last two years available (e.g. for budget 2018, these are 2014 and 2015).⁶

⁶ Plans and Budget 2018 – Summary - <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1193105/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

The contributions from the nordic countries are divided as follows:

Country	Total budget (100%)
Norway	30,2 %
Sweden	31,6 %
Denmark	21,1 %
Finland	16,1 %
Iceland	1,0 %

Table No1: Contribution from the Nordic Countries

Source: Plans and Budget 2018 – Summary⁷

Total expenditure for the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2018 is DKK 950 862 000 (app. 127 617 066 € in current prices) similarly to 2017 when it was 935 091 (app. 125 740 € in 2017 prices).

The budget is divided among the eleven Councils of Ministers who allocate the funds according to their own strategies. More than one third of the budget is for partly or fully financing the Nordic Institution, while 55-60% of the budget covers the projects and programmes of the Council of Ministers for different policy areas. The funds budgeted but not spent during the year are taken over to the next year. However, there were redistributions between sectors in order to reinforce the cooperation in the field of health, social issues and green transition.

⁷ <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1193105/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

3. The Freedom of Movement Council (FMC)

3.1 Introduction of the Freedom of Movement Council

The Freedom of Movement Council operates within the framework of the Nordic Council of Ministers for Co-operation (MR-SAM). It is dedicated to promoting the permeability of the borders, and facilitating the mobility of the people among the member countries. The council was set up in 2014, based on the Declaration by the nordic prime ministers on the work against border barriers concluded on 29 October 2013.

The council has three main missions:

- ❖ to break down existing border obstacles
- ❖ to prevent new border obstacles to occur
- ❖ to enhance and improve information efforts.

The main objective of the council in general is to facilitate that the national borders represent no limits in free movement of individuals throughout the nordic region. It consists of:

- ❖ Uncovering the obstacle – comprises of gathering and analysing border obstacles, and it is performed by a close interactivity with local stakeholders, regional information services, local authorities and so on.
- ❖ Demand for solutions – this is the key work of Freedom of Movement Council. An appropriate solution and drafted proposal on the elimination of the obstacle must be found.
- ❖ Affecting the ministries and governments to solve the border obstacles – only authorities of the member countries have such tools, which enables them to solve the problem. After taking action in eliminating the problem by local authorities, the Freedom of Movement Council thenceforth monitors the steps and achievements made by the member states.

The Freedom of Movement Council (FMC) consists of 10 members. All countries, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland can appoint a national member. In addition to the national members, the Council consists of the Secretary-General of the Nordic Council of Ministers and a representative from the Nordic Council is offered to participate in the work. The FMC cooperates with those actors who can nationally contribute to the elimination of boundaries for individuals and companies in the Nordic region. This cooperation includes information

services, ministers, national administrations and authorities, members of the parliaments and others.

Member of the Freedom of Movement Council

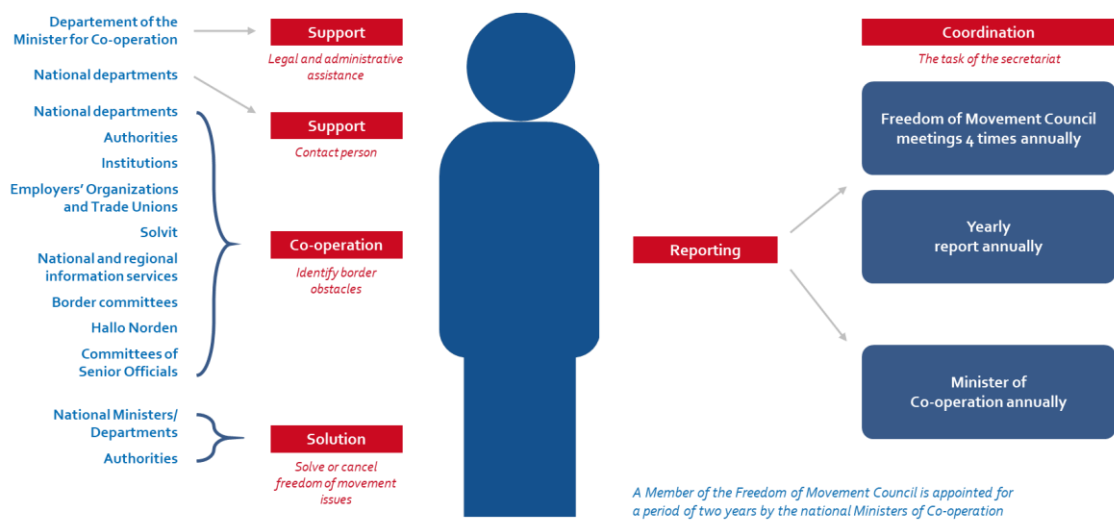


Figure No2: The structure of the Freedom of Movement Council

Source: NCM presentation, May 2018

Each year, the council has one annual kick-off meeting, where the members summarise the results of the previous year and draft the annual working plan, selecting also the obstacles to start eliminating in the given year. The FMC holds further 4 regular meetings every year, and approves an annual report on the status of the elimination processes.

The lead of the council lies among the concerned national representatives of the nordic governments, and is rotating annually, in line with the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The responsibility of the activities toward free movement are shared between the actual chair and the Secretary General.

The work of Freedom of Movement Council is supported by the Committees of Senior Officials and a number of Working Groups. It cooperates on three levels with a number of institutions and organisations:

- ❖ regional services and committees,
- ❖ national and local institutions,
- ❖ the Councils of Nordic Council of Ministers such as that for Labour (MR-A), for Health and Social Affairs (MR-S), etc.

The activities of the Freedom of Movement Council are financed primarily by the contributions from the member countries.

The Nordic Council of Ministers continues to prioritise freedom of movement for people and companies across nordic border, via the work of the Freedom of Movement Council. This promotion can be detected in the budget.

	2018 (DKK)	2017 (DKK)	+/- (DKK)	%
Ministers for Nordic Co-operation	262 059	258 184	3 875	1,5
Nordic Council of Ministers' joint activities and Secretariat	113 050	111 081	197	1,8
Freedom of movement in the Nordic region	5 135	5061	74	1,01

Table No2: Context of the budget for the freedom of movement

Source: Plans and Budget 2018 – Summary⁸

3.2 Obstacle management

In order to manage cross-border obstacles in the nordic countries, Freedom of Movement Council (FMC) of the Nordic Council of Ministers set up an effective, transnational procedure. The procedure is designed as a smart solution capitalising on existing administrative settings including national, macro-regional as well as transnational nordic institutions. Innovativeness of the procedure design makes it easily adaptable to various institutional settings used in the nordic countries, it eliminates unnecessary bureaucracy and therefore assures a sense of independence and common responsibility among participating actors.

It involves many different public and non-governmental bodies, together with their employees and public servants that partake in the obstacle elimination system parallel to their everyday tasks. In this way, people responsible for a particular stage of obstacle elimination, stay close to practice and have the necessary power and influence resulting from their position in the institutional framework and in informal networks as well. Special attention is given to navigation of roles of various actors, and coordination tools such as the border obstacle database.

Moreover, the procedure is designed to include both the technocratic, expert-oriented tasks as well as political, power-oriented actions that assure legitimisation of these actions and management of right obstacles in a right way.

⁸ <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1193105/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

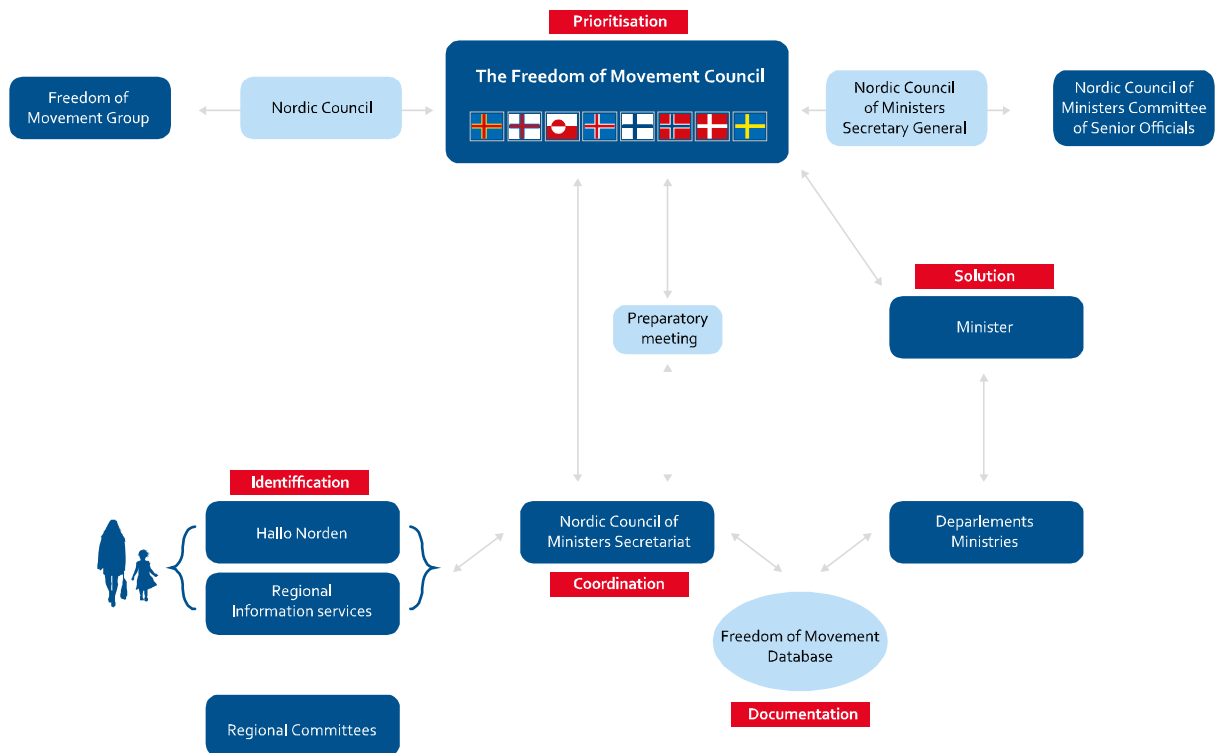


Figure No3. Design of the obstacle elimination system and flow of the procedure

Source: Gränshinderrådets Årsrapport 2017

The procedure consists of the stages including identifying, reporting, analysing, prioritising, eliminating as well as monitoring the obstacles and their elimination. Figure 1. illustrates flow and different stages of the procedure as well as responsibilities of all involved bodies and institutions.

3.2.1 Identification and reporting

Legal cross-border obstacles are identified while citizens and companies are looking for information about moving across the borders. Identification of border obstacles is carried out through several channels, and based to large extent on previously existing institutions and networks that have been noticing some of the obstacles even before this became a separate task of the NCM. The Nordic Council of Ministers cooperate with local and regional partners on three level (Annex 4):

- ❖ the Hello Norden offices: one information office is operated at each member (8 in total), financed by the NCM and run by a local civil association or an NGO;
- ❖ the cross-border structures (the so-called 'regional committees', 12 in total, see the Figure No4; which are also financed by the NCM via one of their member municipalities);

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- ❖ by professional organisations involved in cross-border activities ('Nordic information offices', like the Öresinddirekt office in Malmö).

