NordForsk

## 1. Overriding objectives

1.1 The overriding objectives for NordForsk are to contribute to strengthen and further develop the Nordic region as one of the most dynamic regions in the world for research and innovation and thereby enhance the international competitiveness of the Nordic countries and the living conditions of the populations in the region.

1.2 The primary task of NordForsk is to promote efficient co-operation between the Nordic countries, in terms of research and researcher education of the highest international quality. The aim is to contribute to the further development of research and the use of research results in education, for innovation in trade and industry, in administrative and political decision-making processes and as a basis for improving the living conditions of the populations in the region.

1.3 NordForsk will concentrate its efforts to research areas where the Nordic countries have an international position of strength, but can also choose to promote strategically important areas where the countries consider that joint Nordic efforts would enable the desired development of research and education competence of international quality and strength to be achieved more rapidly. Nordic positions of strength will be made visible through the work of NordForsk.

1.4 The primary basis for the initiatives of NordForsk will be national priorities, as expressed in national programmes or in initiatives taken by the research councils, universities, other research institutions, etc.

1.5 Co-operation on concrete ventures concerning research or researcher education should normally imply binding financial commitment by at least three countries. NordForsk will provide support for marginal financing of the total project and programme costs and can also finance preliminary studies.

## 2. Activities and tasks

2. 1 NordForsk will function as a co-operation body between national research-funding bodies. This co-operation is intended to include all stages of research, from basic research to more practical research applications. NordForsk will take initiatives on its own but also give opinions and comment on initiatives from the research community and universities/ colleges. NordForsk will thus have three functions: co-ordination, funding and policy-making.

2.2 In terms of external activities, the links between the Nordic Council of Ministers and NordForsk will be elucidated for the purpose of strengthening the Nordic profile and

contribute to benefiting the Nordic countries through the Nordic added value created by the activities of NordForsk, in addition to the purely topical results of the co-operation.

**2.3 The co-ordinating role involves:**

2.3.1 Co-ordination of important research priorities that have been identified as suitable for joint Nordic efforts. Activities can be identified both by NordForsk and the research community;

2.3.2 Co-ordination and planning of infrastructure investments that cannot be carried out by an individual country.

**2.4 The funding role of NordForsk implies:**

2.4.1 Provision of financial support to relevant Nordic research efforts together with the national bodies for research funding;

2.4.2 Decisions on joint efforts within the field of researcher education, such as Nordic research schools;

2.4.3 Financing of preliminary studies or investigations that can serve as a basis for decisions on Nordic activities.

**2.5 The policy-making role involves NordForsk acting as an advisory body to the Nordic Council of Ministers in the field of research, and:**

2.5.1 Taking initiatives to create a forum for a debate on research policy issues between the ministers responsible for research, officials, administrators and researchers on current challenges – a debate that may, in turn, provide inspiration for drawing up a forward-looking research and innovation policy;

2.5.2 Advising the Education and Research Ministers Council (MR-U) and other Councils of Ministers on concrete issues, either at the request of the Council of Ministers or at its own initiative.

## 3. The responsibilities of the Board of NordForsk

3.1 The Board of NordForsk will be appointed by and report to the Education and Research Ministers Councils (MR-U).

3.2 The Board will have the overall responsibility for the activities of NordForsk and employer responsibility for all staff members, with the exception of matters relating to the appointment and dismissal of its Director.

3.3 The Board is responsible for the long-term strategic planning based on the objectives laid down for NordForsk by the Council of Ministers. Within the framework stipulated by the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Board will serve as a policy-making body within the fields of activities of NordForsk and will deal with matters of major importance concerning the

objectives, activity focus, organisation, economy, budget and staff policy of NordForsk. The Board will also ensure follow-up and regular evaluation of the results.

3.4 The NordForsk Board will monitor and be responsible for the activities of NordForsk by drawing up guidelines for the Director and ensuring their follow-up.

## 4. The composition of the NordForsk Board

4.1 The NordForsk Board will have nine members and seven observers. The members will be appointed on the basis of their central positions in the national/Nordic research system. The Board members will possess profound knowledge of research, researcher education, innovation and research policy, as well as in the fields of management, administration and financial control.

4.2 Board members (with decision-making rights)

4.2.1 Five (5) representatives of the national research-funding bodies (councils/boards, etc.) in the Nordic countries, appointed by the ministers responsible for research;

4.2.2 Three (3) representatives appointed by the co-operation organisation for Nordic universities and colleges (NUS);

4.2.3 One (1) representative of an enterprise carrying out research, appointed by the Nordic Council of Ministers for Trade and Industry (MR-N).

4.3 Observers with the right of initiative and the right to express opinions, but without decision-making rights

4.3.1 Three (3) representatives of the research-funding bodies in the autonomous territories, appointed by the ministers responsible for research;

4.3.2 One (1) joint representative of the national research-funding bodies in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania;

4.3.3 One (1) representative appointed by the secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers;

4.3.4 One (1) representative appointed by the staff of the NordForsk Secretariat;

4.3.5 The director of NICe (the Nordic Innovation Centre).

4.4 Board members and observers will normally be appointed for a period of four years with the possibility of extending their term by another two years. However, if special conditions prevail, the Council of Ministers may appoint Board members and observers for shorter periods.

