

Nordic Research Collaboration and Evaluations

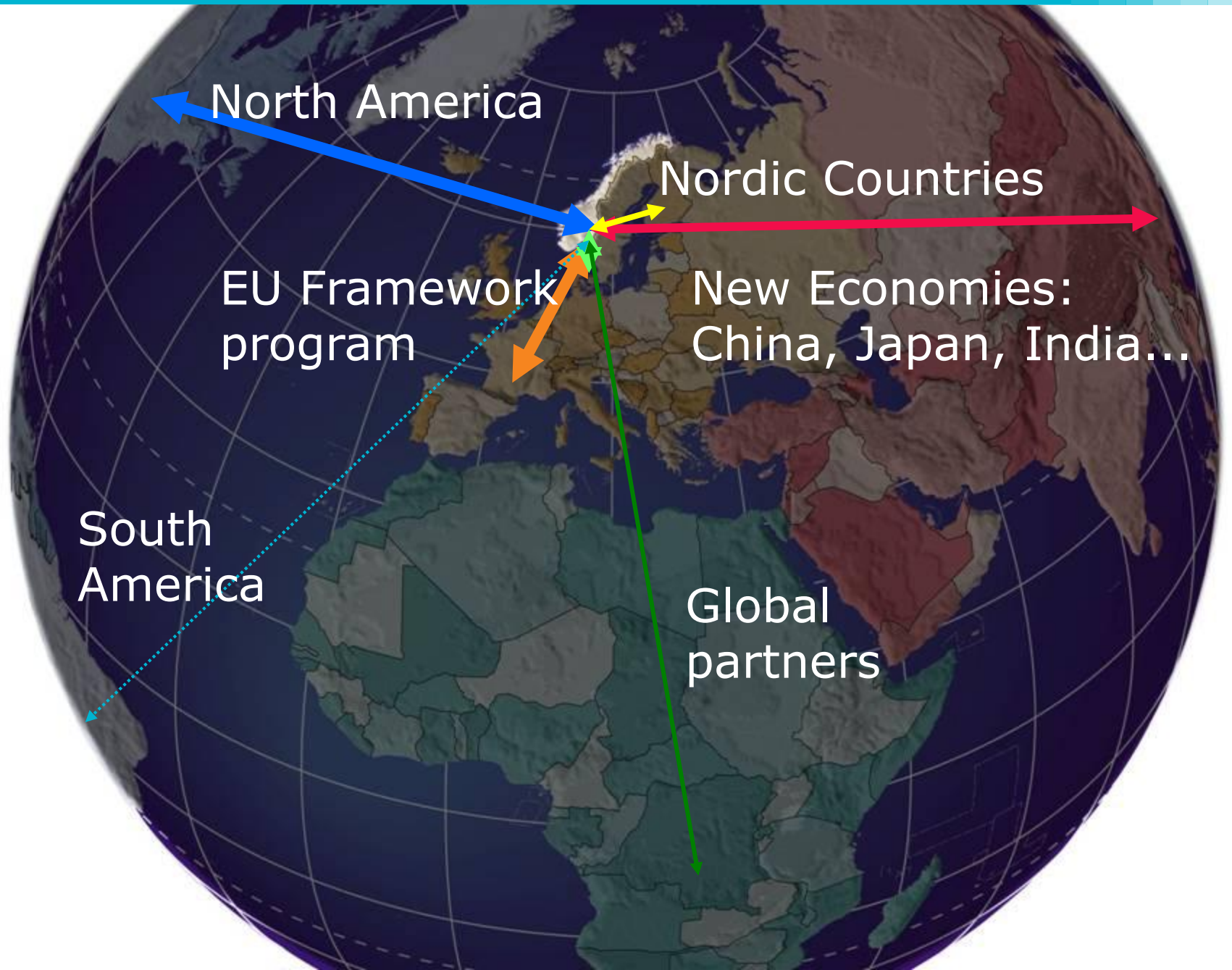
Special Adviser Gro E M Helgesen
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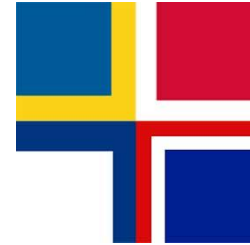
Nordic countries – Nordic region

- Denmark (the Faroe Islands, Greenland)
- Finland (Åland)
- Iceland
- Norway
- Sweden

The Nordic region has a total population of 25 million.



Why go Nordic?