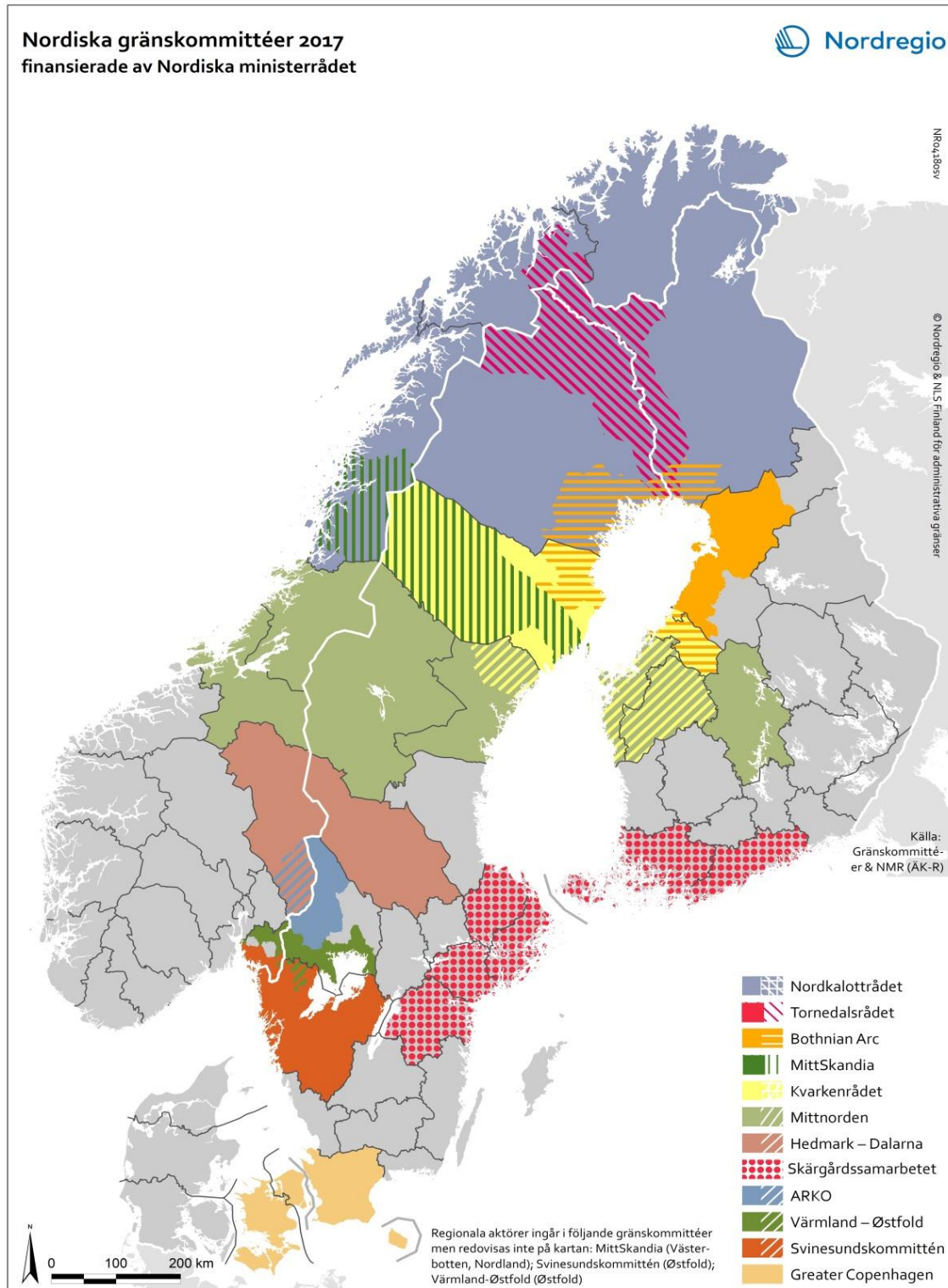


Figure No4: Regional committees of the Nordic States

Source: NCM presentation, May 2018

In order to facilitate the identification process, the Nordic Council of Ministers defined the term 'border obstacle' and established a standardized border obstacle database (see chapter 3.2.4). In addition, in 2017 the Freedom of Movement Council Secretariat prepared an internal checklist based on the definition, with a description of a number of criteria that a given problem should meet in order to qualify as an obstacle. This clear operationalisation improves general understanding of border obstacles among institutions that are part of the obstacle elimination system, therefore making their work more efficient and well-targeted.

According to a definition developed by the Nordic Council of Ministers, a border obstacle is a law, a public rule, practice or custom that limits the mobility of individuals and companies in their freedom of movement and activity across Nordic countries.

Therefore, for instance, the existence of different remuneration levels and taxes in the nordic countries is not a border obstacle. On the other hand, it is considered an obstacle if a person, when crossing the border, experiences worse conditions than other people in a comparable situation, both in the country of residence and in the country of employment.

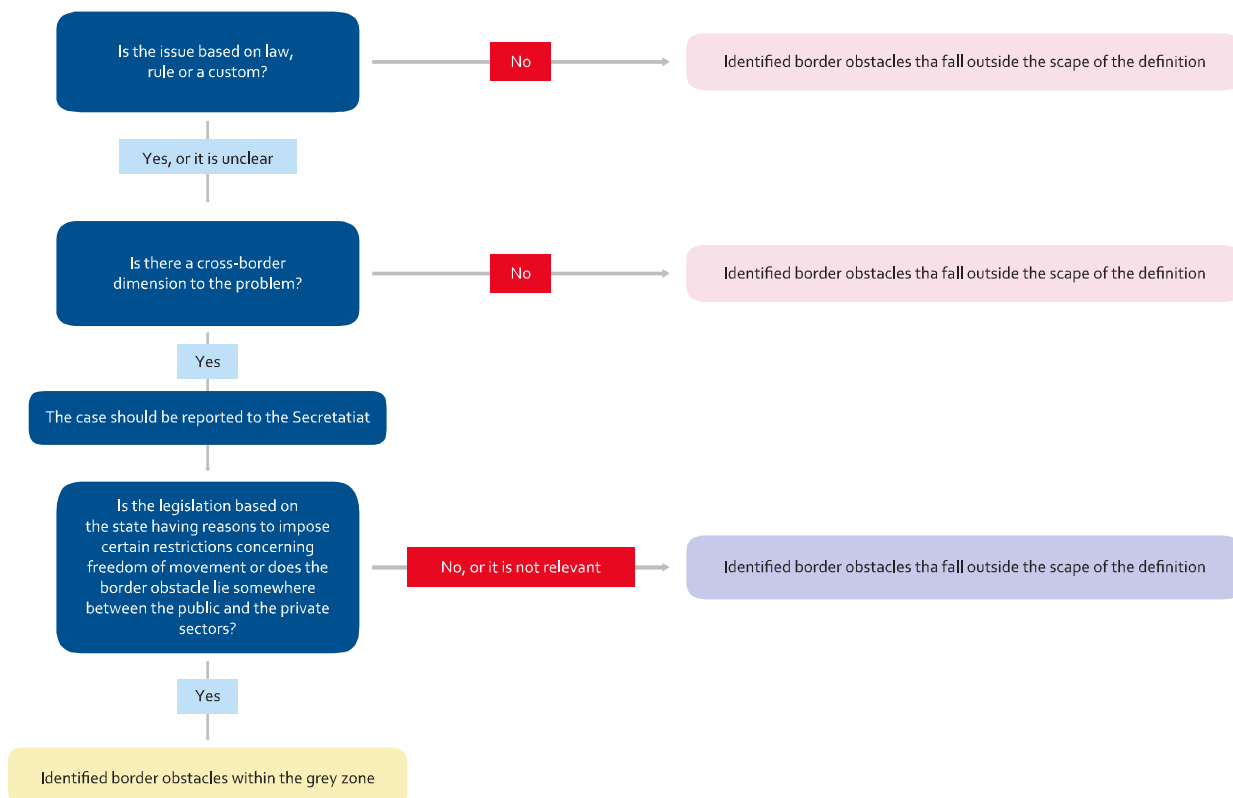


Figure No5: Design of the obstacle elimination system and flow of the procedure

Source: Gränshinderrådets Årsrapport 2017

Initially, when there is a suspicion that frontline information service workers have come across a new cross-border obstacle, they can check whether such a problem is already registered in the database. If not, they analyse if the problem is an issue based on law, public rule or a custom. If so, they look for a cross-border dimension in this problem. If there, indeed are border-related issues to the identified problem, it can be reported to the NCM Secretariat which makes sure that the issue can be located between public and private sectors and that is not a subject to state security or other special strategic regulations (see Figure No5).

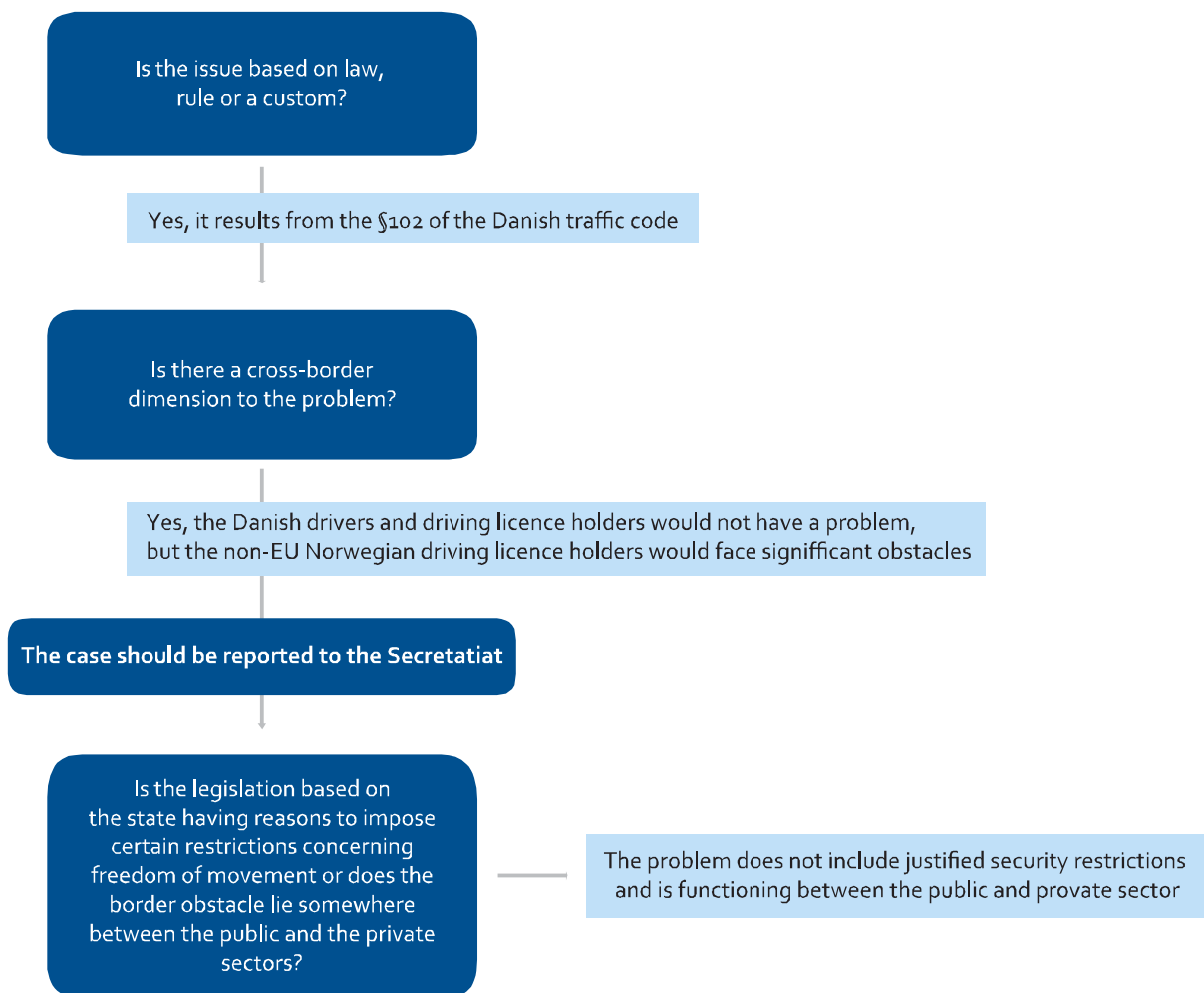


Figure No6: Example of proofing a problem through the FMC checklist

Source: own elaboration by Katarzyna Wojnar

A good way of understanding the functionality of this tool is using it in a real-life case. An interesting example here, is the case of Danish restrictions of foreign, non-EU driving licences. Since 2013, there are obligatory time limits on driving licences for EU countries lasting between 10-15 years. Denmark has chosen to make it obligatory to exchange time limitless driving licences (eg. Norwegian) to Danish within 2-3 years of the residence in Denmark. Proofing this

case through an established checklist helps verify if this problem is indeed of the type of a border obstacle that is dealt with through the activity of the Freedom of Movement Council.

In 2017, all information services generated almost 2 million web searches and more than 36 000 personal contacts (visits, email, phone and group visits) altogether. The border obstacle prevention work has been streamlined through the development of a joint cooperation platform, the LOTS group (the Nordic Solution-Oriented Advisory Coordinator Group), with the information services of the Freedom of Movement Council. This working group meets four times a year.

