

Revitalization of the Nordics

Outcome sketch, mission group 4: Uncovering Nordic research and innovation clusters.

The challenges and lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis has been discussed at a series of webinars during the Fall 2020 with a combined total of 70 top leaders from all the Nordic countries supported by Mobilize Strategy Consulting. The top leaders are from universities, research institutes, private companies, innovation agencies, private research-financing funds, public research councils, and ministries. During the discussions, many valuable insights, experiences, reflections, ideas, and proposals were shared concerning how the Nordic countries could have used a strengthened Nordic collaboration to stand stronger in the handling of the pandemic.

Following the webinars, the steering committee has collected these inputs and provided the abovementioned common ambition for the future of the Nordic collaboration with the purpose of strengthening the region. To follow up on the conclusions from the webinar series it has been decided that 4 mission groups are to be established. The 4 groups will evolve around the following themes:

1. *Leadership development program*

Develop and design a leadership development program that spans across the Nordic countries and can develop (young) top leaders both professionally and personally.

Chair: Nikolaj Malchow-Møller (Rector at Copenhagen Business School)

2. *Open Nordic University*

Create more cohesion across the Nordic countries and hereby bundle and utilize the collective skills and resources from the national universities and educational institutions.

Primary focus on continuing education as the driver for national competence development.

Chair: Anne Borg (Rector at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology)

3. *Nordic digital green transition program*

Contribute to the green transition agenda as a strong intersectoral and Nordic region instead of individual countries, sectors, and institutions.

Chair: Ingrid Petersson (Director General at FORMAS – A Swedish Research Council for sustainable development)

4. *Uncovering Nordic clusters of research & innovation*

Gain a better understanding of the current strengths and potentials in the Nordic region and mobilize innovation with and around the universities.

Chair: Nina Kopola (Director General of Business Finland)

Aim for mission group 4

The aim for mission group 4 is to gain a better understanding of the current strengths and potentials of the research and innovations clusters across the Nordic region. We need to address the following:

- What can we learn from each other across the Nordic countries?
- How can we mobilize these clusters even more and make the collaboration between sectors such as universities, private companies, research organizations, funding agencies and innovation actors even better so they can contribute more and faster to the future societal transformations?
- How should the future innovation system around the universities be organized and governed so they can take advantage of more mission-and impact-oriented research activities at the universities?

Core topics for mission group 4

In order to unfold the potential of the group members and their insights and perspectives into the mission there will be a process with a kickoff meeting (online) and 3 online workshops during the spring 2021 to get and share inspiration and work with the topic. The workshops will be structured and facilitated by Mobilize Strategy Consulting appointed by NordForsk.

The overall webinars have identified the following topics that must be dealt with:

- In the future, we must develop the Nordic innovation system to make the vast knowledge of the universities more accessible to the private sector (both to large corporations *and* SMEs) and increase collaboration. There is no doubt that the universities and their collaboration with the private sector is an important piece in the national R&I puzzle.
- Bringing the universities' innovation efforts to the next level, as there is no doubt the universities make up an important piece of the R&I puzzle why it is necessary to establish an innovation system (clusters and ecosystems) around the universities. IPR legislation and the TTO system must be developed to handle the collaboration between sectors.
- Creation of common Nordic brands to support the Nordic innovation efforts at the EU and global level. This requires that we coordinate and collaborate across the Nordic countries to build these brands and positions of strength when it comes to the Nordic innovation system.
- More common Nordic funding for research, education, and innovation, to bring out and catalyze the potential synergies in creating more common innovation environments across the Nordic countries and sectors. This requires mutual funding at the Nordic level.

Therefore the following matters must be touched upon and discussed from a joint Nordic perspective at the workshops (and between them):

1. How to create a common benchmark?
2. How to enable that knowledge is brought to the table across the Nordics?
3. How to define best practice?
4. How to frame the role of management to succeed?
5. Which core barriers can be identified?
6. How to frame and define a call to action?
7. How to deliver a future governance framework and financing scheme?

Outcome sketch

The mission group is framed in order to deliver the following outcomes (first draft):

1. A manifest with a call to action focusing on:
 - Frame the Nordic potential and a common ambition
 - Mission oriented R&I is the future, and the Nordic innovation and cluster ecosystem must be based on the assumption
 - Nordic partnering can unlock a huge potential
 - It is necessary to bring the universities' innovation efforts to the next level
 - It is necessary to establish a financial, legal and incentivized framework for further Nordic partnering between universities and clusters etc
 - Update a common Nordic legal framework on IPR legislation and the TTO system
2. An outline and mapping of Nordic innovation actors
3. Develop a concrete setup for common Nordic cluster analysis that:
 - a. Has its base in mission oriented innovation
 - b. Can identify the strategic potential for the Nordics on the Global scene
 - c. Is cleared with a potential sponsor
4. Develop a playbook for revitalization the Nordic research and innovation clusters.