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***Spatial planning as an
instrument for promoting
sustainable development
in the Nordic countries
Action programme for 2001–2004***

Spatial planning as an instrument for promoting sustainable development in the Nordic countries. Action programme for 2001–2004

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ISBN 87-601-9466-9

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This publication was completed in November 2001.

Printed in Denmark.

This publication has been granted the Nordic Swan Label.



Preface

The Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning in the five Nordic countries agree that the role of spatial planning in promoting sustainable development should be more clearly emphasized. Spatial planning has the potential to integrate the three interdependent dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

The Nordic strategy for sustainable development underscores the necessity of integrating environmental considerations and the principle of sustainable development into all sectors of society. *Sustainable development – new bearings for the Nordic countries* comprises the overall framework and the starting-point for preparing the Nordic strategies and action plans for specific areas. To implement the strategy, the Ministers responsible for the Environment in the Nordic countries have approved the Nordic Action Programme for Cooperation on the Environment for 2001–2004. The strategy and the Action Programme have mainly focused on economic and legal instruments. In addition, it is intended that *Spatial planning as an instrument for promoting sustainable development in the Nordic countries – action programme for 2001–2004* will guide and develop spatial planning as a third instrument to achieve the objectives of the Nordic strategy.

Spatial planning as an instrument for promoting sustainable development in the Nordic countries – action programme for 2001–2004 was prepared by a Nordic working group under the auspices of the network of cooperation between leading Nordic planning officials. The programme includes both long-term objectives and specific activities for the years 2001–2004. One manager is responsible for each of the four priority action areas. The Nordic Forum of Leading Officials for Spatial Planning is responsible for coordinating implementation and will report on progress in implementation to the Ministers responsible for the Environment and for Spatial Planning in the Nordic countries.

Copenhagen, 30 October 2001

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	<i>European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) and Expert Group on the Urban Environment</i>	
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	<i>European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT)</i>	
	<i>The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (Helsinki Commission – HELCOM)</i>	

1 Introduction

1.1 The political initiative

At the meeting of the Nordic Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning in Bornholm, Denmark on 6 September 2000, the Ministers decided to prepare a memorandum on the role of spatial planning in promoting sustainable development. In addition, a Nordic action programme for developing spatial planning as an instrument for promoting sustainable development was to be prepared. The memorandum and the action programme are intended to serve as independent annexes to *Sustainable development – new bearings for the Nordic countries*, the Nordic strategy for sustainable development.

Strategies for sustainable development are currently being worked on in many different contexts. These include various local, regional, national and international geographical territories and various sectors of society. Given this context, more forcefully emphasizing the role and potential of spatial planning in achieving sustainability is important.

The Nordic Prime Ministers and the political leaders of the self-governing areas adopted the Declaration on a Sustainable Nordic Region on 9 November 1998. The Nordic Prime Ministers asked the Ministers responsible for Nordic Cooperation and for the Environment to prepare a strategy for sustainable development in the Nordic countries: *Sustainable development – new bearings for the Nordic countries*. The strategy includes objectives and initiatives for six sectors of society and five cross-sectoral action areas. Nevertheless, the strategy does not include any spatial planning dimension and thus does not focus on the potential of planning to promote sustainable development across sectoral boundaries. Spatial planning has special potential as a coordinating instrument to integrate environmental, economic and social considerations into sectoral policies.

In addition, the Nordic countries are planning to prepare national strategies for sustainable development, and some have been published. In 1998, Finland published a national action programme for sustainable development that is now being evaluated. A decision will be made on whether to prepare a new programme based on this evaluation. In June 1997, the Government of Norway approved a report to the Storting on environmental policy for sustainable development that expands the ecological perspective in the Government's Long-term Programme for 1998–2001. In June 2001, the Government of Denmark published *Prudent development – a shared responsibility*, a national strategy for sustainable development. Some of the action areas of the strategy apply to spatial planning (transport, urban and housing development, tourism, the principle of public access to information and local Agenda 21 activities). In early 2001, Iceland's draft strategy on sustainable development for 2001–2020 was published. The Government of Iceland plans to approve the final document in late 2001 or early 2002 after public debate during 2001. Sweden is working on a national sustainable development strategy, and the draft is expected in November 2001.

The European Commission is also working on a strategy for sustainability for the European Union.

The Nordic Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning agreed during their meeting in Bornholm that the role of spatial planning in ensuring sustainable development needs to be more clearly underscored. Stronger Nordic cooperation on developing planning as an instrument for promoting sustainable development therefore needed to be initiated. The first result of this cooperation is an action programme for using spatial planning as an instrument for promoting sustainable development. The action programme is included in Chapters 3 and 4.

