



Delegation for Northern cooperation and for relations with Switzerland and Norway and to the EU-Iceland Joint Parliamentary Committee and the European Economic Area (EEA) Joint Parliamentary Committee

21-22.2.2022

MISSION REPORT

following the mission to the 1st EU- Nordic Council Inter-parliamentary Meeting

Delegation for Northern cooperation and for relations with Switzerland and Norway and to the EU-Iceland Joint Parliamentary Committee and the European Economic Area (EEA) Joint Parliamentary Committee

Members of the mission:

Ms Christel SCHALDEMOSE	(S&D) (DEEA Vice Chair in charge of the Iceland Working Group)
Mr Erik BERGKVIST	(S&D) (Member of the DEEA)
Mr Alessandro PANZA	(ID) (Member of the DEEA)

Introduction

The Nordic Council is the official body for formal inter-parliamentary co-operation, founded in 1952 with the main aim to “to make the Nordic region one that people want to live and work in”. Its Members are Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden (founding members), Finland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. The D-EEA Chair or a Vice-Chair regularly represents the European Parliament at the annual Sessions of the Nordic Council and is invited to intervene in the debate dedicated to international guests.

Furthermore, in her letter of 7 April 2020 (A 002361) Ms GUNNARSDÓTTIR, President of the Nordic Council had proposed to President SASSOLI establishing formal inter-parliamentary relations between the two institutions. The President replied by letter of 13 May 2020 (D 305458), affirming his belief in intensified cooperation and the potential benefits of more formal relations between the two institutions. On 6 October 2020, the Conference of Presidents discussed the request to start more formal relations between the EP and the Nordic Council and approved their inclusion under the DEEA’s remit. The first Inter-parliamentary Meeting (IPM) was held on 21 and 22 February 2022 in Helsinki, at the invitation of the Nordic Council

Summary account of meetings

Disinformation/Cybersecurity – Threats to Democracy

MEPs presented the EP’s work and the conclusions/recommendations of the INGE committee. MEP Christel SCHALDEMOSE, who is also EP’s rapporteur on the Digital Services Act raised a question whether it would be useful to ensure more public support for the media, thus strengthening its positive role in fight against disinformation. Education of the whole population, especially older people, could be key in this fight. Sharing best practice, information, technologies and trust between the like-minded national governments and institutions was underlined as key in fight against cyber-threats.

Many of the Nordic Parliaments have recently experienced cyber-attacks, and the Nordic Council is currently discussing a Nordic declaration of solidarity between the Nordic Parliaments: a cyberattack on one parliament is to be considered a cyber-attack on all Nordic parliaments.

The Nordic Council has for a long time been the driving force for increased Nordic co-operation on foreign, defence and security policy, including the hybrid threats and cyber security. Cyber security and fake-news have featured in recent years’ presidency programmes and in the Nordic Council’s international strategy. The Nordic Council’s strategy on societal security (2019) states that cyber threats are an ever-increasing problem for social security, and stress that Nordic countries outside EU or NATO should have access to co-operation on cybersecurity in these-organisations and that cyber security is included as a central part of the joint Nordic transatlantic dialogue on security policy. In recent years, the Nordic countries have addressed questions that can pave the way for a stronger Nordic dimension in foreign and security policy, including cyber security and hybrid treats, especially in democratic and open societies (*see* the Stoltenberg report (2009) and its evaluation ‘Ten Years On: Reassessing the Stoltenberg Report on Nordic Cooperation’ and the more recent Bjarnason Report (2020) on Nordic Foreign and Security policy).

Nordic experts on disinformation have called for increased Nordic co-operation to combat disinformation and propaganda, e.g. through expanded and developed co-operation between the Nordic media authorities on media and information literacy; the promotion of Nordic co-operation between the media organisations' fact-checking editorial offices, e.g. through a common database or joint meetings/conferences.

Arctic Affairs

Mr Petteri VUORIMÄKI, Finnish Ambassador for the Arctic and Antarctic Affairs introduced the topic. He referred to the new Finnish Arctic Strategy, according to which the whole territory of Finland is now considered to be in the Arctic, and underlined that awareness of the Arctic has increased exponentially in the last 20 years, as the Arctic is crucially important for the whole Europe. Mr Vuorimäki recalled the importance of not forgetting the 4.5 million people living in the Arctic and their aspirations for development, infrastructure, connections and well-functioning economy. He believes that geopolitics and security issues cannot monopolise the discussions, as the needs of indigenous populations, climate and connected vulnerabilities do not allow for it. The Ambassador discussed the EU's role in the Arctic Council and underlined that, despite the absence of official observer status, the EU has a place at the table. At the time, the Ambassador expected this to remain unchanged even with the Russian chairmanship.