	Web	Facebook	Twitter	Personal service	Seminars and information meetings
Hello Norden	1 000 298	8 907	1 023	2 560	2 000
Nordkalottens Gränstjänst	25 830	540		3 391	1 209
Grensetjänsten	141 796	558	92	15 474	1 405
Øresunddirekt	788 113	1 576	642	14 844	6 306
Total	1 956 037	11 581	1 757	36 269	10 920

Table No3. Scope of information and border obstacle identification work done by institutions coordinated by the NMC

Source: Gränshinderrådets Årsrapport 2017

The group has developed a joint action plan on how to streamline cross-border work and information efforts. In addition to the information services, the LOTS group also includes eleven of twelve border committees. It is worth mentioning that yet again, this process is designed to eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy by using existing institutional framework, and making it more flexible and responsive by creating task teams and working groups that work on particular projects in a particular timeframe.

The informal and operational cooperation is one of the key success factors in border obstacle work in the nordic countries. That is why a lot of attention is given to the adequate coordination of cooperation activities undertaken by all institutions participating in the process. In order to improve the efficiency of cooperation each year, there is an Action Plan with a particular focus, creating synergies between different initiatives taken in the field. For instance, in 2016, there was a conference on labour market obstacles focusing on unemployment benefits in Sweden, and two Interreg projects aimed at increasing the mobility of SMEs in the

Nordic region. The Nordkalotten Business Advisory Project was implemented in the border region of the North Calotte, comprising Sweden, Norway and Finland. A border opportunities project was carried out along the entire Norwegian-Swedish border.

The Secretariat of the Freedom of Movement Council is also included in the steering groups of the interregional information services, and sometimes participates in Hello Norden's working group meetings, as well.

In cases, where the members of the FMC hold meetings before the Council's regular meetings, the information services and the border regional committees participate. In the coming years, the ambition is to coordinate Hello Norden and the border regional committees more closely in order to increase the efficiency and added value of the combined information activities.

Hello Norden – an example of the transnational nordic information service



Hello Norden is the Nordic Council of Ministers' Information Service that has offices in all the nordic countries, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. It was established in 1998, and is fully financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers. Its total annual budget ranges around 6.1 million DKK (app. 820,000 € in current prices). *Hello Norden* coordinates its activities in

cooperation with the Nordic Council of Ministers Communication Department that provides administration, advice, translation, web development and promotion. National administration of this service is managed at different organisations, usually ones that already have experience and expertise in the field of information related to nordic mobility. (In 2017, Nordregio took over the management of Hello Norden in Sweden.) Hello Norden stays within close cooperation with the Freedom of Movement Council. In each country, a full-time project manager is employed, while project managers in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland work part-time. Hello Norden offices in Denmark, Finland and Greenland have employed a variety of project staff.

Hello Norden's mission is to simplify the opportunities for individuals to move freely in the Nordic region by publishing information about moving, working and studying in the nordic countries (www.norden.org/hallo), and answering citizens' requests. Each year, there are over 1 million online visits to the service's website. The service identifies problems and obstacles that individuals encounter, when crossing the nordic borders. Hello Norden cooperates with relevant authorities and institutions at local, regional, national and nordic level in order to strengthen mobility in the Nordic region. It also provides information and facilitates exchange

and cooperation between officials and caseworkers. The cooperation has also an internal direction in order to develop, improve and promote services of Hello Norden.

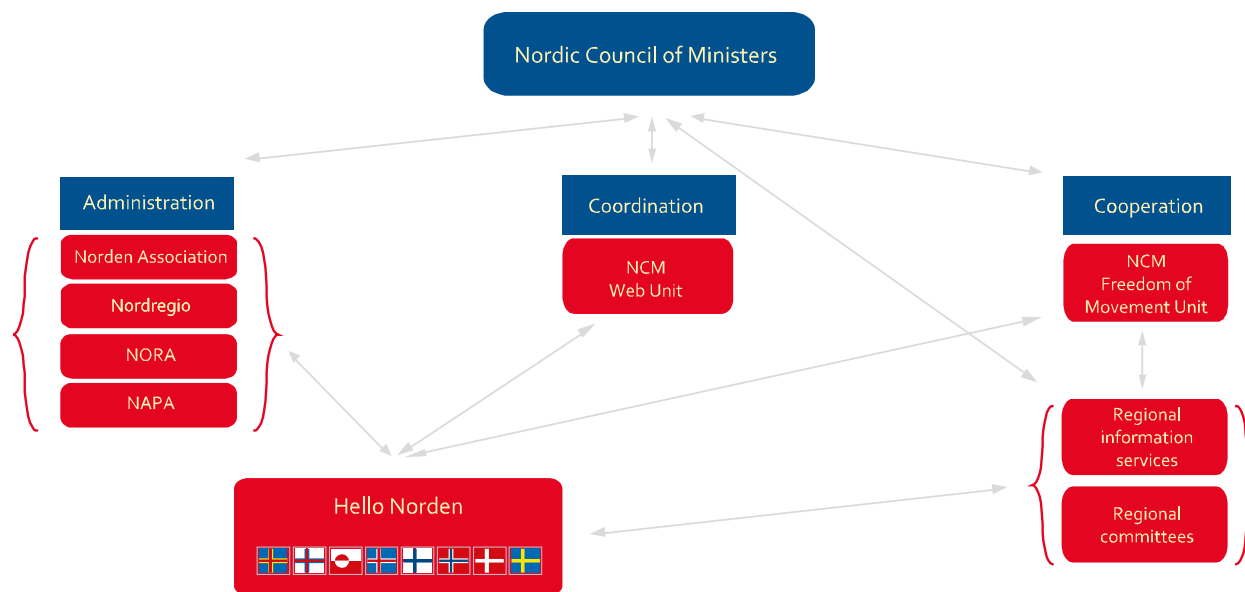


Figure No7. Placement of Hello Norden in the organisation of enhancement and improvement of information services in the nordic countries.

Source: Jakob Tråsdahl (2018), *Hello Norden And Its Role In Cross-Border Obstacle Process*, presentation at the visit of the representatives of the Visegrád Group, Copenhagen, 23 May 2018

The information on the website is officially provided by national tax offices, social security agencies, entrepreneurship agencies, higher education institutions (e.g. borger.dk, KELA, Nordisk eTax, NAV, UDI, Almanaverkið etc.). Hello Norden employees prepare draft information sheets on shared templates, and ask adequate authorities to fact check and control quality of edited materials. After quality-proofing, the Nordic Council of Ministers Communication Department provides translation. This way the official authorities secure that information provided through Hello Norden is correct, and Hello Norden ensures that the information is well structured and understandable for users not familiar with the system and solutions practiced in a particular country.

The network also works to improve project leaders' linguistic skills in all its articles so that citizens get information in a clear language. In conjunction with the Nordic Council's session in 2017, Hello Norden presented four small movies on mobility and border obstacles in the Nordic region, in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Frontier Council. Cooperation with the Nordic Council for Disability Cooperation continued in 2017, to make it easier for people with disabilities to be mobile in the Nordic region.

In 2017, Hello Norden performed a series of events at Almedalsveckan, Arendalsuka and Suomi-Areena. These are political party fairs, traditionally organised in the nordic countries,

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where each political party can present their programme, leaders, think-tanks and solutions. Presence of Hello Norden at such events raises awareness on cross-border obstacles among decision-makers and key political influencers. Hello Norden has also organised information events for embassy staff in Norway and Sweden and met Solvit and student organisations in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. In Iceland and Åland, Hello Norden has completed information days for educational institutions and in Finland, has had an event to search for jobs in the Nordic region. In addition, the network's employees have been informed about mobility and border obstacles as invited guests and collaborators at debates, seminars, conferences and fairs throughout the Nordic region.

Hello Norden started a work in 2017 with a view to merging the network and the social insurance portal NordSoc. The merger will be completed in 2018. Hereafter, norden.org's social security articles will be formulated by an editorial board consisting of representatives of the Hellenic North and the respective social security authorities of the nordic countries.

Example of a regional information organisation – the Øresunddirekt



Øresunddirekt is a public information service for individuals and business in the border region between Denmark and Sweden. Øresunddirekt consists of two sections - an information centre in Malmö and a communication department in Copenhagen being in charge of updating

the information websites. Since 2000 (the opening of the bridge between the two countries), Øresunddirekt has mediated public information in Swedish and Danish to both citizens and businesses in the Øresund region being one of the three regional border information services in the Nordic region.

Øresunddirekt Denmark and Øresunddirekt Sweden share a brand, but are organisationally separated by partly different financing institutions. The service operates in a form of an NGO and is in fact a think-tank that is financed by member fees and grants by other nordic institutions.

Øresunddirekt's Information centre is conveniently located right next to Malmö Central Station, on Hjälmaragatan 3 in Malmö. The Information centre is open from Monday to Friday and citizens do not need to make an appointment to meet the staff from the authorities represented there. The Swedish office has two full-time employees from the Employment Service and the County Administrative Board of Skåne / Region Skåne, as well as rotating staff from Arbetsförmedlingen (Swedish Public Employment Service), Försäkringskassan (Swedish Social Insurance Agency), Länsstyrelsen Skåne (County Administrative Board of Skåne), Region

Skåne and Skatteverket (Swedish Tax Agency). The staff is rotating from all of these institutions and hosts the clients in one placement. When a client comes to clarify a particular issue, for instance a problem related to taxes, they are additionally provided with a comprehensive analysis of their employment, tax and social security situation to find an optimal solution tailor-made for their conditions. Such organisation of information service allows on the spot advisory by multiple experts and institutions to aid personal strategies of people living and commuting in the whole region. Moreover, such comprehensive information and advisory service creates tool for identification of both simple and complex border obstacles faced by people working and living across borders.

Sandra Forsén, the site manager is employed by Länsstyrelsen Skåne and Region Skåne. Among other things, the staff can assist in issues relating to looking for a job in the Øresund region, Danish apprenticeships, tax rules, social insurance when commuting between Sweden and Denmark, etc. The information centre serves annually over 25,000 visitors through direct customer contact, e-mails and telephone. Moreover it offers free information meetings every week on working in Denmark and Danish apprenticeship, appointments with business advisors and tailored information meetings for companies before recruitment or establishment on the other side of the strait.

Most common questions to the Swedish Tax Office:

- ❖ Should I pay tax in Sweden or in Denmark?
- ❖ How do I get tax return?
- ❖ Taxation questions –how much money is left of my salary when I have paid my taxes?
- ❖ Am I required to register in a new country?
- ❖ In which country will I pay my taxes while on retirement?

Most common questions to the Swedish Social Insurance Agency

- ❖ In which country do I have my social insurance?
- ❖ Where from do I get parental benefits?
- ❖ Where from do I get child benefits?
- ❖ Where from do I get sickness benefits?
- ❖ How to use healthcare and dental care services across borders?
- ❖ What happens if I am / my family members are employed in two countries?

The Øresunddirekt Information Centre in Malmö is financed by Arbetsförmedlingen (Swedish Public Employment Service), Försäkringskassan (Swedish Social Insurance Agency), Skatteverket (Swedish Tax Agency), Länsstyrelsen Skåne (County Administrative Board of Skåne), Region Skåne and Nordiska Ministerrådet (Nordic Council of Ministers).

The editorial staff are located at Nørregade 7 B in Copenhagen, Denmark and four employees are working there. The editorial staff's primary task is to develop and ensure that the information on the websites are accurate and up to date. Therefore they work in partnership with the authorities in both Sweden and Denmark, which continuously update the team on new laws and regulations in both countries. The websites are visited by over 30,000 users each month. Øresunddirekt Denmark owns and operates the following portals:

- ❖ oresunddirekt.se – website in Swedish for Swedish citizens looking for a job in Denmark, starting to work in Denmark, who have or are going to move to Denmark or who wish to study in Denmark.
- ❖ oresunddirekt.dk – website in Danish for two different target groups: Danish citizens looking for a job in Sweden, starting to work in Sweden, who have or are going to move to Sweden or who wish to study in Sweden. In addition, there is information for Danes who have moved to Sweden but commute to work in Denmark.
- ❖ oresunddirektbusiness.se – website in Swedish for companies – about Danish conditions
- ❖ oresunddirektbusiness.dk – website in Danish for companies – about Swedish conditions.