1.2 Aims

This document describes the potential of spatial planning in coordinating efforts to promote sustainable development across sectoral boundaries. This thereby emphasizes that spatial planning can be used as an instrument to ensure a comprehensive approach to the numerous initiatives taken to promote sustainable development. This document supplements *Sustainable development – new bearings for the Nordic countries*, the Nordic strategy for sustainable development.

The other aim is to use the Nordic action programme to initiate projects that support sustainable development. These include specific initiatives for research and synthesis with the aim of developing spatial planning as an instrument. The projects outlined in the action programme build on numerous existing initiatives within the Nordic and European cooperation on spatial planning and regional policy or within the individual Nordic countries.

The concept of planning will continue to be used in a broad perspective. Spatial planning is broader than traditional town and country planning focusing solely on the physical form and design of specific development projects.

1.3 Spatial planning and sustainable development

Sustainable development means development that meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development involves a process of change in which the use of resources, the management of investment, the general direction of technological development and changes in institutions are harmonized with both future needs and present needs (in accordance with the definition of sustainable development of the World Commission on Environment and Development). Sustainable development requires improving the integration of three interdependent dimensions of development: economic, social and environmental.

Spatial planning can be used as an instrument to coordinate socioeconomic development by preventing environmental problems and simultaneously protecting the natural environment and the cultural environment. The challenge for planning is to ensure the efficient use of limited land resources and to contribute to balanced regional business development and balanced use of resources, including natural and landscape resources, soil, water and air. Since spatial planning has a long-term perspective, it can also include important principles of sustainability.

Based on this, using spatial planning to promote sustainable development involves striving to view the concepts of *development* and *protection* as being complementary rather than contradictory.

Spatial planning is used to create solutions that are bound to specific geographical territories. Sustainable development cannot solely be achieved at the local level. Spatial planning enables various territorial dimensions to be considered: local, regional, interregional and global. Spatial planning as an instrument creates solutions that target specific geographical territories while the solutions are integrated with solutions in other larger or smaller territories.

Spatial planning can coordinate various aspects of socioeconomic development across the sectors of society: urban development, development in rural districts, urban-rural relationships, the development of infrastructure and environmentally sound use of land and natural resources. Planning procedures are based on and should be developed further to ensure the involvement of the public in a democratic decision-making process so that various societal interests can be weighed and balanced in decisions on development.

2 The potential of spatial planning to contribute to sustainable development

How can spatial development contribute to achieving the sustainable development of society? This chapter provides examples of aspects of development in which the challenges involve several sectors of society and an intersectoral solution is therefore required (section 2.1). The sectors involved could include service and industrial sectors, housing, the labour market, transport, tourism or agriculture. In these cases, spatial planning can coordinate the efforts of various sectors to promote sustainable development. The next topic is public participation in the planning process, corresponding to the democratic participation required by the concept of sustainable development (section 2.2). Two instruments are then described that can improve the quality of the planning and thereby improve a comprehensive effort to achieve sustainable development (section 2.3). Finally, the chapter discusses the need to develop spatial planning as an instrument in the Nordic countries and describes the choice of priority areas in the action programme (section 2.4).

2.1 Integrating sectors through spatial planning

Regional planning and business development

The regional approach to planning provides comprehensive development while respecting the distinctive characteristics and competencies of regions and local areas.

Sustainable regional business development relies on the competencies and strengths of a region in meeting the challenge of international competition. This requires increased cooperation between urban regions instead of attempts to vanquish potential competing cities within the region. Planning and extensive cooperation between cities in the form of city networks can ensure that the region's infrastructure and service functions are used more efficiently.

The changes in business development are forcing regions to redefine their role in meeting the challenges of increased globalization and international competition and to focus on their strengths. Based on analysis of a region's competencies and distinctive characteristics, planning can contribute to finding initiatives that can promote business development. Such analysis should determine the need for business sites, the designation of undeveloped land for business purposes and location requirements applicable to the specific type of business development in the region. Business development in the Nordic countries is becoming increasingly oriented towards services and knowledge-intensive industries. This changes the requirements for the physical surroundings compared with previous production processes. These changes in business development mean that economic growth may be decoupled from increasing the environmental impact.

Example: National guidelines for land use in Finland

The Government of Finland adopted national guidelines for land use for the first time on 30 November 2000. The guidelines were prepared in an interactive process with the Parliament, several ministries, the regional councils and the regional environmental centres (regional units of the state environmental administration). In addition, information has been disseminated through the Web.

The national guidelines detail the general aims of the Land Use and Building Act, which are to organize land use such that it creates the basis for a favourable living environment and to promote development that is ecologically, economically, socially and culturally sustainable.

