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Ministerial Declaration



Norwegian Ministry
of Local Government and Modernisation



Nordic
Co-operation

Ministerial Declaration

This declaration is taking its departure point from the priorities of Norwegian Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2017 and the Digital Single Market Strategy (DSM) of the EU.

This Declaration supports the following vision statement:

The Nordic-Baltic region: a digital frontrunner

The Nordic-Baltic region is well-positioned to show the way for digitalisation of Europe. The digital maturity of our societies is generally high. Our governments have high ambitions for digitalising services to citizens and businesses, and the level of digital competencies in society is high.

The Nordic and Baltic countries already have close transnational digital collaboration in the public and private sector expressed through policy dialogue and common initiatives on digital innovation.

However, we still have a great potential for seizing the benefits of digitalisation, in order to improve the quality of life for our citizens, to address climate change and other environmental challenges, and to make our enterprises – public and private - more innovative and competitive in order to foster sustainable economic development.

We need to strengthen our region's digital role in Europe and globally. In order to do so, we need to capitalize on our knowledge and strong position in the digital area. We need to seek closer cooperation to spur the development of an even more efficient digital single market in the Nordic-Baltic region.

We, the ministers in charge of digital development, from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Faroe Islands, Greenland, Åland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, support the following policy goals to make the Nordic-Baltic region a digital frontrunner:

1. *Strengthening the ability for digital transformation of our governments and societies, especially by creating a common area for cross-border digital services in the public sector.*
2. *Strengthening the competitiveness of our enterprises through digitalisation.*
3. *Enhancing the digital single market in the Nordic-Baltic region.*

1. Strengthening the ability for digital transformation of our governments and societies, especially by creating a common area for cross-border digital services in the public sector

Recognizing that better services for our citizens, more effective public sector, further reduction of administrative burdens on our enterprises and strengthening the enterprises' ability to innovate are instrumental for our societies' ability to stay competitive, adapt to technological changes, and deal with societal challenges such as climate change,

We shall:

- Develop close cooperation between our administrations to establish cross-border digital service infrastructures or integrate the relevant national infrastructures, with the aim to support free movement of people, goods, services, capital and data in our region. The work shall focus on removing technical and legal barriers, particularly in the following areas:
 - o Enabling unique identity number usage across borders and facilitating cooperation between national infrastructures for the use of electronic authentication (eID) in accordance with the eIDAS-regulation.
 - o Promoting the re-use and free movement of data in order to support more advanced public service design that will reduce administrative burdens for citizens and businesses, and identifying key fields and building common infrastructures for data exchange within these fields.
 - o Promoting good public procurement practices, including wider use of electronic and innovative procurement within the framework of the EU single market.
 - o Ensuring that information security and personal data protection are fundamental to all digital solutions across the whole region.

2. Strengthening the competitiveness of our enterprises through digitalisation

Recognizing that digital innovation can play a key part in strengthening the competitiveness of our enterprises for instance through the adoption of new business models, the diffusion of digital standards, the use of advanced production technologies, and through attracting investment while also acknowledging the importance of developing digital skills, safeguarding the rights of workers and enhancing data protection and ICT security,

We shall:

- Promote initiatives that will make our region “leading edge” digital technology developers and suppliers within the new data economy.
- Contribute to realizing the potential of digital disruption, by opening up markets for new services through flexible and adaptable regulations.
- Promote initiatives facilitating small and medium sized enterprises’ uptake of digital technology and innovations. Develop, evaluate and share good practices in this area.
- Market our region as an innovative and suitable location for test beds, and leverage the opportunities afforded by new or existing demonstration centers and digital startup hubs across the region, also by facilitating their connections and collaboration.
- Further promote ways for our academic institutions and technology companies to collaborate (incl. across the borders) to complement each other in terms of competences and capacity.
- Develop advanced ICT competencies by facilitating free movement of people within the framework of the European single market, and simplifying procedures for skills accreditation and use.
- Promote 5G and interoperability of various access technologies, including a combination of different fixed, terrestrial and satellite networks, in order to provide ubiquitous seamless coverage in cities as well as in remote land and sea areas.
- Capture the technological development in a manner that maintains levels of protection for workers’ employment conditions, including standards relating to health and safety in the workplace.

3. Enhancing the digital single market in the Nordic-Baltic region

Recognizing that we need to facilitate the implementation of innovative solutions by supporting and putting into practice the principles of free movement of data, once-only and digital by default, as well as that cyber security and personal data protection are essential to implementing the goals of this declaration,

We shall:

- Exchange experiences, develop common solutions and share good practice within the area of the new sharing economy and other disruptive business models.
- Strengthen our region's voice within the EU-/ EEA-area by, on identified and prioritized issues, exchanging ideas and developing analysis on policy initiatives with a particular focus on the early legislative phase and on national implementation of proposed EU legislation within the Digital Single Market area.
- Work together to abolish obstacles to the functioning of Digital Single Market, such as unjustified data localization restrictions and other regulatory obstacles.
- Promote the rollout of good practice solutions across the EU-/ EEA-area, in cooperation with the European Commission and other stakeholders.

Follow-up

The Nordic and Baltic countries will develop, evaluate and share good practices and joint initiatives, particularly in areas identified in this declaration.

The Nordic Council of Ministers can play an important role facilitating the collaboration in practice in identified and prioritized fields within the scope of this declaration, in close cooperation with the governments, national digital authorities and other relevant stakeholders.

The Nordic and Baltic Ministers in charge of digitalisation in the public and private sector, ask the Secretary General for the Nordic Council of Ministers to help develop a plan identifying relevant initiatives and projects for the follow-up on the goals in this declaration.

The Ministers also ask the Nordic Council of Ministers, by taking departure point in existing cooperation structures, to explore and propose most efficient ways to organize the work to be carried out in order to implement this declaration through a decentralized setup where the countries take a leading role on different issues and drive the work forward.