

# Co-operation among the Baltic and Nordic countries

Published: 02.07.2021.

The Baltic and Nordic countries are linked by common cultural, historical, political and economic ties. And they share an interest in the provision of stability, security and welfare in the Baltic Sea region and beyond.

A regular political dialogue and practical cooperation has been established between the Baltic and Nordic countries, with a potential for further development. Baltic-Nordic cooperation for the most part takes place within NB8 and NB6 formats; an active dialogue with the Nordic Council of Ministers is ongoing.

In continuing to develop cooperation with the Nordic countries, it is important for Latvia to facilitate people-to-people contacts, to support co-operation among local governments, academic, professional, cultural and non-governmental organizations and educational institutions, to promote tourism and to expand economic contacts.

[NB-8](#)

[NB-6](#)

[Cooperation among Nordic Council and Baltic Assembly](#)

[Cooperation among Nordic Council of Ministers and Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia](#)

---

## NB-8

The NB-8 (Nordic-Baltic Eight) format comprises Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. There has been ongoing active cooperation between the Baltic and Nordic countries since early 1990s. Under NB-8, regular meetings are held of the Baltic and Nordic countries' prime ministers, members of parliaments, foreign ministers, secretaries of state and political directors of Foreign Ministries, as well as expert consultations, where regional issues and current international developments are reviewed.

In the early days of Nordic-Baltic cooperation, after the Baltic States had regained their independence, joint activities of the Nordic and Baltic Foreign Ministries were coordinated by the country holding the chairmanship of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The Baltic States have engaged in coordinating the cooperation of the NB-8 Foreign Ministries on an equal footing since 2008. In 2010, for the first time, Latvia coordinated the cooperation among the NB-8 Foreign Ministries. During the year, NB-8 meetings were held at the level of Foreign Ministers, State Secretaries, political directors and others addressing topics on regional and international agendas; a report on Baltic-Nordic cooperation was also produced.

Key purpose for the development of the report was to evaluate the effectiveness of former cooperation between the Baltic and Nordic countries and make recommendations on how to strengthen it. Its authors were high-ranking experts from Latvia and Denmark – Valdis Birkavs, an ex-Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Latvia, and Soren Gade, an ex-Minister of Defence of Denmark, both appointed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of NB-8 countries. The report offered the analysis of the current state of affairs and future ambitions of NB-8 cooperation; it also contained 38 recommendations for practical initiatives.

[NB-8 Wise Men Report](#)

*Memorandum of Understanding to share diplomatic premises*

One of the measures for implementation of recommendations was the '[Memorandum of Understanding on Principles for Locating Diplomats within the Premises of the Parties' Missions](#)', signed on 30 August 2011 by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Baltic and Nordic countries. The document came into force in 2012. Under the Memorandum, Latvia has strengthened international cooperation and enhanced its own and the region's representation in third countries by sharing resources and

premises.

### *Rotational coordination*

The NB8 format is coordinated on a rotational basis. In 2021, the NB8 cooperation is coordinated by Finland, which has selected recovery of the economy after the shock caused by the pandemic as the cross-cutting theme for NB8 cooperation this year. This theme will be explored via digitalisation, innovation, and climate policies.

In 2020, the NB8 cooperation was coordinated by Estonia.

Latvia has been the coordinator of the NB8 two times – in 2016 and 2010.

### **NB-8 +**

#### *E-PINE*

The role of NB8 is increasing also in a global aspect. Since 2003, [Enhanced Partnership in Northern Europe](#) (e-PINE) has been active as a framework for consultations between NB8 and the United States. The e-PINE format of meetings is put into practice through organizing regular meetings for 8+1 Foreign Ministry Political Directors and foreign policy experts who discuss topics of current regional and international importance.

#### *The Northern Future Forum*

*The meeting format of NB8 countries and United Kingdom.* The first NFF was held in London on the initiative of the UK Prime Minister David Cameron in January 2011.

#### *NB8+Visegrad Group (V4)*

This is a format where Ministers of Foreign Affairs from NB8 countries and Visegrad Group countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) meet. In 2013, those were the Polish Foreign Minister Mr Sikorski and Swedish Foreign Minister Mr Bildt who came up with the idea to have a meeting of both cooperation formats. The meeting is co-organized by the coordinating country of the NB8 and by the country holding the presidency of the V4.

---

### **NB-6**

The NB6 (Nordic–Baltic Six) format comprises Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Sweden. The NB6 was established upon the accession of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania to the European Union on 1 May 2004. Within NB6, informal visits take place on the level of Prime Ministers and Ministers of Foreign Affairs for exchange of opinions on current EU issues. The NB6 Prime Ministers meet before European Council meetings, and the Foreign Ministers, for their part, align their gatherings with those of the EU General Affairs Council and EU Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels. Other meetings, for instance, of Ministers for European affairs, also convene on regular basis.

---

### **Co-operation between the Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly**

The Nordic Council (NC), established in 1952, is an organization for parliamentary co-operation among the Nordic countries, which involves members of parliament delegated by the five Nordic countries (Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Finland and Sweden) and three autonomous territories (Åland Islands, Faroe Islands and Greenland). The Nordic Council has a permanent secretariat located in Copenhagen.

Each calendar year one Nordic country presides at the Nordic Council. It is customary to have the state holding the chairmanship

at the Nordic Council of Ministers preside at the Nordic Council the following year. In 2021, the presiding country of the Nordic Council is Denmark.

The Nordic Council and the [Baltic Assembly](#) (BA) agreed on cooperation in 1992. Since 2006, annual meetings of the Baltic Assembly and Nordic Council presidiums have been held, with participation of the heads of joint committees, as well as themed meetings and joint committee conferences. Active cooperation takes place between parliaments and their standing committees. The heads of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the Baltic and Nordic parliaments hold meetings on a regular basis.

---

## The Nordic Council's co-operation with Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia

The Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM), set up in 1971, is an organization dealing with cooperation among the governments of the Nordic countries. The NCM comprises the same member countries as the NC. The NCM has a standing secretariat, located in Copenhagen. The formal responsibility for the work of the NCM lies with the Prime Ministers of the Nordic countries but in practice the NCM work in each Nordic country is coordinated by a Nordic Cooperation Minister and a Nordic Cooperation Committee.

The Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers rotates between the five Nordic countries and is held for a period of one year.

In 2021, the presiding country of the NCM is Finland. The Finnish Presidency will continue to advance Our Vision 2030, a declaration that was adopted by the Prime Ministers of the Nordic countries in 2019, to ensure that by 2030 the Nordic region becomes the most sustainable and integrated region in the world. The priorities of the Presidency are as follows: a green Nordic region, a competitive Nordic region and a socially sustainable Nordic region. The Finnish Presidency intends to continue the work begun by previous presidencies as well as to work on implementing the action plan agreed for 2021–2024. The Presidency Programme stresses the importance of working together and improving existing cooperation, especially when it comes to mobility and preparedness for future crises, it also emphasises the participation of Åland, the Faroe Islands, and Greenland in Nordic cooperation. Some of the areas that Finland wants to promote include circular economy of the construction industry and cross-border digitalisation. For more information, please see the [Programme](#) of the Finnish Presidency in the NCM.

In 2020, Denmark was the presiding country of the NCM.

Nordic Council of Ministers webpage: [www.norden.org](http://www.norden.org)

Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Latvia: [www.norden.lv](http://www.norden.lv)

<https://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/co-operation-among-baltic-and-nordic-countries>