The guidelines also promote the implementation of international conventions and agreements on the protection of the cultural environment, biological diversity, climate change and regional development in a European perspective.

The guidelines have been divided into the following categories:

- a well-functioning regional structure;
- a more coherent settlement structure and the quality of the living environment;
- the cultural and natural heritage, outdoor recreation and natural resources;
- a well-functioning communication network and energy supply;
- special issues related to the Helsinki region; and
- areal entities of outstanding interest as natural and cultural sites.

The prerequisites for achieving the guidelines are promoted through spatial planning and the initiatives adopted by state authorities, which are required to promote opportunities to achieve the guidelines as part of their activities. Planning by the regional and municipal councils converts the guidelines into specific activities by considering the distinctive characteristics of each individual district and ensuring that they are coordinated with the regional and local objectives. Regional planning includes a regional land-use plan and a regional development programme. The regional council is responsible for preparing both of these.

Example: Regional cooperation to promote business development in Denmark

Local identity and new challenges, Denmark's national planning report launched in 2000, was the vehicle the Government of Denmark used to designate two new national centres in Denmark. One is the Midwest Region, a city network between Herning, Ikast, Holstebro and Struer in Ringkøbing County in western Denmark. The Midwest Region is known for its textiles and clothing industries and, more recently, for the wind turbine industry. The Midwest Region is also often associated with the entrepreneurial spirit that characterizes this part of Denmark, as many people have the will and courage to start new businesses.

The executive board of the Midwest Region has decided to prepare a strategy for business development for this national centre. This strategy is being prepared in cooperation with the regional actors in promoting business development, with Ringkøbing County and with the Ministry of Environment and Energy, Spatial Planning Department.

The strategy for business development will be based on analysis of the specific strengths and competencies of the Midwest Region because they are decisive for development in the years to come, comprising the economic role of the Region and its competitive parameters. Thus, the strategy will target both the well-known traditional companies on which the regional economy has been based for many years (woodwork and furniture manufacturing and food products) and the new growth sectors (such as information and communication).

A spatial planning strategy will be prepared as an integral aspect of the Region's strategy for business development. The planning strategy is prepared such that the spatial design of the national centre creates new frameworks and promotes the potential for development in the Region. Spatial planning will be used to determine where companies can and will be located, how development can be initiated at derelict industrial sites and for other regional challenges.

Integrating the spatial planning strategy into the strategy for business development will create excellent potential for companies, actors promoting business development and planners to collaborate in creating the basis for sustainable business development in the Midwest Region.

Sustainable urban development

Spatial planning contributes to achieving balance in urban development between using undeveloped land versus reusing old urban sites and promoting compact urban development.

Sustainable urban development requires preventing uncontrolled urban sprawl in the open landscape. Urban sprawl results in problems in land use and the environment such as increased use of undeveloped land, more transport and dependence on car transport, excessive infrastructure costs and increased use of energy. Compact development reduces the use of new land for urban development.

For example, spatial planning can revitalize old industrial and harbour sites or districts by converting them to take on new urban functions. Reusing old urban districts allows various urban functions to be integrated if this does not cause excessive adverse effects on the community environment. The new service and knowledge-intensive businesses can be integrated with other urban functions since they do not cause as many adverse environmental effects as does traditional industry. Mixed use can reduce the volume of commuting transport and promote the use of more environmentally sound modes of transport, especially public transport. The planning process can inspire new forms of cooperation and dialogue between various stakeholders in urban regeneration and potentially achieve public-private partnerships in implementing revitalization projects.

If undeveloped land is to be used in urban development, spatial planning can ensure that priority is given to areas in which development is scheduled to be followed up by investment in infrastructure instead of areas intended to be developed in the longer term.

Example: Planning for sustainable urban development in Norway

The municipal comprehensive plan for the Municipality of Kristiansand for 2000–2011 is aiming for more compact urban development. Development in various peripheral districts is being discouraged and priority given to increasing the density of already developed districts in and near the city centre and the district centres. Kristiansand is implementing a land-use policy that further restricts the development of undeveloped land and protects beaches and open-air recreational areas. Increasing density and encouraging urban development in the urban core is related to the desire to improve bus services in a strongly centralized bus axis. The Municipality has initiated a comprehensive project on the urban structure called Land and Bus. Public transport is to be bolstered by defining a main axis with nodes, examining the general planning framework in cooperation with relevant authorities, further developing a comprehensive plan for public transport and seeking funding to implement initiatives. Coordinating current bus routes into a “bus metro” will achieve service with 5-minute intervals on the central bus axis from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. and frequent evening service. Future urban development will largely comprise increasing density and urbanization around this public transport axis.