- The Nordic region is our **common, expanded “home court”**
- Cultural, social and geographical similarities (homogeneity)
- A long history of political interaction
- Similar traditions and languages
- Mutual trust and ability to collaborate

Nordic research collaboration

Not a goal in itself to go Nordic,
but cooperation:

- provides a stronger basis for international cooperation (a "steppingstone")
- creates critical mass and added value
- increases international visibility and attractiveness
- contributes to the overall branding of the region

Nordic model of democracy/welfare state

- The “Middle Way” – social-democratic politics and strong welfare-state policies
 - Strong trade unions – collaboration between social partners – flexible work markets – high social security
 - Well-developed educational systems, including generous support schemes for higher education and post-graduate training
 - High levels of public expenditure on R&D
- => Extensive opportunities for coordination and collaboration, including in the domains of research and innovation

A long tradition of Nordic cooperation

- Nordic Council (1952)
 - Cooperation among governments and parliaments
 - Political initiatives and monitoring
- Nordic Council of Ministers (1971)
 - Meetings of sectoral ministers (education/research)
- Nordic advisory "contact bodies"
 - agriculture, fishery, forestry, environment, energy
- Several Nordic institutions

A long tradition (cont)

- Research Council cooperative bodies (NOS)
 - NOS-N (natural science), NOS-M (medicine), NOS-HS (humanities and social science)
 - Researchers and administrators
- **NORIA** (2005) - The Nordic Research and Innovation Area (three pillars):
 - NICE (2004)- Nordic Innovation Centre
 - NordForsk (2005) – Meta-Regional Research Board
 - NEF - Nordic Energy Research (2007)

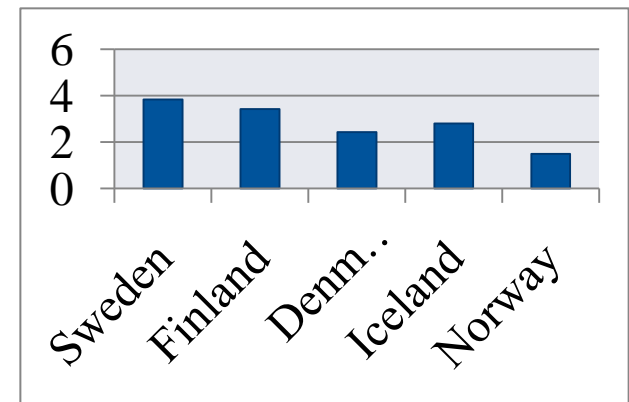
Nordic research today

Strengths

- Large investments in R&D (in % of GDP)
- Leading position in many fields
- Tradition of research cooperation
- University cooperation on all levels
- Cultural, social and geographic similarities

Weaknesses

- Do not always reach critical mass
- Nordic investment levels are low
- Poor visibility and attraction value



NordForsk – coordination, funding and policy advice

- Develop the Nordic Research and Innovation Area (NORIA) into an attractive, cutting-edge region for research and innovation
- Create synergies that supplement existing national investments in research – appropriate funding schemes
- Research policy advice to the Nordic Council of Ministers
- The Board is comprised of representatives from five Nordic research councils, the Nordic University Association, and trade and industry

Challenges

- Different focus of national research priorities
- Different research strengths
- Different industrial orientation/strengths
- Different managerial "systems"

Nordic collaboration on evaluation

- NORIA-net on peer review – best practice
- Nordic Centres of Excellence – added value
- Research-based evaluation as an ERA-net - impact of collaboration (NORDERA)
- Other examples – future projects
 - National CoE-programs (DK, F, N)
 - Sports research (evaluation of research fields/disciplines)

NORIA-net project: Development of Peer Review in the Nordic context

- Work Package 1: Develop peer-review methods in the Nordic context
- Common peer-review system – based on NORFACE (initiated by Nordic countries + GB + Irl)
- Seminar October 2009
 - Closed or open peer review? (impartiality, confidentiality, anonymity)
 - Evaluation criteria (rating, ranking)
 - Selection of reviewers (pool of experts, specialized or general expertise)
- Work package 2: Develop joint peer-review activities in the Nordic context
 - sociology

The Nordic Centres of Excellence

- *Virtual network centres* consisting of well-established excellent and up-front groups of researchers from at least 3 Nordic countries
- Established in *areas of high national priority* in the participating Nordic countries
- Given *Nordic top-funding* for networking, collaboration and researcher-exchange and -training
- NCoEs are typically:
 - top-funded by the NordForsk/NMR (1/3) and the participating research councils (2/3) - in addition to existing basic funding
 - the program secretariat is located in one of the Nordic research councils, with the last round at NordForsk