MEPs presented the [EP's report](#) on 'The Arctic: opportunities, concerns and security challenges' and discussed the importance of talking with the Arctic populations (not about them). It is important to ensure the right balance between the needs to protect the vulnerable Arctic environment and the needs of the region to develop in a sustainable way, including their full involvement in the Green Deal related policies.

The Nordic countries are continuously addressing Arctic concerns as part of all policy initiatives and priorities, and all Nordic countries have a national Arctic strategy just as the Nordic Council of Ministers has Arctic Cooperation Programs to facilitate joint efforts in the region. The most recent programme covers the period 2022-2024. The Nordic Council considers it important that the EU, together with the international community, works to ensure that the Arctic remains an area of low-tension. Particularly, the NC calls on the EU to endorse the principles of the Ilulissat Declaration on peace and stability, sustainable development, dialogue between actors and a focus on supporting the Arctic population and peoples and their right for self-determination and development.

The Nordic Council highlighted that the EU should ensure that priorities identified in the Nordic countries' national Arctic strategies resonate with the EU initiatives, so that synergies and co-operation are created and that the EU engagement is not at odds with the national interests of the Nordic countries.

With regards to the Arctic population and their living conditions, the Nordic Council believes that the EU should play an active role in improving understanding of Arctic conditions, including demographic challenges, unemployment, welfare gaps, educational opportunities and digital challenges, in order to have a broad picture of the challenges facing the region.

The EU plays a role in providing solutions to many of these challenges to the Arctic environment, such as reducing greenhouse gases, integrated environmental protection, regulating fish stocks, strengthening the knowledge base through satellite observation and research activities. The Nordic Council encourages the EU to continue and increase the level

of ambition for this commitment, particularly in reducing greenhouse gases that negatively affect the Arctic. The Nordic Council suggests that the European Parliament ensures more regular Arctic assessments from the European Environment Agency (all 5 Nordic states are EEA members).

European Green Deal/ Climate Change

MEPs discussed the EU's and EP's climate-related ambitions and legislative work, including the climate diplomacy and EU's global role as a power promoting sustainability and stability, also through the public climate finance, whereas the EU and its member states are the largest provider in the world.

The Nordic Council commended the EU's ambitions and underlined that until recently it considered itself as a frontrunner, but if the EU manages to implement the Green Deal fully, this will place the EU much ahead.

In 2019, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Prime Ministers adopted a vision that the Nordic Region should be the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. Nordic cooperation has an important role to play in ensuring an environmentally and socially sustainable economic growth, as well as in advancing the transition towards a green economy. To realise this vision, three strategic areas are being given priority in the work of the Nordic cooperation: 1) a green Nordic Region, 2) a competitive Nordic Region, and 3) a socially sustainable Nordic Region. When it comes to a Green Nordic Region, the objective is to promote a green transition of societies and work towards carbon neutrality and a sustainable circular and bio-based economy.

The Nordic and EU visions on environmental and climate issues have much in common, and there is scope for increased cooperation to facilitate a green (and blue) transition to the benefit of climate and ecosystems, while ensuring that such transition is just and inclusive and motivate external partners to raise the level of ambition.

The recent proposal on taxonomy adding gas and nuclear power as "transitional" technologies was widely debated as a controversial issue by both the MEPs and the Nordic Council MPs. Some NC Members believe that the views of EU's Nordic members were not taken into account while preparing the proposal.

Any other business

The Conference on the Future of Europe and EU's adequate minimum wages proposals were raised as information points.

Visits

The [Nordic Investment Bank \(NIB\)](#) & [Nordic Environment Finance Corporation \(NEFCO\)](#)

NIB's mission is to finance projects that improve productivity and benefit the environment of the Nordic and Baltic countries by addressing the needs of the region and the challenges it is facing – sustainable growth, technological innovation, climate change, the development of circular economy and the protection of marine environments.