The Municipality has prepared a climate action plan that provides an overview of local emissions of greenhouse gases and the potential to reduce them based on technical and financial solutions and changes in attitudes. In addition, the Municipality is striving to extend the catchment area for district heating, which will have such positive effects as making use of waste heat from industry. The priority customers will be new public buildings, new high-density housing and existing public buildings with heating systems that already use circulating water. The concession area for district heating largely coincides with the area designated for the bus metro and increased residential density. The distribution network for district heating is aligned with the public transport axis and will thus strengthen the desired urban development.

Example: Comprehensive plan for regenerating and renewing a large industrial district in Denmark

A large industrial district in the Valby section of Copenhagen is near a main railway station and has been ripe for revitalization in recent years.

To spark this restructuring process, a diverse group comprising property owners, developers, the district council, the City of Copenhagen and the Ministry of Environment and Energy has prepared a planning framework for comprehensively regenerating this district from industry to an integrated urban centre. The district council has discussed this framework with the residents of Valby, and the City of Copenhagen followed up with a local plan and budgetary allocations. Agreement was reached on the plan, which owners and developers are now implementing.

This old industrial district will become part of an urban centre with attractive shops, new open squares, streets and designed urban space. Various types of housing, shops, service businesses, schools and recreational areas are being integrated. Conservation-worthy factory buildings are being renewed. Space is being created for culture, sports, theatre, music, a health centre and other local attractions. In addition, quality in architecture is being emphasized.

The regeneration and renewal of the industrial district demonstrates the potential of reusing existing industrial and commercial districts for modern urban development. Mixed use, short distances, public transport services, compactness and high quality are important factors in sustainable urban development.

Planning the structure of retail trade can promote the creation of attractive urban environments.

Appropriate location of shops and shopping centres ensures that retail trade will thrive in city centres and local centres. This ensures an ample range of goods for sale, excellent accessibility for all population groups and short distances to shops. Planning can counteract the increasing concentration of retail trade into large retail units and shopping centres. One way to do this is to establish maximum sizes and maximum floor space in specific areas in accordance with the regional structure of retail trade.

Transport and the environment

An appropriate location strategy can rationalize transport and thereby contribute to reducing transport-induced environmental impact.

Spatial planning can ensure that enterprises with commuting employees are located near stations to maximize the use of public transport. In addition, planning can promote the use of environmentally sound goods transport chains that combine several different modes of transport (intermodal transport).

The demand for transport is increasing. Rising international competition increases the division of labour between enterprises with divergent transport needs. Companies are implementing new business principles, such as just-in-time inventory, and inventory functions are being increasingly centralized. When the spatial planning process has designated transport regions and regional location strategies for enterprises and other functions have been prepared, the planning process can designate locations for transport and other technical installations, including goods transport centres, and zones for

specific companies and institutions. A transport-related strategy for determining location can also be the starting-point for planning that ensures the efficient utilization of existing infrastructure instead of building new infrastructure, which can save land for other purposes.

Example: The principle of planning location near stations as a strategy for urban development in Denmark

The principle of planning location near stations means that urban functions that generate substantial transport demand that can be suitably spatially concentrated (such as in office buildings) should be required to be located near transport nodes: the railway stations with the best service from anywhere. Regional planning in Greater Copenhagen is based on this principle.

Greater Copenhagen has a comprehensive structure of urban fingers (radial axes based on the “finger plan” from 1947) with numerous urban centres developed around railway stations and with undeveloped green wedges between the fingers used for such functions as agriculture and recreation.

As part of comprehensive urban development, implementing this principle provides benefits related to environment and energy, economic efficiency and the labour market and social equity.

Environment and energy. The carbon dioxide emissions of the transport sector are stabilized and reduced. Transport is converted from car transport to more energy-efficient and environmentally sound modes.

Economic efficiency. The substantial public investment in public transport is utilized optimally. Employees have optimal access to companies.

Labour market and social equity. Families without a car have good accessibility. Only about half the families in Greater Copenhagen have access to a car.

The regional planning process in Greater Copenhagen has designated more than 40 public transport nodes and city centre terminals on the suburban and metropolitan railway network and the regional railway network. Office buildings and similar functions must primarily be located on sites within 500 metres from a transport node and secondarily between 500 and 1000 metres from one. Surveys of transport habits have demonstrated that a pattern of location near stations promotes the use of more environmental sound modes of transport.

The principle of requiring location near stations is also being adopted in regional planning outside Greater Copenhagen. Aarhus County (western Denmark) will be linking urban growth and public transport to reduce the volume of transport. Residential and business districts will be planned together with efficient public transport service. Urban functions creating substantial demand for transport, such as large companies or institutions with many commuting employees or visitors, should be located near public transport nodes that are easily accessible.