The editorial team in Copenhagen is financed by Erhvervsministeriet (Ministry of Business), Region Hovedstaden (the Capital Region), SKAT (Danish Customs and Tax Administration), Nordiska Ministerrådet (Nordic Council of Ministers) and Region Skåne. The Danish team is also responsible for the annual economic award, called Øresunddirekt Business Award, as well as producing Øresunddirekt's printed materials such as various brochures, taking up marketing initiatives and conducting user and commuter surveys. Occasionally, the team takes on special projects such as social insurance tests, tax calculation and partnerships with Jobindex.dk and Jobsafari.se, or displaying vacant posts in Zealand and Skåne regions.

In comparison to Hello Norden, which is targeted at people and businesses moving rather permanently in one direction, this organisation is specialised in helping and providing information for people and business that are located in the cross-border region and regularly dealing with border obstacles as they function and develop. Øresunddirekt is also quite different from the regional cooperation programmes managed by regional authorities across

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nordic borders, as these are mainly focused on growth and improvement of regional competitiveness, rather than obstacle elimination. That is why there is a need for a different type of actor that fills in the gap in the cross-border obstacle identification system, and Øresunddirekt (between Denmark and Sweden), Grensetjänsten Sverige/Norge (between Sweden and Norway) as well as Nordkalottens Gränstjänst (between Finland and Sweden) are the types of institutions that have the capacity of doing great job in that field.

Øresunddirekt Sweden and Øresunddirekt Denmark work together in a close partnership. The authorities review texts published on the websites, and cooperate on larger projects such as participation in the recruitment and career fairs in Sweden and Denmark, collaboration with the Swedish and Danish authorities as well as EURES.

The organisation fits into the FMC framework by their actions and strategies targeted at improving the competitiveness of the Greater Copenhagen region. The office is built into the overall system of obstacle management at nordic cooperation level by:

1. gathering information on obstacles from the customers;
2. assessing together with the Secretariat whether it is a new obstacle, using the developed checklist;
3. encouraging the concerned authority to gather further information and knowledge through various channels;
4. supporting registration in the database of The Nordic Council of Ministers;
5. participating in the coordination process;
6. attending meetings with the Swedish and Danish representatives of the FMC in order to monitor and update the obstacle.

3.2.2 Coordination and documentation

After the identification processes that are carried out by local and regional partners, the next step of the whole elimination process is the further analysis and the registration of the obstacle in the related database.

When the identification of the particular obstacle is completed, the information services (like the abovementioned Øresunddirekt office) subsequently report it to the Secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The next steps particularly involve the gathering of more comprehensive and detailed information about the issue, consulting the barrier with various authorities and experts, creating a study or analysis based on the ascertained data or statistics,

and the conclusion of this work should be a final description of the obstacle, which is consequently registered in the obstacle database.

Once the border obstacle is identified and check-list proved (see the previous subchapter), the FMC moves it to national ministries or to other respective authorities, so that all this analysis process proceeds external to the FMC. The early involvement of the operation level from the concerned countries contributes to the effectiveness of the border obstacle management process.

Concerned ministries or in some cases other departments or authorities have the task to collect and summarise all available information about the identified obstacle. These information should give a general idea of:

- ❖ why the border obstacle occurred, thus which law, a public rule, practice or customs caused it;
- ❖ which problems does the obstacle make, and who is affected (the member countries, entrepreneurs, business companies, individuals, etc.);
- ❖ which are the possible alternatives to the solution.

For this purpose, the national authorities consult the issue with various subjects, depending on the nature of the obstacle. That can be various experts, bodies, representatives of trade unions, business associations, local stakeholders, etc. Essentially, no formal procedure is prescribed. The choice of further working process depends on the ministry to which the obstacle has been forwarded by the FMC. The process itself involves the work with particular data, statistics, studies, or opinions.

Despite the fact that this analytical phase is in charge primarily of the respective ministry, this does not exclude the possibility of the simultaneous cooperation with the FMC, mainly the cooperation with the individual members of the FMC. The collaboration between particular members of the FMC and respective national authorities should take place continuously throughout the whole elimination process.

The final output of this phase should be the formulation of the final description of the border barrier drafted by the relevant ministry. This should be identical with the official description that is subsequently registered in the border obstacle database. The registration itself is in charge of the Secretariat. This solution makes the particular ministries responsible for the content and in some way it makes them the owners of the documented obstacle. It creates a sense of ownership, and creates responsibility for providing solution to the obstacle.

After the registration of the obstacle to the database, there is a four-month period for the countries to check the facts included in the database. The member countries are consequently

legitimised to find a solution, and to remove the registered obstacle. Again, there is no formal procedure prescribed. The aim is to minimise, and to avoid bogging down in red tape in consequence of circuitous bureaucratic procedures. It also would be practically impossible to set uniform rules common to all the member countries, because each has its own legislation rules.

There is no international or national authority that would be able to force national ministries to solve out the documented obstacles. All the members participate in this process voluntarily. According to that, the responsibility for solving the problem is not legally enforceable, and the obligation to remove the obstacle is based on a willingness to cooperate.

It is possible to discuss political responsibility assumed by the member country in the moment when the border obstacle has been registered. The political responsibility is also given by the membership of the country in the council itself, for the reason that the member countries committed themselves to promote the freedom of movement, and thus to remove existing border barriers throughout the Nordic region.

After the registration process, the border obstacle thus becomes not just a common problem of the nordic countries, but also an internal problem of that particular affected country. It makes a new way of the legitimisation to find a solution, because there is a personal interest in solving it, as the problem itself, in most cases has a negative impact on the citizens of the member country as well.

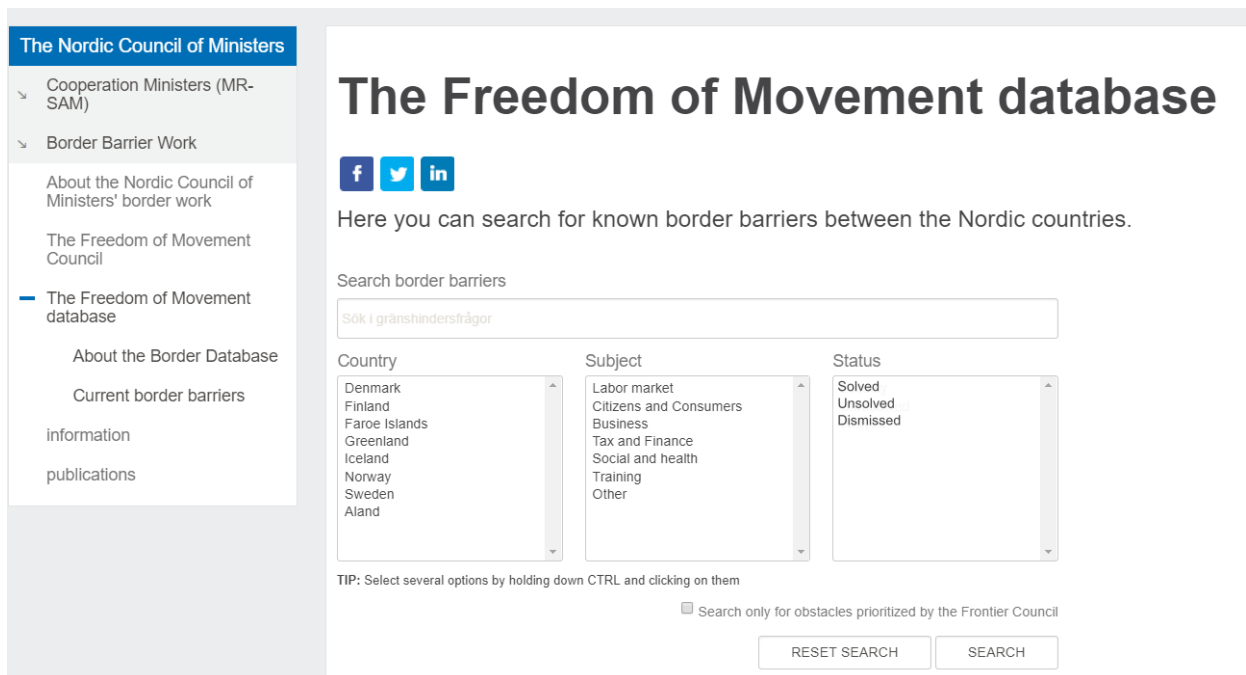


Figure No8. Screenshot of the border obstacle database (translated automatically by Google Translate)

Source: <http://www.norden.org>

There are several possibilities with further analysis of the results. They can be individually opened in new tabs in the online browser and analysed through the database's online interface. The search can be further narrowed by manual selection on the list generated during the initial search. There are also additional options, that are especially useful for consultations and meetings. They allow to export records on selected obstacles in a form of nicely edited, printable PDF report with aesthetic cover, stylish fonts, additional summary and basic information on obstacle elimination. Each of involved nordic and regional institutions can brand such custom-made report by selecting their logo. This possibility broadens the possible uses of the database content and provides convenient tool for preparing working materials and handouts for all types of meetings, decision-making and opinion gathering processes, that take place during the obstacle elimination phase.

Database entry – an example

Title: Travelling with guide dogs

Today, people travelling with EU guide dogs are treated like tourists travelling with pets. This means high costs and long treatment times for vaccinations and certificates for guide dogs.

Description:

All nordic countries have the same entry requirements for service dogs (eg salvage, bomb and drug dogs and guide dogs for visually impaired, hearing impaired and disabled) and for pet dogs. In Finland, Denmark and Sweden, EU Regulation 576/2013 applies. For Norway, EU Regulation 998/2003 applies until implementation of Regulation 576/2013 is completed. The basic EU requirements include ID marking, rabies vaccination and EU passports. The regulation gives no possibility of derogation from these rules. In Norway and Finland, supplementary requirements are treatment for fox dwarf bandworms 1-5 days before entry. Individual countries also require other vaccinations / medications.

The rules for the implementation of vaccinations, such as time limits and controls, are also different across nordic countries. Iceland has an exception to the EEA Agreement's Annex (Chapter I, Part 1.1, No. 10, EU Regulation 998/2003). Greenland and the Faroe Islands are not covered by the regulation. For Greenland, the area is regulated by the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration. Neither Greenland nor the Faroe Islands have special rules for guide dogs.

Upon entry, dogs must be ID-labeled and vaccinated against rabies. Except for dogs coming from Denmark, rabies vaccination is forbidden by law in Iceland. It is possible to apply for dispensation when dogs are taken from Iceland. The above rules imply costs that vary between countries. The costs represent a small part of the total cost of dog breeding and require the trip to be planned far ahead. Most nordic public transport companies (air, train, boat and bus) allow guide dogs free of charge. This border obstacle is identified by No. A2 in the report "Intervention in the nordic countries in the social and labour market" (Nord 2012: 002).

Who is affected by the problem?

Nordic citizens with visual impairments.

Solution proposal:

A nordic expert group emphasises that the reason behind different requirements are the veterinary considerations (Nord 2012: 002). It is therefore hardly possible or desirable to give guide dogs a dispensation from the veterinary requirements of the EU rules when importing and exporting dogs. Good and accessible information about vaccination and quarantine requirements in the nordic countries is important. The expert group points out that the dog's status as a service dog should be acknowledged. It may also be considered whether persons travelling with EU guide dogs could get help with the costs of vaccinations and certificates for guide dogs.

Prioritisation (yes/no)

Yes

Status

Unresolved

Category

Social and health

Serial number

14-130

Affected countries

Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden, Åland

Responsible contact person in the FMC

Petri Suopanki

Last updates

2015-08-18 11:15

The database is a warehouse of border obstacles and problems. It serves multiple tasks for multiple types of users. It allows various institutions to keep track of the elimination process, especially when it involves multiple countries, national and transnational institutions.

The database facilitates the obstacle identification stage as well when the relevant party has the opportunity to check whether such a problem is already registered in the database.

The data collected in the database show that obstacles identified within the nordic countries have a broader range of affected locations. Besides the nordic countries the database identified other countries affected by nordic cross-border obstacles: Belarus, Belgium, Canada, China, the Sami language area of Estonia, France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Russia, United Kingdom, and USA.