NEFCO's task is to accelerate the shift to green. They do this by financing the initial scale-up of Nordic environmental and climate-friendly solutions in international markets and are ready to take financial risks if there is a green upside. NEFCO focuses on small and medium-sized projects with tangible results and demonstration value. Through their operations, they contribute to the Nordic Vision 2030, the EU Green Deal and the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Visit to the [Hybrid CoE](#)

Ms Teija TIILIKAINEN, Director and Mr Rasmus HINDRÉN, Head of International Relations presented the work of the Hybrid CoE, its cooperation with the EU and national parliaments and briefly discussed the definition of hybrid threats and why they have become increasingly important in the last few years (new asymmetrical set-up of powers worldwide trying to weaken democracies).

Most importantly, one of the researchers presented centre's recent work on Russia and the assessment of its [objectives in Ukraine](#). The Centre's analysts estimated that Putin was seeking effective control over Ukraine (internal destabilisation, change of government, breaking of ties with the EU and NATO). Putin's overall objective is a change of current global order, from the rules based international order to a multipolar world with great power competition and defined spheres of influence.

They underlined the importance of cooperation with the EU institutions and appreciated the EP's work, as well as the importance of EU-NATO cooperation in the field despite the existing structural impediments.

Conclusions

The interaction between the EP and the Nordic Council was already very close, as demonstrated by many informal meetings between the DEEA Chair and the Nordic Council representatives, as well as by the fact that the European Parliament has been regularly invited to the Nordic Council's Annual Sessions.

MEP Christel SCHALDEMOSE represented the EP at the 73rd Session of the Nordic Council of 1-4 November 2021 and 3 DEEA Members attended the first IPM, which was a success. The two institutions should keep this upgraded pace of cooperation. e.g., through sharing best practices in the fields of fight against disinformation and cyber-security, exchanges between the committees, cooperation on any other issues such as democracy promotion. The 2nd EU-Nordic Council IPM should take place in 2023 in one of the EP working places.

**Interparliamentary meeting
Nordic Council and the European Parliament (DEEA)
21-22 February 2022, Helsinki, Finland**

Draft Programme

Monday 21 February 2022

08.00-13.00 Arrival in Finland

08.00-13.30 Check-in at Hotel Scandic Simonkenttä

14.00-17.00 IPM meeting between NC and EP/DEEA
Hotel Scandic Simonkenttä, Meeting Room: Balsa-Freda (1st floor)

19.00-21.00 Dinner

Tuesday 22 February 2022

08.30-08.45 Checkout from Hotel Scandic Simonkenttä

08.45-09.00 Walk from Hotel Scandic Simonkenttä to NIB/NEFCO

09.00-10.40 Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) & Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO)

10.40-11.00 *Walk from NIB/NEFCO to Restaurant*

11.00-12.15 Lunch

12.15-13.30 The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats

14.00-18.00 Departure from Finland

1st EU-Nordic Council IPM

Helsinki, Finland

21 and 22 February 2022

European Parliament delegation

MEPs

Ms Christel SCHALDEMOSE (S&D, Denmark)
(DEEA Vice Chair in charge of the Iceland Working Group)
Mr Erik BERGKVIST (S&D, Sweden) (Member of the DEEA)
Mr Alessandro PANZA (ID, Italy) (Member of the DEEA)

Secretariat

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Political group advisors

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Nordic Council and invited guests

Members of the Nordic Council

Mr Erkki TUOMIOJA, President, Finnish MP
Ms Lulu RANNE, Vice-President, Finnish MP (*Monday only*)
Ms Lorena DELGADO, Member of the Presidium, Swedish MP
Ms Oddný HARÐARDÓTTIR, Member of the Presidium, Icelandic MP
Mr Magnus EK, Chair of the Committee for a Sustainable Nordic Region, Swedish MP

Finnish Parliament

MS EVELIINA HEINÄLUOMA, Member of the Grand Committee of the Finnish Parliament

Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Mr Petteri VOURIMÄKI, Ambassador, Arctic and Antarctic Affairs

Other institutions/Guests

Mr André KÜÜSVEK, President, Nordic Investment Bank
Ms Josefin HOVINIEMI, Vice President Communications, Nordic Environment Finance Corporation
Ms Lida KARJALAINEN, European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats

Staff

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