Example: Public bus transport in villages in Iceland

Public transport in Iceland has increasingly been abandoned as the use of private cars has increased and the road network has improved. The result is an explosive increase in motor-vehicle transport, both cars and goods transport, which increases emissions of air pollutants. This trend creates difficulties for the residents of outlying areas and strongly reduces the opportunities for tourism.

Based on this trend, the public bus services in rural areas were investigated, with specific focus on three regions that are not bolstered by having any large settlements nearby: western Iceland, an agricultural region; Skagafjörður in northern Iceland; and Djúpvogur in eastern Iceland. The investigation resulted in proposals intended to improve the opportunities to maintain regular bus service in various parts of Iceland. The catchment population varied substantially in the regions investigated. The results indicated that public transport should be planned at a level that is closer to the people who need the services. Thus, the planning should be carried out within municipal planning and in cooperation with actors in the transport sector.

Iceland has no administrative level between the state and the municipalities and thereby no specific regional boundaries to delimit service areas for public transport. Although Iceland has no mandatory regional planning for specific geographical regions, the report based on the investigation recommended implementing geographical delimitation that considers the potential for public transport. This requires each municipality to create a company for coordinating all public bus transport. The report proposes classifying settlements into urban areas, rural areas near population centres, more remote rural areas and very thinly populated areas.

The report also describes a proposed division of labour for future cooperation between the state, municipalities and private bus companies. For example, the report proposes repealing the current reduction in motor-vehicle weight taxes on buses and that the public sector instead should purchase specific services from companies and individuals based on contracts lasting 3–5 years.

After legislation was amended in May 2001, Iceland's Public Roads Administration has been requested to work on implementing several of the report's proposals. A new scheme based on tenders is intended to be implemented in 2005.

Tourism

Spatial planning contributes to developing tourism so that it promotes the protection of the landscape and conservation of cultural environments and encourages local employment.

Spatial planning can prevent the natural heritage from being further destroyed. Vulnerable natural areas such as beaches and mountain areas are especially endangered by increasing tourism but also by the recreational needs of urban populations. Designating areas for holiday and recreational purposes can be based on a strategy seeking to develop the quality of such areas. For example, this means improving facilities for tourists and developing a type of tourism that respects the distinctive characteristics of the location, protects urban environments and natural and cultural environments and creates local employment.

Example: Planning for tourism focused on business development, culture and the environment in the Municipality of Åre, Sweden

Development in Åre

Tourism is important for the local economy in the Municipality of Åre in Jämtland County in central Sweden near Norway. Previous state efforts were certainly important for tourism but did not produce the expected results. The Municipality therefore initiated new efforts to develop Åre. The Municipality applied for and received state support for new Alpine ski trails under the condition that local businesses co-financed the project. The result was tremendous, with new shops and restaurants and capacity to accommodate about 2000 new overnight guests. Åre developed from scattered villages into a town.

The municipal planning

The existing area regulation became obsolete rapidly. To manage the expansion and to emphasize Åre's distinctive characteristics, the Municipality has adopted a comprehensive plan for the central village of Åre. The plan focuses on construction opportunities, culture, transport and parking. In addition, the plan had guidelines on building design and the environment. The strategy was to allow national romanticism to inspire the competition with the imported Alpine style. Then a comprehensive plan was prepared for the Åre Valley that concentrated on solving challenges related to land use, water and sewerage, the Alpine ski resort, other recreation, culture and national interests. A design programme was adopted in cooperation with business for signs, lights and the external environment. Finally, a municipal comprehensive plan could be adopted.

Future initiatives

Åreskutan (mountain) and the surrounding massif of national significance together with the charming well-supplied town provides a positive future perspective for Åre. Nevertheless, the competition between winter resorts is hard. The ski trails must be regularly renewed. Åre also needs complementary activities: more commerce, improved service and higher standards. The town needs to be developed to be attractive all year round.

A sustainable mountain environment

Many people have difficulty in integrating the concept of long trips to the mountains, plastic skis, ski lifts and groomed slopes with a sound approach to the environment. Nevertheless, Åre is accessible by train, and no car is needed. Åreskutan is exposed to considerable environmental impact but this spares the rest of the mountain range. In addition, tourism provides income that can be used for environmental initiatives and to protect the mountain areas of national significance. These initiatives are needed because tourists do not solely demand steep slopes and wild experiences. Pure air, clean water, raw nature and breathtaking prospects are becoming increasingly important to more and more people.

Biological diversity

Spatial planning can manage appropriate land use to ensure that nature is protected and biological diversity promoted and can contribute to integrating nature protection into the planning of agriculture, forestry, fisheries and installations in the open country.