Another useful feature of the database is that it allows to synthesise the knowledge about border obstacles by showing structural and geographical patterns of identified problems. Using the database makes it also easier for bodies responsible for further stages of obstacle elimination procedure, namely helps prioritise, eliminate as well as improves monitoring and reporting done annually.

3.2.4 Prioritisation and elimination

The Freedom of Movement Council (FMC) prioritises the registered border obstacles that arise in the following fields: labour market, social security, business community and education, and which consist of law, public rules or practices that impede the mobility of individuals or companies' ability to cross the border throughout the Nordic region. The main mission of the mechanism is to make possible to change them through agreements or policy changes by respective authorities and departments.

Freedom of Movement Council has given priority to 30 out of 100 identified obstacles. Prioritised obstacles are not evenly distributed according to subject and number of affected countries. They reflect the agenda of the given presidency on one hand and preferences of a particular country on another. As a result, there is a visible focus on social and health services, business and other, more specific, obstacles. Additionally prioritised obstacles usually are universal in the way they affect nordic countries, so there is a clear preference to prioritise obstacles that affect all 8 countries. As a result, most of prioritised obstacles are the most complex ones to solve, either because of the number of countries affected, or because of the complexity of the solution. These factors explain why there are only two priority obstacles that have been solved so far.

Serial number	Title	Status	Subject	Number of countries affected	Countries affected
14-004	Requirements to be covered by unemployment insurance of various countries without interruption or risk lower unemployment benefits	Unsolved	Labour market	1	Sweden
14-008	Finnish financial month rule	Unsolved	Social and health services	1	Finland
14-022	Right to unemployment benefits after resettlement and termination after work in Norway and Finland	Unsolved	Labour market	3	Finland, Norway, Sweden
14-062	Customs and security deposit in connection with the transfer of goods	Unsolved	Tax and finance	3	Finland, Norway, Sweden
14-076	Different building regulations	Unsolved	Business	8	Denmark, Finland, Åland Islands, Sweden, Norway, Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland
14-092	Age limit for entry into a Swedish unemployment fund	Unsolved	Labour market	1	Sweden
14-102	Move with disabled vehicles	Unsolved	Social and health services	6	Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Åland Islands

Serial number	Title	Status	Subject	Number of countries affected	Countries affected
14-104	Move for institutionalised persons	Unsolved	Social and health services	8	Denmark, Finland, Åland Islands, Sweden, Norway, Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland
14-122	Recognition of professional qualifications	Unsolved	Labour market	8	Denmark, Finland, Åland Islands, Sweden, Norway, Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland
14-124	Personal assistant when moving	Unsolved	Social and health services	8	Denmark, Finland, Åland Islands, Sweden, Norway, Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland
14-128	Recognition of Faroese driving licenses	Unsolved	Other	3	Sweden, Finland, Faroe Islands
14-130	Traveling with guide dogs	Unsolved	Social and health services	5	Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden, Åland Islands
14-132	Right to leave for political assignments for a person living in a country and working in another country	Unsolved	Labour market	8	Denmark, Finland, Åland Islands, Sweden, Norway, Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland

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Serial number	Title	Status	Subject	Number of countries affected	Countries affected
14-136	Disability service	Unsolved	Social and health services	8	Denmark, Finland, Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Åland Islands
14-150	Notification of wrong unemployment agency can result in lost entitlement to compensation	Unsolved	Labour market	1	Sweden
14-152	Faroese tachograph cards	Unsolved	Business	1	Faroe Islands
14-160	Coordination number for foreign homeowners in Sweden	Unsolved	Other	1	Sweden
14-164	Compensation for patient travel between Norway and Finland / Sweden	Unsolved	Social and health services	3	Finland, Norway, Sweden
14-172	Recognition of Greenlandic driving licenses	Unsolved	Other	8	Greenland, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Åland Islands, Faroe Islands
15-002	Value transport across the border	Solved	Business	2	Finland, Sweden

Serial number	Title	Status	Subject	Number of countries affected	Countries affected
15-004	Norwegian internal tax practices make it difficult to carry out assignments in the construction industry	Unsolved	Tax and finance	8	Denmark, Finland, Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Åland Islands
17-002	Recognition of parenting in cohabiting families	Unsolved	Other	1	Sweden
17-004	You can't get a close-up allowance unless both carers and the sick are insured in Sweden	Unsolved	Social and health services	2	Sweden, Åland Islands
17-008	Mobile food venue as first animal product proofing facility in Finland	Unsolved	Business	1	Finland
17-010	Digital tools for communicating with the public do not work across the nordic borders	Unsolved	Other	8	Denmark, Finland, Åland Islands, Sweden, Norway, Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland
17-016	Different requirements for labeling medicines and different requirements for language for package leaflet	Unsolved	Social and health services	8	Denmark, Finland, Faroe Islands, Greenland, Åland Islands, Norway, Sweden, Iceland
17-018	Temporary import of horses between Norway and Sweden	Unsolved	Business	2	Norway, Sweden
17-020	Import of Norwegian salmon fry to Sweden	Unsolved	Business	2	Sweden, Norway

Serial number	Title	Status	Subject	Number of countries affected	Countries affected
17-022	Documentation requirements for national accounting in Norway	Unsolved	Other	1	Norway
17-024	Requirements for exchange of foreign driving licenses in Denmark	Solved	Other	1	Denmark

Table No4. List of prioritised border obstacles

Source: The Freedom of movement database

In order to create long-term and structural work, every member of the FMC identifies 3-5 obstacles, which should be prioritised by the FMC's work. Also members can choose to prioritise certain obstacles in common. Members can also qualify some of the barriers as acute and of particular size of interest and for that reason they should be resolved preferentially. Every year, the FMC has one annual kick-off meeting, where the members inter alia draft the annual working plan and select the obstacles to start eliminating in the given year.

If the given obstacle is not selected for action in a given year, the member of the FMC has the opportunity to start own initiative towards the relevant ministry directly – with the professional support and under the coordination of the Secretariat.

The elimination of the obstacles is implemented according to the prioritisation made by the council. On the one hand, the Secretariat inform the relevant ministries about the problem and suggests a solution if the stakeholders during the previous steps of the process drafted any. On the other hand, the members of the FMC work individually on the removal of the obstacles by organising preparatory meetings at national level involving the officials of the ministries affected. The main objective of these meetings is to inform and sensitise the officials and facilitate the decision-making on elimination. The members of the FMC have impelling role in the work of getting national ministers and ministries to solve cross-border obstacles. They are supported by the national government and also get legal and administrative assistance from the Department of the Minister for Co-operation.

The decisions on elimination and the relevant amendments of the legislations are made at national level, at the ministries involved. The FMC may, however, work to solve border barriers

that inhibit mobility and growth in the Nordic region by developing a clear problem description, draft solution, as well as, to the extent that it is possible, prepare cost analyses. The FMC works in accordance with the assignment of the Nordic Council of Ministers and therefore places great importance of cooperation and the open dialogue with those departments and authorities affected by border barriers.

In short, the FMC itself, neither its individual members don't have the tools to remove border barriers directly. The role of the FMC in their meetings is to create the working plan and to summarise those obstacles that pose the greatest difficulties in the lives of nordic citizens. And the role of an individual member of the FMC besides the joint meetings is primarily to influence the ministries concerned and to present them possible solutions to the problem.

3.2.5 Monitoring and annual reporting

As already described above, the task of the Freedom of Movement Council (FMC) is to prioritise the concrete cross-border obstacles which should be resolved, therefore it chooses amongst the obstacles registered in border barrier database those which deserve attention the most. After the elimination process of the border obstacle begins, the FMC thenceforth monitors the steps and achievements made by the member states. The role of the FMC and its particular members is subsequently to communicate with respective authorities and departments of the member states about the status of the elimination process, to draft the solution, when problems arise, and to prepare cost analysis of the elimination.

The substantial part of the monitoring work lies on the FMC's members. They are able to communicate easier and more directly with the governments and other political bodies about the solutions of the concrete cross-border obstacle concerning respective member state. For that purpose, they must have a strong and current network at national ministerial and governmental level; they must be experienced with the areas where the majority of the obstacles occurs (labour market, social policy, tax, education); finally, they must have the opportunity to hold national meetings involving affected parties when it's required to prioritise; as well as to monitor, and eventually to coordinate the elimination process. Preferentially, they notify the FMC of which activities have been already initiated at national level in the process of eliminating prioritised border obstacles.

The monitoring work includes also the identification of border barriers already resolved. Therefore it represents some kind of a feedback control, whether the measures taken by the respective authorities of the member states were sufficient and effective.

The FMC members subsequently inform and report all ascertained information to the FMC on its meetings, and also submit a yearly report on their work and the status of the elimination processes. They are also obliged to inform the Minister of Co-operation annually.

Besides the aforementioned, the Presidency of the FMC shall report annually on its work to the Prime Ministers if so requested and when it is required to elevate the work to the prime-ministerial level.

Every year, at its kick-off meeting, where the members of the FMC summarise the results of the previous year and evaluate the success of the elimination processes. The achievements are summarised within the annual report which consists mainly of:

- ❖ the greetings of the Prime Ministers and of particular FMC's members;
- ❖ the description of the organisation and the functioning of the FMC;
- ❖ the general survey of prioritised obstacles divided by particular areas (obstacles in the fields of labour market, education, social and health matters; tax obstacles, barriers to business, and other border obstacles) including information about their solving status and about which country they have been prioritised by;
- ❖ comprehensive description of the particular obstacles with detailed information about the elimination process and its actual status;
- ❖ brief overview of all the obstacles raised since the year 2014 divided according to whether they have been resolved or not;
- ❖ summary of the FMC's activities, as for example conferences, dialogues with the social partners and so on;
- ❖ description of work of the information services;
- ❖ the prevention of new border obstacles;
- ❖ the mandate for the FMC in the period of next 4 years.

Due to the content, the most extensive part of the report is the comprehensive description of individual border barriers, which have been prioritised most recently. The description includes detailed information about the obstacle and the problems, which occurred, the reasons of the obstacle, the group and nationality of persons or companies concerned in consequence thereof, the attitude of the FMC to the given obstacle, the proposed solution, and the steps already made to eliminate it.

In order to make the analysis of the obstacles more clear and transparent, the members of the FMC graded its work with the prioritised obstacles according to a colour scale with four levels.

Blue means that a final response has come from concerned ministry. The headline indicates, if the obstacle has already been solved or whether the countries decided to write off the barrier and not to work further to find the solution. Green means that the work will continue after the process when respective member set up to get a final answer of respective body, whether it is possible to resolve the obstacle or not. Yellow means that there's actually some kind of work going on with the barrier at the relevant ministries. Lastly, the red colour means that the obstacle is not currently prioritised by respective ministries or other authorities of the member states.

Every year the FMC puts more emphasis on prevention work in order to prevent new barriers to occur. The approach should be maintained by common consultations of the nordic countries every time, when adopting new legislation and regulations, or when implementing EU legislation that could create new border obstacles in the future.

The FMC's annual reports published by the Nordic Council of Ministers are available on the Internet and are written in Swedish. These reports are the FMC's main tool to ensure transparency and to provide all information about its work including the status of the prioritised obstacles for all the persons interested in.

3.3 Overall assessment of the elimination model

3.3.1 Structure of cross-border obstacles

In mid-2018 there were 100 obstacles registered in the database out of which 34% were already solved, 54% remained unsolved and 12% of the obstacles were dismissed.

One third is a pretty decent number of eliminated obstacles taking into consideration that the process has been taking place since 2014 and that the number of identified obstacles before the database was established had been significant. As many as 82 of 100 obstacles were registered in 2014, which means that the initial number of cases to work with could have been quite overwhelming. The following years brought more limited extension of the database, instead, accent was given to improved prioritisation of obstacle elimination.

Just over a half of the problems is unsolved, however taking into consideration the commitment of the nordic countries and a new, improved and extended mandate for the Freedom of Movement Council these remaining obstacles could be resolved during the next 5-6 years - depending on the level of complexity of each of the issues and the number of countries affected having to address the issue in a formal or legal manner.

The dismissed problems are the ones that for formal or political reasons are not undertaken by affected countries. However they are kept in the database for later possibilities and

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opportunities of solution, as well for analytical reasons that will allow to make the typology and identify more complex issues that perhaps need different procedures or solutions in order to be addressed.

