

Accelerating measures to achieve an integrated Nordic region with cross-border freedom of movement

In 2019, in Reykjavik, we agreed on an ambitious vision: for the Nordic region to become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. Since then, we have made progress towards reaching our common vision, and there is much to be proud of. Today, however, halfway to 2030, we have to acknowledge that in order to reach our goals – our common vision – we need to find ways to accelerate our efforts.

It should be easy to live, study, work and run companies throughout the whole Nordic region and across its borders, regardless of whether you are a daily commuter, live in another Nordic country for a period or regularly live in more than one Nordic country. During the Swedish Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers, we have jointly focused on measures to improve cross-border mobility, security and integration.

In this context, we welcome the work being done by the ministers for Nordic cooperation, the Freedom of Movement Council and the adoption of an enhanced programme for freedom of movement in the Nordic region 2025–2030, with the clear aim to give our joint efforts new political impetus.

The work carried out in the context of the Nordic Council of Ministers must also be supplemented by bilateral measures at national, regional and local level.

Some examples have been set this year, such as the conclusion of a revised Öresund Agreement between Denmark and Sweden and the decision for Finland and Sweden to improve procedures for population data exchange. Another example is the initiative between Finland, Norway and Sweden to establish a strategic corridor for military mobility in the northern Nordic region. Strengthened infrastructure will also have a positive effect on civilian cross-border mobility and accessibility.

In our highly digitalised societies of today, the same principles of free movement must be applied online. The barriers in the digital world must be identified and eliminated, and our citizens must be able to communicate digitally with authorities and businesses abroad. To ensure that, measures must be taken to provide safe, secure, accessible, inclusive and user-friendly digital services.

To that end, we – the Nordic Prime Ministers – have agreed to:

improve cross-border digital service infrastructures and the coherency of relevant national infrastructures to support the free movement of people, goods, services, capital and data in our region;

ensure that responsible national authorities take the necessary measures to enable cross-border identity matching, taking into account the revised eIDAS Regulation;

undertake to identify and eliminate remaining obstacles, both legal and technical, to enable information exchange between business and population registers; and

commit to developing a multilateral agreement between our countries that will increase the accuracy, flexibility and security of cross-border identity matching of natural persons in our region, while aligning with existing and future EU regulations such as the establishment of the European Digital Identity Framework.

Cooperation to combat transnational organised crime

Organised crime is one of the most serious security threats facing the Nordic region and our societies. To combat transnational organised crime, cooperation is necessary. The criminal economy must be reduced and illegal trafficking to and from our ports combated effectively, through increased resilience and high levels of security.

Organised crime is driven by money. By minimising possibilities of illicit financial gain, incentives to engage in crime can be reduced. This is a responsibility of the whole Nordic society – regulators, law enforcement and administrative agencies, but also the private sector including financial institutions. We should continue our collective efforts to identify vulnerabilities in our systems, address them and apply the follow-the-money approach. Efficient confiscation and supervision regimes are key, as well as an efficient system for cooperation when illicit funds cross our borders.

A common challenge for the Nordic region is that digital services are misused for criminal purposes and thereby facilitate the planning and commission of crimes. Furthermore, law enforcement authorities face more and more operational challenges when trying to access digital data to investigate crimes. We are committed to a joint Nordic approach to combating criminals' misuse of digital services, in close cooperation with the business sector.

We will also draw particular attention to how criminal networks recruit minors and young individuals online for on-the-ground execution of crime. Online services should not be marketplaces for crime-as-a-service, and both the Nordic countries and companies must take action against this recruitment.

A responsible migration policy

Irregular migration is one of Europe's biggest challenges. Cynical human smugglers take advantage of a broken system and send migrants on dangerous journeys towards Europe. In order to ensure a more responsible migration policy, we have deepened our cooperation in parallel with important work undertaken by the EU. We are striving to find solutions to address the challenges related to migration, including effective external border

management, which is a key element of a well-managed migration policy, not least in dealing with the threat of instrumentalisation of migration.

The implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum is important for better management of migration, but new innovative approaches are also needed to address the external aspects of migration more efficiently. In addition, we believe that comprehensive and sustainable partnerships with important third countries along the migratory routes are key to addressing the root causes of irregular migration and breaking the business model of migrant smugglers. Well-functioning and effective return of those without the right to stay is paramount for a sustainable migration and asylum policy – but also for the security of our societies. We will therefore continue to collaborate to improve the work related to return, including by sharing experiences of national procedures and intensifying the cooperation within the EU+ and with relevant third countries. We will utilise all relevant policy areas to achieve effective returns.