Spatial planning can designate the location of valuable natural areas, vulnerable natural areas, buffer zones from which certain activities can influence vulnerable natural areas and wildlife dispersal corridors. Thus, spatial planning can comprise the basis for formulating differentiated demands and conditions applying to companies and farms or in connection with extracting raw materials, constructing transport installations and other activities. In addition, priority areas can be designated for special initiatives in nature protection and nature restoration.

Other interests associated with land use that influence biological diversity are related to such areas as valuable agricultural and forestry areas, coastal areas, wetlands or afforestation areas. Planning can establish a geographical overview of the areas with which the various interests in land use are associated. The planning process can weigh the numerous and varying interests in land use, such as urban growth, transport installations, intensive agriculture, intensive livestock farming and interests in recreation or protection, and this can create a balance between use and protection.

Example: Partnership in managing local resources in Norway

The Municipality of Aurland in Sogn & Fjordane County in western Norway manages natural and cultural assets of great national value. These areas are important to the tourist industry, and the state has proposed subjecting parts of Aurland (the Nærøy Fjord) to a conservation order. The property owners and a community that is having difficulty with declining population and a poor outlook for traditional economic sectors are in the centre of this clash of interests.

The challenge for Aurland was to take a positive attitude towards tourism and towards managing biological diversity. This community has worked to achieve management based on local responsibility, partnership and protection through active, sustainable use. The Aurland Nature Workshop was created as an active organization through a local Agenda 21 initiative and to follow up the municipal plan for managing nature and the landscape. The Aurland Nature Workshop comprises representatives of associations of property owners, the local mountain council, hiking organizations, hunting and sports fishing organizations, tourism-oriented businesses and the Municipality of Aurland. The Aurland Nature Workshop is a meeting-place for formulating management plans and promoting locally based business development.

The Aurland Nature Workshop is a new approach based on open dialogue and cooperation among equals: property owners and the public authorities. It is developing local capacity to act, responsibility and creativity with the aim of increasing economic activity based on sustainable management of biological diversity and Aurland's cultural landscape resources.

Interregional planning in border regions

This document has described how spatial planning can promote sustainable development by integrating sectors of society. Business development, urban development, urban-rural relationships, the transport structure and tourism should receive special attention in border regions, since development does not stop at national borders, and regions are created regardless of these borders. Independent cross-border regions are established when goods, services, labour, knowledge and culture are exchanged across national borders. Nevertheless, borders often severely inhibit this process. Various types of country-specific regulation and practice, such as different rules governing retail trade or the labour market, collide and pose problems for appropriate development in the region. In addition, the borders determine the economic and monetary framework, taxes and fees and often language, culture, habits, products and consumer priorities. Cross-border cooperation in spatial planning is especially important to ensure that the differences in regulation and practice do not result in inappropriate spatial development in these regions.

Example: Cross-border cooperation – the Municipality of Haparanda (Sweden) and the Municipality of Tornio (Finland)

At the border between Sweden and Finland in the Bothnian Arc, the Municipalities of Haparanda and Tornio have created a seamless Swedish-Finnish region. The cross-border cooperation has been developed and extended continually since the mid-1980s. In 1987, Provincia Bothniensis was established, an organization aiming to develop, extend and deepen the cooperation between these municipalities. Today the cooperation spans nearly all fields of municipal activity. They have built a joint district heating system and wastewater treatment plants, carried out joint investment in emergency services and developed common primary schools and language schools and a common upper secondary school programme (the European Gymnasium).

Cooperation intensified after Sweden and Finland joined the European Union; in 1995, Haparanda and Tornio declared themselves to be one city, Eurocity, with 35,000 inhabitants and 2000 businesses. The cross-border cooperation is now oriented towards integrating the spatial framework and activities of the twin cities. The spatial planning is also carried out jointly.

These municipalities are located in the Bothnian Arc, a region extending from Raahen in Finland to Piteå in Sweden. The objective for the region, including Haparanda and Tornio, is to use regional development planning to create a common vision on the future of the region and a strategy for development that can bolster the community and business development of the Bothnian Arc. This includes proper use of land and water resources and protecting the cultural heritage and natural resources. The planning is also intended to stimulate improved cooperation to make business more diversified and competitive. Another objective is to identify the position of the region within the European Union and to make the Bothnian Arc known in the rest of Europe.

In autumn 2000, the municipal councils in both cities approved a joint comprehensive plan for implementing a common city centre spanning the national border between the towns. One objective is to integrate the towns into a well-functioning whole. Another objective is that the city centre can comprise a model for European cooperation between neighbouring countries.