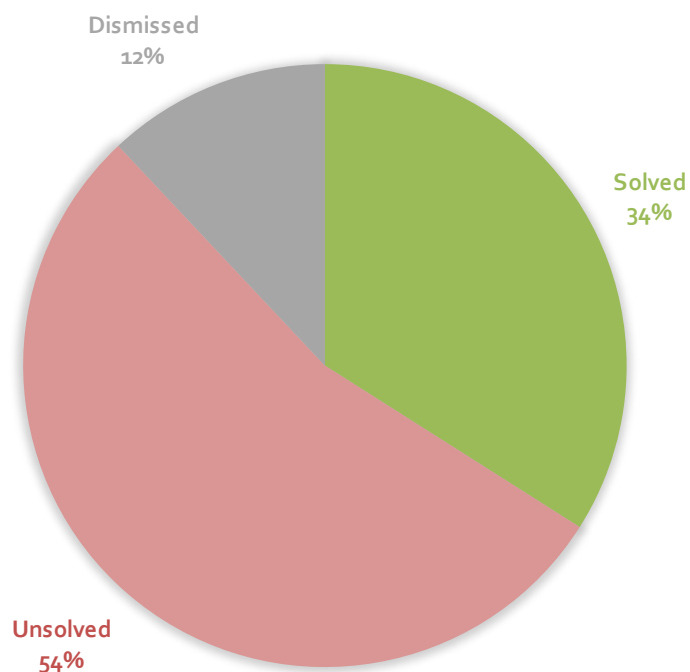


Figure No9: Status of obstacles in the database

Source: own elaboration of Katarzyna Wojnar

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Figure No10 shows that most of the obstacles are related to social and health services (34%), labour market (19%) and tax and finance issues (14%).

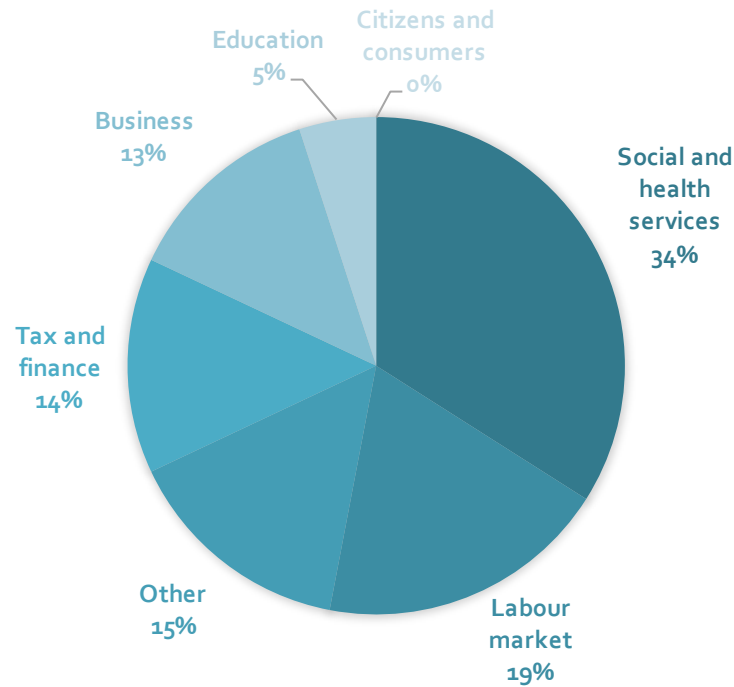


Figure No10: Obstacles according to the subject

Source: own elaboration of Katarzyna Wojnar

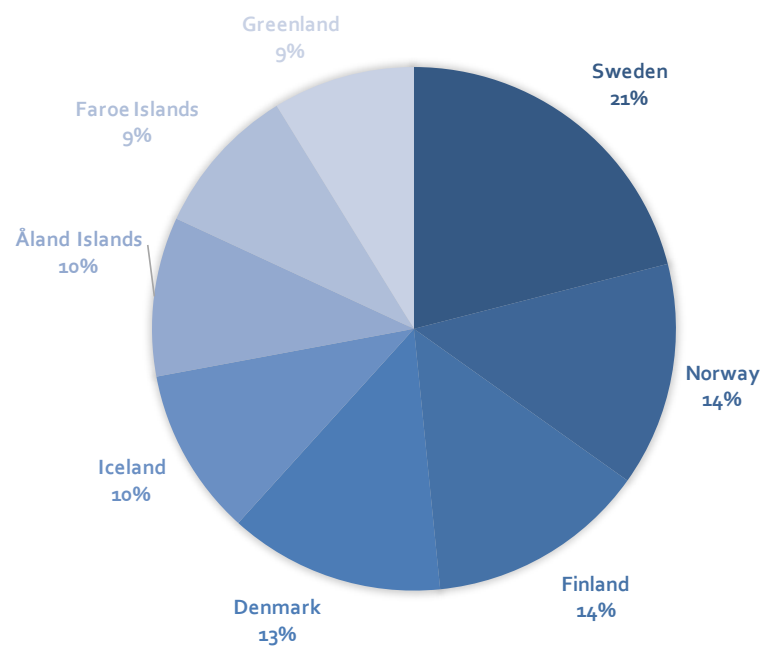


Figure No11: Obstacles according to country affected

Source: own elaboration of Katarzyna Wojnar

There is also a significant group of random problems (15%) that do not fit into any of the above categories. These are more specific problems, that among others include acceptance of driving licenses, travelling with pets and guide dogs, weapon licences or resident evidence regulations. Issues related to business and education are of lesser quantity and problems related to citizens and consumers have not been identified or registered yet.

All nordic countries together have been affected 376 times by all of 100 obstacles, which gives an average of 3,76 cases per country affected by a single obstacle. The most affected nordic country is Sweden with 79 obstacles. It is easily understandable taking into consideration its central location, the fact that it is the biggest country in the region with the largest length and number of borders. Norway, Finland and Denmark make up for a next category with around 50 obstacles that apply to each of them. More isolated locations like Iceland, Åland Islands, Faroe Islands and Greenland are affected by a lesser number of obstacles, between 39 and 33 respectively. These are dominantly the types of obstacles that affect all 8 members of the Freedom of Movement Council. It is therefore possible to generalise that the continental part of nordic countries is to higher extent affected by bilateral and trilateral obstacles because of higher degree of business and labour market integration resulting from higher mobility and interaction between people, employers, businesses, institutions and other types of bodies.

This observation is easily confirmed by studies of human and capital flows across nordic countries. An interesting specificity of the Nordic region is that most of flows, like foreign direct investments, origin in neighbouring countries of the regions. Only few major metropolitan areas note significant FDI flows from biggest global economies like UK, USA or China. This is usually not the case in areas that face some kind of peripheral disadvantages (in this case geographic peripherality). This observation shows even more how strongly integrated internal markets and societies of nordic countries are (see Figure 12.). Therefore the impacts of the border obstacle elimination model on basic freedoms, mobility and functionality of institutional and economic systems are more significant.

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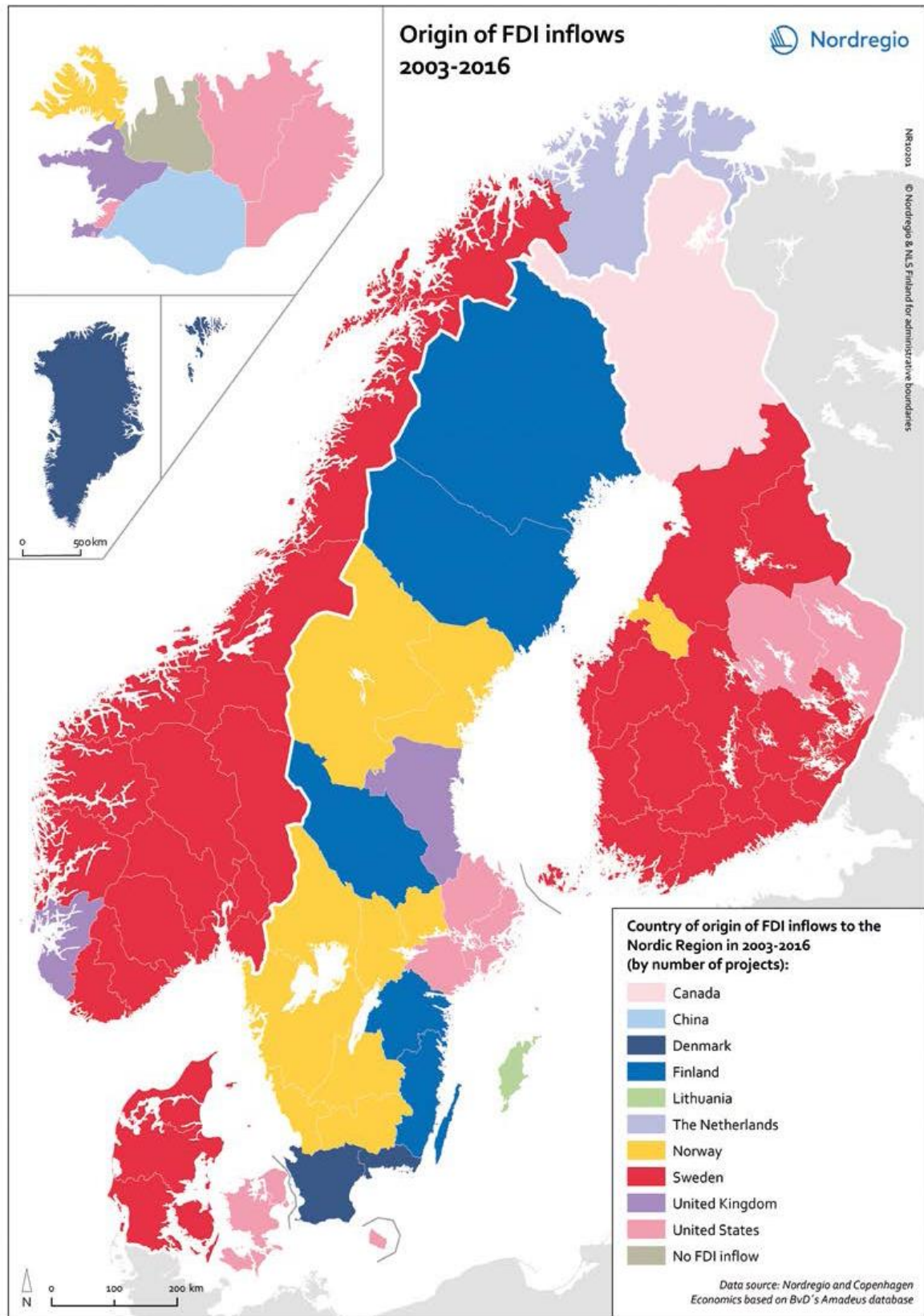


Figure 12. Origin of FDI inflows to the Nordic Region 2003–2016

Source: Nordregio (2018) State of the Nordic Region 2018

3.3.2 Success stories of the elimination model

Building on 4 years of experiences 2018 has shifted the dynamics of obstacle elimination by solving record nine problems that were causing barriers to freedom of movement. A new stronger mandate for the Freedom of Movement Council has brought visible results by giving the highest priority to finding solutions for obstacles in the labour market and for industry.

Some of Council's success stories involve providing safer working life for Swedes working in neighbouring countries, possibility of using the other nordic countries' driving license in Denmark as well as eliminating three obstacles to unemployment insurance that are going to be resolved by changes in law in Sweden at the end of the year. Amongst other things, those who reach the age of 64 may also be admitted to the Swedish unemployment fund, which previously had an age limit. And those who have a shorter gap in the membership period in the Swedish unemployment fund will not lose their income-related compensation. A more light-weight example shared on social media includes Pajala's fishing car and other "food trucks" that after a change of regulation can finally seek new customers on the Finnish side of the border.

3.3.3 Number and topics eliminated so far – list and typology

In general, there are 34 obstacles that have already been solved. The table below lists all of them according to title, number, priority, subject and countries affected. In proportion to all obstacles in the database, there is relatively more resolved that apply to labour market (29%) tax and finance (15%) and education (9%). Obviously, a majority of solved obstacles were those that were the easiest to fix and most of them affected only one or two countries. However 7 of solved obstacles were of a more complex character and applied to all 8 nordic countries. These were problems related to social and health services.

