Nordic Research Collaboration and Evaluations

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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.
North America

Nordic Countries

EU Framework program

New Economies: China, Japan, India...

South America

Global partners
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
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
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-sCHO

**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