The project has distinctive advantages in relation to sustainable development. It supports the development of a spatial structure that can promote compactness and prevent urban sprawl on the periphery of the towns. In addition, the project can support the development of improved public transport. The planning for implementing this as an Interreg IIIA project began in spring 2001, and the project will be completed in spring 2003.

2.2 Democracy and public participation

Sustainable development includes democracy, and public participation in decision-making processes is important. The process of preparing and adopting plans encourages public participation by including the publication of plan proposals, the opportunity to make objections, public meetings and an appeals process. The process contributes to ensuring that various interests in land use or in a specific type of development can be considered and balanced. The public can participate in decisions on the overall direction of development.

The principles related to public participation in the spatial planning process consider the intention of local Agenda 21 processes and the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (the Aarhus Convention) adopted by the

Fourth Ministerial Conference in the “Environment for Europe” process in 1998.

2.3. Planning instruments

Strategic environmental assessment as an example of a planning method

Strategic environmental assessment is the assessment of environmental effects that precedes and supersedes the project level. Strategic environmental assessment includes the assessment of plans, programmes and policies. On 21 July 2001, European Union directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment entered into force.

Strategic environmental assessment can be considered a dynamic process in which the objectives or activities are assessed and reassessed as they are changed or adapted, including changes resulting from environmental assessment. This process weighs the positive and negative environmental effects associated with achieving the objectives themselves and of the various means being considered to achieve the objectives. The basic principles of strategic environmental assessment include:

- preparing reports on the environmental effects as a basis for making decisions;
- having established procedures for carrying out the assessment;
- investigating all the significant environmental effects that are likely;
- investigating and assessing relevant alternatives; and
- involving the public in carrying out the assessment.

The strategic environmental assessment of plans addresses the formulated objectives for the desired development and the framework to be established by the plans. Strategic environmental assessment in spatial planning can make visible the environmental objectives and contribute to more systematic synthesis of local or regional environmental challenges. Strategic environmental assessment can thereby make visible the priority to be given to environmental considerations in planning solutions.

Indicators as a monitoring instrument

Indicators are being developed in various contexts to monitor the achievement of objectives related to the environment and spatial planning. Specific indicators for spatial planning are being developed. The previous efforts to develop indicators in the Nordic countries have focused on sector-specific environmental indicators. In the Baltic 21 (see Annex) context, a report on indicators was prepared that does not contain specific indicators for spatial planning. Indicators relevant to spatial planning are included in the individual sector-specific indicators or in general headline indicators. More specific indicators for spatial planning are being developed under the auspices of Visions and Strategies around the Baltic Sea (VASAB) 2010 (see Annex).

The European Spatial Planning Observatory Network (ESPON) has been established under the Committee on Spatial Development of the European Union. The Network is an Interreg IIIB project extending until 2006. The Network is based on national institutions with special knowledge on spatial planning that can be involved in the monitoring work as needed. The Network has an operational programme of work with 50% co-financing by the European Union.

2.4 Developing spatial planning as an instrument for promoting sustainable development

The previous sections have described fields and examples of development in which spatial planning can consider the interests of several sectors of society and in which planning can coordinate these interests to promote sustainable development across the individual sectors. Spatial planning instruments can support this sectoral integration.

The Nordic countries need to develop planning and to use it effectively to find solutions to common Nordic features of development. The potential of planning in implementing the Nordic strategy for sustainable development should be investigated. Special attention should be focused on sustainable development in Nordic cities and towns and the associated challenges of transport. Much of the population lives in cities and towns, which have substantial economic, social and cultural activity.

In addition, planning methods need to be developed, such as the use of strategic environmental assessment. In this context, the Nordic countries can benefit from synthesizing shared experience with the aim of improving initiatives at the national level.

The action programme therefore selects four priority areas that are assessed to be most useful in the efforts to promote sustainable development in the Nordic countries:

- 1) new bearings for the Nordic countries – spatial planning and sustainable development;
- 2) urban policy – sustainable urban development;
- 3) border regions – promoting cooperation on spatial planning in border regions within the Nordic countries; and
- 4) developing methods and research – spatial planning for promoting sustainable development.

Each individual priority area outlines the background and the objectives for the initiatives, proposed activities and expected results.

3 A Nordic action programme for the use of spatial planning as an instrument for promoting sustainable development, 2001–2004

3.1 New bearings for the Nordic countries – spatial planning and sustainable development

Background

For some of the various strategies in *Sustainable development – new bearings for the Nordic countries*, farsighted spatial planning can be a complementary instrument in achieving sustainable development. This applies especially to transport but also energy; agriculture; forestry; business and industry; biological diversity; the natural and cultural environments; public participation in planning; and contacts and cooperation with the Adjacent Areas (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Northwest Russia and the Arctic region).