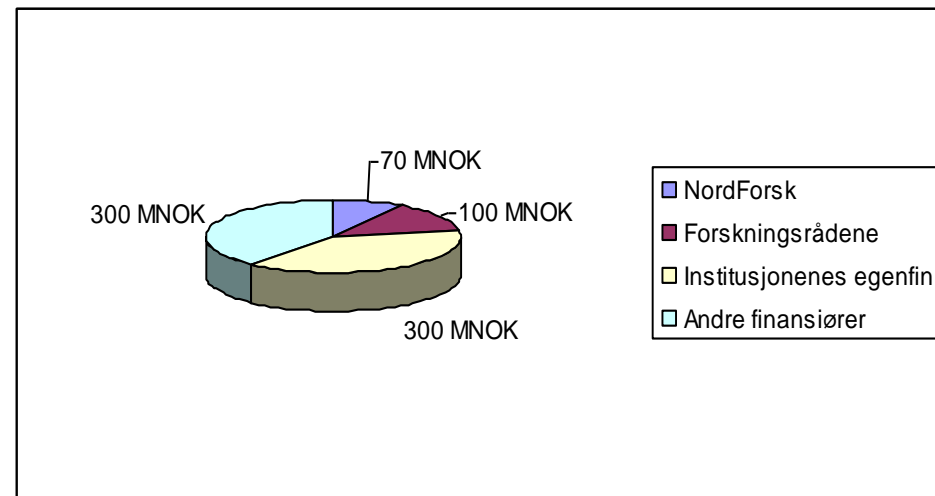
NCoE - Characteristics

- **16 centres within 5 programs;**

- Global change (4)
- Molecular medicine (3)
- Humanities/social sciences (4)
- Food, nutrition and health (3)
- Welfare (2)

- **Common features;**

- International evaluation
- Research schools attached
- Scientific Advisory Board
- Program Steering Committee



Nordic Centres of Excellence (NCoE)