4.5 Equality of opportunity shall be aimed at when appointing the Board members.

4.6 A staff representative has the right to participate in the work of the NordForsk Board, in accordance with the co-determination rules in the country of domicile. It is up to the Board to decide when the staff representative will not be allowed to participate in the work; for example, when the Board is dealing with matters concerning salaries and staff issues, such as specific salary adjustments.

4.7 The risk of bias should be avoided in the appointment of Board members. A Board member must not participate in the handling of matters in which the member has a personal interest or may play a double role. All members have a duty to inform the Board if and when there is a risk of bias.

## 5. The working methods of the NordForsk Board

5.1 The Board will elect its chairperson and vice chairperson among the five representatives of the national research-funding bodies. The chairmanship will rotate between the countries. The chairperson and the vice chairperson are elected for two years with the possibility of extending this term by another two years. The election of the chairperson and the vice chairperson shall be notified to the Nordic Council of Ministers.

5.2 The Board forms a quorum when six members from at least three Nordic countries are present.

5.3 The Board should aim at taking decisions through agreement. If no agreement can be achieved, each member has one vote. Decisions are taken with simple majority. If the numbers of votes are equal, the chairperson has the casting vote.

5.4 The Board will meet at the decision of the chairperson or at the request of at least two members of the Board.

5.5 Minutes should be kept during Board meetings. The minutes should be submitted to the secretariat of the Council of Ministers for information.

5.6 The Director normally serves as rapporteur at Board meetings. The Director also has the responsibility for preparing the matters to be dealt with by the Board, as well as for executing the Board’s decisions.

## 6. The decision procedure of the Board

6.1 The Board may take decisions at ordinary meetings, in telephone conferences, video conferences or through correspondence.

6.2 The Board may delegate decisions that are not of a fundamental or major nature to working committees, other committees, the chairperson or the Director.

## 7. Secretariat

7.1 The NordForsk Secretariat will consist of a Director and staffing, the size and topical competence profile of which will be decided by the Board on the basis of a staffing plan drawn up by the Director in accordance with the requirements that have to be met to perform the tasks of NordForsk.

7.2 The Director will have the primary responsibility for implementing the NordForsk working programme, within the framework laid down by the Board and with consideration of the statutes of NordForsk. The Director controls the funds appropriated to NordForsk. NordForsk should carry out its work in close contact with the Nordic Council of Ministers and the secretariat of the Council of Ministers.

7.3 The Nordic Council of Ministers or the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials will appoint or dismiss the Director after proposals from the Secretary General. The Council of Ministers or the Committee of Senior Officials or the Secretary General will lay down or amend the working conditions.

7.4 The Board will advertise the position of Director, consider the applications submitted and put forward proposals to the Nordic Council of Ministers on appointments.

7.5 Other senior or key employees of NordForsk will be appointed or dismissed by the Director after delegation by the Board. Other staff members will be appointed or dismissed by the Director. Staff members will normally be employed on four-year contracts that may be extended; however, with a maximum contract period of eight years. Other employment conditions are regulated through the "Agreement of December 9, 1988, on the legal status of employees in Nordic institutions" and other provisions issued by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The employees of NordForsk are independent of the national administrations.

## 8. Financing and economy

8.1 The work of NordForsk is wholly or partially financed through the budget of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The "Financial Regulation for Activities Financed through the Budget of the Nordic Council of Ministers" and the inter-Nordic audit regulation for funds granted by Nordic parliaments to the Nordic Council of Ministers apply to the Nordic Research Board. In addition to this, the Council of Ministers for Co-operation (MR-SAM) may draw up further financial and administrative instructions.

8.2 NordForsk is included in the contract steering system of the Nordic Council of Ministers. NordForsk draws up a draft contract that includes, among other things, the objectives and central criteria for successful implementation. These contracts should, i.a., form the basis for regular independent evaluations with a view to assessing the results achieved and the administrative efficiency. The annual report of NordForsk, including the financial report, the report of activities and statistics, and the auditor's report should be submitted to the Nordic Council of Ministers by the NordForsk Board. The auditor's report should contain proposals for the Council of Ministers' decision regarding approval of the annual report.

## 9. Public access

9.1 With regard to public access to and control of the administration of NordForsk, NordForsk will comply with applicable rules in the domicile country.

## 10. Other provisions

10.1 NordForsk will have its seat in Oslo, until further notice.

10.2 The Council of Ministers for Research and Education (MR-U) will decide on amendments or additions to or repeal of these statutes. Any amendments, additions or repeals should be approved by the Council of Ministers for Co-operation (MR-SAM).

10.3 In the case of discontinuation of the work of NordForsk, all assets will go to the Nordic Council of Ministers