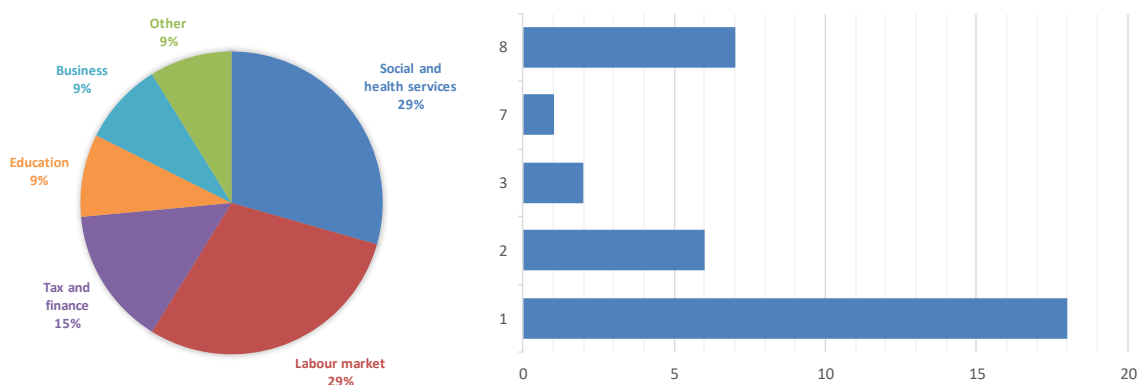


Figure No13: Structure of solved obstacles by subject and by number of countries affected

Source: own elaboration of Katarzyna Wojnar

As mentioned, a new mandate for the Freedom of Movement Council amplified the elimination procedure. Some of the most recent resolved border barriers, that were achieved during the first half of 2018 include:

- ❖ the possibility for Swedes to enter the unemployment fund after reaching 64 years.
- ❖ unemployed Swedes have been able to lose entitlement to income-related compensation if they applied for membership in the wrong unemployment insurance fund⁹ and thus received a gap in their membership period;
- ❖ employees who have had a gap during the membership period of the Swedish unemployment fund have risked to lose income-related compensation;
- ❖ a mobile food shop has not been allowed to function as the first place of arrival for animal food imported into Finland;
- ❖ recognition of parenting for families with cohabiting parents (the problem has arisen when moving to Finland and Sweden, but is not yet solved for Sweden);
- ❖ requirements for exchange of foreign driving licenses in Denmark;
- ❖ Finnish youth can have internships in another nordic country;
- ❖ compensation for patient travel between Norway, Finland and Sweden (border barrier is not solved for Sweden);
- ❖ right to guide dogs while travelling.

⁹ There are sectoral funds and those for students, etc.

Serial number	Title	Priority	Subject	Number of countries affected	Countries affected
14-012	A cross-border worker who becomes unemployed during a sick period does not receive compensation when he or she recovers a part of the workforce	n	Social and health services	8	Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Åland Islands,
14-014	Labour rehabilitation in the country of residence	n	Social and health services	8	Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Åland Islands
14-020	Work outside Sweden, now possible without lowering Swedish unemployment benefit	n	Labour market	1	Sweden
14-024	Ability to remain a member of a Swedish unemployment fund at work abroad	n	Labour market	1	Sweden
14-026	Employees in Denmark, now also have the right to sickness benefit and parental allowance. Previously, there were uncertainties regarding temporary workers in Denmark.	n	Labour market	1	Denmark
14-028	Unemployment insurance for people who are spontaneously looking for work abroad	n	Labour market	1	Sweden

Serial number	Title	Priority	Subject	Number of countries affected	Countries affected
14-030	Danish flex-job when settling outside Denmark	n	Labour market	1	Denmark
14-032	Long-term sick leave commuters can get unemployment benefit	n	Labour market	1	Sweden
14-034	Right to unemployment benefit after period with unemployment benefit payments from a different country	n	Labour market	3	Denmark, Norway, Sweden
14-036	No right to study support after work abroad	n	Social and health services	7	Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Norway, Sweden, Åland Islands,
14-040	Unemployment allowance for contractors in temporary employment agencies	n	Labour market	2	Denmark, Sweden
14-044	Days in remuneration for parental leave are settled differently in the nordic countries	n	Social and health services	1	Sweden
14-060	VAT taxation in Sweden has hampered the possibility of co-financing or receiving nordic funds for research and development projects at universities and colleges in Sweden.	n	Tax and finance	1	Sweden

Serial number	Title	Priority	Subject	Number of countries affected	Countries affected
14-064	VAT requirement on temporary admission of construction machinery	n	Tax and finance	2	Norway, Sweden
14-070	Transboundary activities for security guards	n	Business	2	Finland, Sweden
14-088	Coordination of Swedish parental benefit	n	Social and health services	1	Sweden
14-094	The rules concerning unemployment insurance for temporary workers	n	Labour market	8	Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Åland Islands
14-098	Health insurance for Finnish students	n	Social and health services	1	Finland
14-100	Nordic students' social insurance in Sweden,	n	Social and health services	1	Sweden
14-108	Nordic citizens in need of social assistance have, in some cases, been sent home from another Nordic country, despite some connection with the country of residence.	n	Social and health services	1	Denmark
14-112	Application for tax cards in Norway,	n	Tax and finance	1	Norway
14-116	Swedish company car in	n	Business	1	Denmark

Serial number	Title	Priority	Subject	Number of countries affected	Countries affected
	Denmark,				
14-118	Transit with hunting and sport weapons	n	Other	8	Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Åland Islands
14-120	Traveling with pets between Bornholm and rest of Denmark, via Sweden,	n	Other	1	Sweden
14-138	Fees for foreign students at Swedish colleges	n	Education	3	Sweden, Faroe Islands, Greenland
14-142	Part-time sick person who starts working part-time in a country other than the country of work	n	Social and health services	8	Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Åland Islands
14-154	Taxation of capital pension	n	Tax and finance	1	Denmark
14-158	Adult education support for wage earners who are studying	n	Social and health services	1	Finland
15-001	Approval of Greenlandic Education	n	Education	8	Denmark, Faroe Islands, Greenland, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Åland Islands

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Serial number	Title	Priority	Subject	Number of countries affected	Countries affected
15-002	Value transport across the border	y	Business	2	Finland, Sweden
15-005	Taxation of foreign pensions in the country of residence	n	Tax and finance	8	Denmark, Finland, Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Åland Islands
15-006	EU Mobility Program	n	Labour market	2	Iceland, Sweden
17-014	Limited opportunities for Swedish doctors to carry out their public service in Åland	n	Education	2	Sweden, Åland Islands
17-024	Requirements for exchange of foreign driving licenses in Denmark,	y	Other	1	Denmark

Table No5. List of solved border obstacles

Source: The Freedom of movement database

3.4 The role of the FMC in public policy making

45 000 nordic residents move each year to another nordic country. The nordic countries have created good opportunities for mobility but the Nordic Council of Ministers and Freedom of Movement Council still scope for improving the conditions for mobility through promoting elimination of border obstacles among decision makers, politicians and policy makers. Their work on improving coordination, promotion and effectiveness of identification, elimination and prevention of obstacles has brought visible results over the last four years.

The Freedom of Movement Council itself is a very efficient and well synchronised assembly of its own. Most of the members have known each other from their previous work with many years of ministerial background and nordic cooperation. Such successful composition generates dynamism, sense of mission, trust and naturally contributes to strengthening nordic cooperation by setting the border obstacle elimination very high on the agenda of all authorities and ministries that these members contact. In their national work and monitoring each of the members has support of other colleagues representing nordic countries as well as members appointed by the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Monitoring of obstacle elimination is done on a regular basis as part of preparatory work regarding meetings and briefing during internal FMC meetings. The FMC database serves as an important tool of keeping all interested parties as well as the general public up to date with the obstacle elimination process. However, regardless of mid-term quantitative and procedural monitoring practices a larger evaluation project was carried out in order to investigate actual impacts and more tacit qualitative aspects of FMC work.

A large evaluation project on the border obstacle elimination has been commissioned by the Nordic Council of Ministers in spring 2017. An external evaluation, made by Oxford Research, showed that the Freedom of Movement Council's work has brought significant results during the first three years and led to the desired results. These conclusions have led the Nordic Council of Ministers to extend the mandate of the FMC with increased powers and tasks contributing to closer cooperation with stakeholders.

Among the most important positive results are the sector-specific strategic investigations made by independent experts for the Nordic Council of Ministers in recent years. The investigations have acted as political agendas in the areas that have been examined; health, labour market, energy, environment and now the nordic welfare model. Moreover, there has been an improvement in efficiency. At the same time as the nordic budget has been reduced, the Nordic Council of Ministers has initiated cooperation in areas such as social security and integration, global sustainability, digitisation and profiling of the Nordic region as a region.

Evaluation points out that nordic cooperation is currently more relevant than ever before. The organisation works better and reacts more quickly and the content of the cooperation is more clearly linked to the current policy agenda in the region than before. This message provides an evaluation of the reform process of the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers. More and more frequently, nordic work on improving cooperation, mobility and counteracting border obstacles is presented as a model for other parts of the world, other regions and cooperation unions, including European Union, United States or Central and Eastern European countries.

Another important evaluation study, a mobility report "The Nordic Region - New Opportunities", presented in June 2018, describes a number of areas where the nordic countries can further strengthen cooperation to facilitate the mobility of people and companies across national borders. This applies to nordic identity, languages, education, transport, legislation, health, digital solutions, and work and business.

Since nordic mobility has always been individual-oriented border obstacle elimination process targeting the facilitation to move between countries by the citizens, it has created a broad acceptance for these initiatives among the citizens themselves.

In a survey, the citizens considered that mobility issues were one of the most important areas of cooperation. Among improvements in obstacle elimination and prevention there are 16 proposals to increase mobility and integration in the Nordic region. In particular by introducing electronic ID in all nordic countries by 2020, which would be a new milestone in the nordic cooperation.

4. Conclusions

As a matter of fact, by now 280 000 nordic citizens live in another nordic country and 45 000 nordic residents move each year to another nordic country, furthermore 70 000 workers are commuting on a daily basis. These are the results of the long-term cooperation of more than 60 years between the nordic countries which have been developed from step to step including the passport union, the fully integrated labour market and the free access to higher education and health care services.

In spite of the facts below, there is still a need for improving the conditions for mobility through the elimination of border obstacles and its promotion among decision makers, politicians and policy makers which was the main reason of establishing the Freedom of Movement Council within the framework of the Nordic Council of Ministers. Their work on coordination and promotion of obstacle identification, elimination and prevention has brought visible results over the last four years.

The efficiency of the border obstacle management system of the Freedom of Movement Council is reasoned by several factors. On the one hand, it is based to high extent on the existing institutions including national, macro-regional as well as transnational nordic actors. It involves many different public and non-governmental bodies together with their employees and public servants that partake in the obstacle elimination system parallel to their everyday tasks. In this way people responsible for a particular stage of obstacle elimination stay close to practice and have the necessary power and influence resulting from their position in the institutional framework and in informal networks as well.

Regarding the Freedom of Movement Council itself, its members are activists committed to cooperation, being already in a senior position; they have experiences and extensive connections within regional, ministerial and sectoral environments. Their role is primarily to influence the ministries concerned and to present them possible solutions to the problem. Accordingly, they have great power to involve the relevant authorities from the nordic countries which can help solve the border obstacles. Such composition generates dynamism, sense of mission and results in a very high appreciation of the topic in the agenda of all authorities and ministries.

The procedure of identifying and solving border obstacles is based on the principle of minimal bureaucracy. It capitalises on existing administrative settings which makes it easily adaptable to various institutional settings used in the nordic countries. Taking into account the different legislation rules and procedures, in many steps of the obstacle management there is no formal

procedure prescribed. As a result, it minimises or eliminates unnecessary red tape and therefore assures a sense of independence and common responsibility among participating actors. Moreover, the procedure is designed to include both the technocratic, expert-oriented tasks as well as political, power-oriented actions that assure legitimisation of these actions and management of right obstacles in a right way. Special attention is given to navigation of roles of various actors, and coordination instruments such as the border obstacle database.

In terms of the applicability of the nordic model within the V4 countries, it is obvious that beside the diverse public administration systems and legislative background, there is also a completely different socio-economic, cultural and political atmosphere in the region. In addition, the history, the desire and the capacity to cooperate both on cross-border and on regional levels seems to meet a lower standard than in the Nordic region which makes the adoption of the model extremely challenging. However regardless of the wide range of challenges, experiences persuaded the project partners, it is worth continuing the work and preparing the proposal following the nordic example.