Microcomparative syntax

Systems biology in controlled dietary interventions

Cognitive control

The Nordic welfare state

Disease genetics

Biosphere-aerosol-cloud-climate interactions

Empirical labor economics

Reassessing the Nordic welfare model

The dynamics of ecological systems

Water imbalance related disorders

Bioactive food components

Medieval expansion of Europe

Ecosystem carbon exchange

Neurodegeneration

Luminescence research

Health – Wholegrain food

Tromsø

Umeå

Kuopio

Helsinki

Bergen

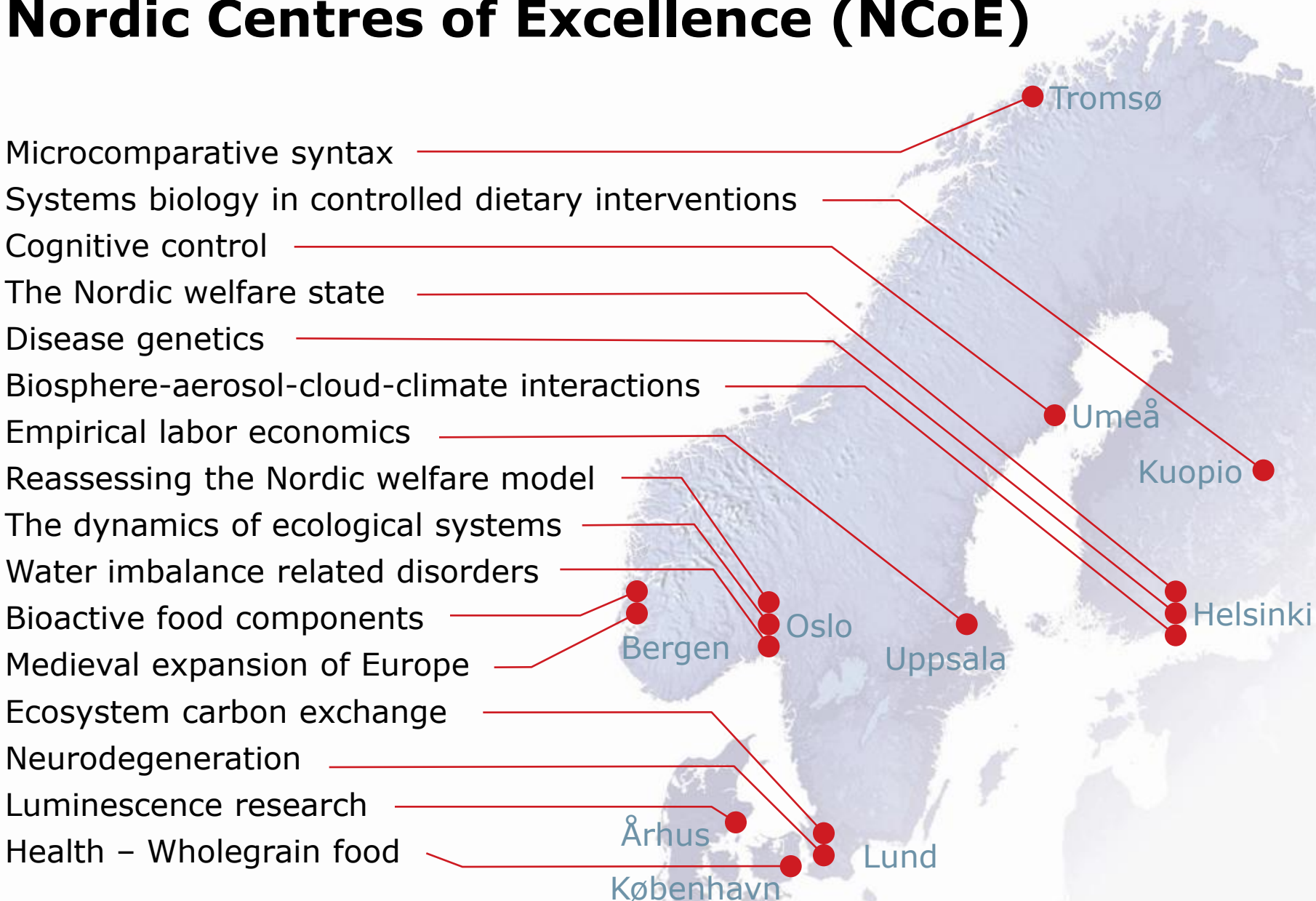
Oslo

Uppsala

Århus

København

Lund



NCoE Evaluation

Some observations....

- Leadership – research plan
- Division of labour
- International visibility
- Cooperation among the centers
- Needed national additional finance
- Exit strategies

For new centers

- Prioritized areas
- Co-financial scheme
- Standardized procedures - simplifications



NORDERA – research based evaluation

FP7 ERA

- Identify good practice on research and innovation programme coordination
 - Assess how lessons learnt can be of value for further development of ERA and NORIA as an integral part of ERA
- 1) Added value of cooperation?
 - Policy level
 - Programme level
 - Project level
 - 2) Success or failure?
 - 3) Contribute to realisation of ERA?

NORDERA - methods

- Official documents
- Qualitative interviews
 - Policy level: NCM, NORDHORCS
 - Programme level: national agencies, research councils
 - Project level: researchers, project leaders
- Quantitative survey
 - Bibliometric survey
 - Other relevant data on Nordic cooperation (statistics)

National CoE programs

- Danish National Research Foundation CoE, 2003
 - Scientific evaluation
 - CoE scheme evaluation
- Academy of Finland, 2009
 - Impact evaluation
- Research Council of Norway, 2010
 - Limited impact evaluation

In planning stage: an evaluation of sports research

- Finland, Norway, Sweden
- Common impressions of research field:
 - scattered, small groups
 - involves many different research disciplines
 - important for new platform on "health and welfare research"
 - lack of insights on strengths and weaknesses

Purpose

- Form strategies to develop scientific quality and practical applications
- Disclose focus and scattering of disciplines
- Overall quality – strong and weak areas
- Quality factors:
 - Strategic issues
 - Human resources
 - Doctoral training and researcher career development
 - Infrastructure
 - External funding
- Level of funding
- Science-society interaction
- Future prospects

Added value in the Nordic context

- Comparisons between countries in addition to within one country
- Possible deeper insight in the field's strengths and weaknesses, since at least some areas are scarce
- Show potential for increased cooperation among both researchers and funding agencies
- Common solutions to similar problems
- Probable international interest even outside Nordic countries, since impacts from national evaluations mostly remain at the national level

Nordic cooperation



Gains

- Efficient utilisation of common resources
- Utilisation of scientific equipment and national data-bases
- Cost effective use of common ICT-infrastructures
- High quality PhD-schools

Challenges

- Achieving a good selection of processes of priority areas
- Time constraints and better coordination of strategic and budgetary processes in the national research councils
- Achieving more long-term cooperation between institutions and research groups