5. Annexes

ANNEX 1

Councils of the Nordic Council of Ministers

- ❖ Nordic council of Ministers of Finance (MR-FINANS)
- ❖ Nordic Council of Ministers for Legislative Affairs (MR-LAG)
- ❖ Nordic Council of Ministers for Labour (MR-A)
- ❖ Nordic Council of Ministers for Sustainable Growth (MR-VÆKST)
- ❖ Nordic Council of Ministers for Education and Research (MR-U)
- ❖ Nordic Council of Ministers for the Environment and Climate (MR-MK)
- ❖ Nordic Council of Ministers for Health and Social Affairs (MR-S)
- ❖ Nordic Council of Ministers for Culture (MR-K)
- ❖ Nordic Council of Ministers for Fisheries, Aquaculture, Agriculture, Food and Forestry (MR-FJLS)
- ❖ Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality (MR-JÄM)
- ❖ Nordic Council of Ministers for Digitalisation 2017-2020: On 22 June 2017, The Ministers for Co-operation (MR-SAM) decided to establish an ad hoc council of ministers for digitalisation (MR-DIGITAL) for the period 2017 to 2020.

ANNEX 2

Committees of Senior Officials shared by Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers

- ❖ Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Finance
- ❖ Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Legislative Affairs
- ❖ Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Labour
- ❖ Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Regional Policies
- ❖ Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Gender Equality
- ❖ Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Business Policies
- ❖ Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Energy Policies

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- ❖ Committee of Senior Officials for Education and Research
- ❖ Committee of Senior Officials for the Environment and Climate
- ❖ Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Health and Social Affairs
- ❖ Committee of Senior Officials for Culture
- ❖ Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Fisheries, Aquaculture, Agriculture, Food and Forestry

ANNEX 3

Working Groups in the Nordic Council

Climate and Air Pollution Group	The work of the Climate and Air Pollution Group supports the nordic objectives of reducing serious climate change and preventing the impact of air pollution on the environment, ecosystems and human health.
Environment and Economy Group	The remit of the intersectoral Environment and Economy Group is approved by the Nordic Council of Ministers' environment and climate sector as well as the economy sector. Its main responsibility is to look into questions related to the environment and the economy that are of interest to the nordic countries.
EU Information Group	The main task of the Nordic-Baltic-Polish EU Information Group is to follow the work of the EU in the field of labour market policy, labour law and working environment.
Industrial Relations Committee	The Industrial Relations Committee was set up by the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Labour (EK-A) to help implement the Nordic Council of Ministers for Labour's (MR-A) cooperation programme.
Labour Market Committee	The Labour Market Committee was set up by the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Labour (EK-A) on behalf of the Nordic Council of Ministers for Labour's (MR-A).
Nordic Chemical Group	The Nordic Chemical Group's work supports a chemical policy whose overarching goal is sustainable development based on high-level health and environmental protection for both the present and future generations.
Nordic Cooperation Board of Natural Sciences	Nordic Cooperation Board of Natural Sciences is a cooperation of the Nordic research councils that finance scientific research.

Nordic Committee on Bioethics	The Nordic Committee on Bioethics was founded in 1989 to promote cooperation and exchanges of information between researchers, politicians, civil servants and other influential people.
Nordic Committee on Food Analysis	NMKL compiles methods of analysis and guidelines and organises training courses in food analysis. It also acts as a network for Nordic food analysts.
Nordic Macroeconomic Group	The Nordic Macroeconomic Group was originally established outside formal inter-governmental cooperation, but has operated under the auspices of The Council of Ministers for Finance (MR-FINANS) since 2004. The Group consists of representatives from the nordic finance ministries. They exchange information about market trends and the economic situation in their countries. The Group publishes the annual 'Nordic Economic Outlook' in advance of the autumn meeting of MR-FINANS.
Nordic Waste Group	The remit of the Nordic Waste Group is to promote the transition to a circular economy and a green society in which the use of resources is decoupled from economic growth by means of greater resource efficiency, and the prevention and recycling of waste. NAG's work focuses on the EU
Nordic Working Group for Diet, Food & Toxicology	NKMT is responsible for the implementation of "The Nordic action plan for improved health and quality of life through food and physical activity". It also has particular responsibility for the review of the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations (NNR).
Nordic Working Group for Food Safety & Consumer Information	NMF is responsible for activities to do with legislation, inspection and control, labelling of food and consumer information.
Nordic Working Group for Microbiology & Animal Health and Welfare	The remit of the working group covers activities in the fields of microbiology, animal health and welfare, and to ensure that nordic agencies work together effectively.
Nordic Working Group for Sustainable Consumption and Production	The working group serves as a forum for the environment, business and consumer sectors. Its programme of work takes into account the ambitions of all sectors. HKP's remit is to develop coordinate and evaluate the instruments needed for work on sustainable consumption and production, and to promote the efficient use of resources and the circular economy while paying due respect to the sustainability of nature.

The Electricity Market Group	Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark have long shared a single electricity market and serve as a prime example to other European countries of how to liberalise electricity markets across national borders. Nevertheless, potential still exists for further improvements to the general conditions for the electricity market in the Nordic region.
The environmental BAT Group (best available technique)	The BAT Group is a sub-group of the Working Group for Sustainable Consumption and Production (HKP). The BAT Group's aim is to promote knowledge of effective and sustainable production as a prerequisite for a sustainable society. The nordic work on best available techniques has two objectives: 1) To draw up information on techniques and cleaner technology for industries with a large number of nordic companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises. 2) To put a nordic stamp on the EU work to draw up a BREF document on the subject.
The Marine Group	The group support the nordic countries in activities that help collate data and establish the scientific basis for nordic initiatives to combat pollution in the marine and coastal environments.
The Networking Group for Energy Efficiency	The main purpose of the Networking Group for Energy Efficiency is to promote nordic cooperation on initiatives in the region and to promote nordic cooperation on the implementation of EU/EEA directives and programmes
The Nordic working group for global climate negotiations	The group's overarching goal is to contribute to an ambitious and effective implementation of the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement, with a nordic perspective.

ANNEX 4

Information Offices and InfoPoints

Hello Norden Åland	Hello Norden is the Nordic Council of Ministers information service. Its job is to make it easier for private individuals to move freely about the Nordic region.
Hello Norden Denmark	
Hello Norden (Finland)	
Hello Norden (Greenland)	

Hello Norden (Iceland)	
Hello Norden (Norway)	
Hello Norden (Sweden)	
Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Estonia	One of the office's most important tasks is to pick up on new trends and look for new opportunities for joint Nordic-Estonian cooperation, in dialogue with the nordic embassies, with which the office has a close working relationship. The office also works broadly as the advocate of all that is 'Nordic' and promotes nordic cooperation in Estonia.
Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Lithuania	One of the office's most important tasks is to pick up on new trends and look for new opportunities for joint Nordic-Lithuanian cooperation, in dialogue with the nordic embassies, with which the office has a close working relationship. The office also works broadly as the advocate of all that is 'Nordic' and promotes nordic cooperation in Lithuania.
Nordic Information Office in South Jutland/South Schleswig	The job of the Nordic Information Office is to provide information about formal nordic cooperation and co-ordinate official nordic activities in the border region between Denmark and Germany. It promotes nordic culture via activities such as visits by authors, art exhibitions, concerts, reading groups and exchange visits to other nordic countries. Its remit also includes enhancing knowledge of South Jutland and South Schleswig in the rest of the Nordic region.
The Nordic Council of Ministers' Branch Office in Tartu	The Nordic Council of Ministers' branch office in Tartu is responsible for regional cross-border cooperation and for education and science. The office assists the Nordic Council of Ministers in administrating the Nordic-Baltic mobility programme for civil servants.
The Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia	The Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia is a part of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat and serves as a catalyst for the Nordic-Baltic cooperation in Latvia. The Office works closely with the nordic diplomatic representations in Latvia and coordinates joint nordic initiatives, as well as identifies trends and opportunities for the Nordic-Baltic cooperation.
The Nordic Region in Focus in Iceland	The mission of the Nordic Region in Focus in Iceland includes raising awareness raising and knowledge sharing of the region and of official nordic cooperation by hosting seminars, debates, etc. It operates out the Nordic House in Reykjavik.

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Analysis of the nordic model

Study on the Nordic Council elaborated within the framework of the *project 'Legal accessibility among the V4 countries'* funded by the Visegrad Fund

6. Study tour report

On 22nd and 23rd May, within the framework of the project facilitating the legal harmonisation between the Visegrad countries, the representatives of the cooperating partners and the ministries of the four countries visited Copenhagen and Malmö. The objective of the study visit was to get to know about the work and internal mechanisms of the Freedom of Movement Council established by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2014. The objective of the project itself to promote the set-up of a similar entity at V4 level dedicated to eliminate the obstacles hindering the mobility among the member states following the model of the above council.



The members of the delegation were: Katarzyna Wojnar (EUROREG, Warsaw), Katarzyna Kos (Governmental Legislation Center of Poland), Pavol Foltín Office of the Governor of South Moravian Region, Brno), Tomáš Swiatlowsky (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development, Bratislava), Katalin Fekete (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Budapest), as well as Zsuzsanna Fejes and Edit Soós (University of Szeged). The leader of the delegation was Gyula Ocskay secretary general of CESC, the lead partner of the project.

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Analysis of the nordic model

The one-and-a-half-day program was especially busy and informative; thanks should go for it in particular to senior advisers, Claes Håkansson and Petri Suopanki who are in charge of the administration of the Freedom of Movement Council at the Secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

At the first day in the morning, the delegation was welcomed at the Nordic Cultural Fund by Kenneth Broman, chief of staff who presented the functioning of the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council (the parliament of the nordic states). Lise Østby, senior adviser of the department of Growth and Climate spoke about the role and participation of the local and regional actors in the elimination of cross-border obstacles. The principles, the structure, the procedures, all activities related to the documentation and database development of the Freedom of Movement Council was introduced by Claes Håkansson, Daniel Jaakkola and Petri Suopanki.



Thanks to the close cooperation of the nordic states of more than half a century, the number of legal obstacles are remarkably lower than anywhere else in Europe. The history of free movement without passport started 60 years ago and nordic citizens can use the education and health care services in each nordic country without limitations. Regardless of the above,

there are still several smaller and bigger obstacles hindering cross-border mobility. The Freedom of Movement Council which was established for abolishing these obstacles prioritises every year 8 to 12 such obstacles, takes initiatives for their elimination and monitors the activities taken at national level, as well. The information on the problems arrive from regional level stakeholders, and they are analysed and prepared for further decision and measures of the council by the Secretariat.

The V4 delegation spent the afternoon at the office of the Øresunddirekt whose main mission consists of the promotion of cross-border labour mobility between the two border cities and regions connected by the Øresund bridge and provision of related information. First, Britt Andréén, senior analyst of the Øresund Institute gave an overview on the history of the integration of the border area – with a special focus given to the role of the bridge. As it was mentioned, the number of the commuters in the region had reached its peak period on 2008 when 20 thousand people had commuted mainly from Sweden to Copenhagen. These commuters have to face a lot of barriers of legal nature the solution of which is facilitated by the office introduced by Sandra Forsén head of office and Malin Dahl coordinator of Swedish Employment Service. During their work they face many legal obstacles about which they inform the Secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The cooperation is operating at the same way with the Greater Copenhagen and Skåne Committee visited by the delegation at the second day in the morning. Matilda Sommelius project manager and Sara Røpke head of the secretariat spoke about the evaluation of the cross-border integration and the way how they facilitate this Swedish-Danish integration by the identification and resolution of the legal barriers. The office works in direct cooperation with the two governments so they can launch initiatives of legal harmonisation by themselves but they also deliver problems to the Freedom of Movement Council.

Finally, their presentation was followed by Jakob Tråsdahl, head of Copenhagen office of Hello Norden network. Hello Norden started in Stockholm in 1998 as a call center. Now, they have 8 offices (one in every member country and autonomous territory) run by a local civil association financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers. These offices are gathering and share the information on transnational mobility with the help of a web page and a back-office service. The major part of the legal obstacles is identified by themselves what they channel in the above mentioned way to the mechanism of legal accessibility of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

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