For the Nordic countries and their regions, issues related to structure and spatial and regional planning mainly focus on where infrastructure, regionally important functions, the residential community, workplaces and the natural and cultural heritage are to be located in relation to one another. How they are located strongly influences people's opportunities to organize their daily lives and thereby the volume of transport and the concomitant effects on immissions, noise and safety. Another important aspect is creating a sustainable urban structure and sustainable cities, towns and communities. Coherent green spaces in communities and the surrounding rural areas ensure a supportive human environment but also improve biological diversity. One way to encourage a sustainable network of urban communities is to link regional centres using rapid public transport. The Nordic countries' relatively small, remote and vulnerable local housing and labour-market catchment areas would thereby be transformed into a network of moderately large, coherent settlements with a distinctive identity that are easily accessible to one another. Such enlarged and diversified housing and labour markets provide more secure jobs and draw various business sectors closer to one another. The network will also comprise a structure to support rural areas with their smaller settlements and communities, where many people prefer to live near nature.

Achieving sustainable development in a Nordic perspective socially, culturally, economically and environmentally also requires developing the natural environment and the landscape in addition to the network of cities and towns in a new and creative manner. People must be able to identify themselves with the natural features and landscapes around their settlements just as much as with the features of the urban environment. The landscape around the cities and towns and the rural communities with their fields and forests will also need to be developed into part of a future society with a sustainable ecological cycle. The main focus here is energy supply with

renewable energy sources such as biomass and wind power, natural disposal of wastewater and negotiations with actors in the surrounding rural areas for environmentally sound disposal of such waste products as sludge and ash. Good local and regional spatial planning is required as an instrument to bring about workable comprehensive solutions.

The issue of the role of spatial planning in promoting sustainable development has been developed in a series of transnational Interreg IIC projects in recent years and will be developed further in several projects within the framework of the new Interreg III. In these projects the Nordic countries are cooperating with the countries around the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, and experience is increasing on the significance of spatial planning in promoting sustainable economic, social and environmental development in the Nordic countries and their nearest neighbours.

Objectives

- Minimizing the demand for transport through cooperation and regional planning between municipalities and cities concerning local housing and labour markets, transport and regionally important functions.
- Actively promoting well-functioning and energy-efficient regional and local public transport that has efficient and reliable connections to regionally important functions such as hospitals, educational institutions, workplaces, recreational facilities and areas and other transport nodes.
- Protecting and strengthening a well-functioning green structure that promotes biological diversity in cities and towns, at the regional level and in society as a whole.
- Developing alternative energy supply using such sources as wind power and biomass.
- Actively promoting approaches to the ecological cycle in urban areas based on cooperation with the surrounding rural areas.

Activities

- Identifying the initiatives and proposals in *Sustainable development – new bearings for the Nordic countries* for which planning can be an effective instrument. These include the spatial structure, policies on the location of regionally important functions and protecting the natural and cultural heritage. The project should be managed by Nordregio (the Nordic Centre for Spatial Development)¹ and be implemented as a collaborative project by the Nordic planning authorities.
- Holding several Nordic seminars on the issues of the role of spatial planning in *Sustainable development – new bearings for the Nordic countries* and the planning instruments that are likely to be required to implement this.

¹ Nordregio is a research and development institute for regional development and spatial planning established in 1997 by the Nordic Council of Ministers and located in Stockholm.

Expected results

- A preliminary study of the specific opportunities for spatial planning to support certain proposals and initiatives in *Sustainable development – new bearings for the Nordic countries*.
- Several Nordic seminars on the planning instruments likely to be required to implement *Sustainable development – new bearings for the Nordic countries* that result in an overview of specific future initiatives for the Nordic planning authorities.

3.2 Urban policy – sustainable urban development

Background

Current urban development uses substantial land and resources and causes severe pollution problems and is therefore not sustainable. Much of the urban population is exposed to noise and poor air quality, which adversely affects health in severe cases. Many cities and towns have excessive motor-vehicle traffic, especially during rush hour. Public transport service is poor and capacity is low, especially in the largest cities. Pressure for building new residential and business districts by developing valuable natural and recreational areas and agricultural land is great in many cities, both in urban and rural zones.

Promoting sustainable development requires confining more development within urban zones that are well connected to the public transport system. Old harbour, industrial and warehouse sites have considerable potential for urban development with new businesses, housing and cultural activities. Protecting the historical and cultural heritage through renewed use is an important strategy. Urban regeneration and centralized urban growth will reduce the pressure on land and natural resources, contribute to improved utilization of infrastructure and reduce the growth in motor-vehicle transport and thereby reduce the associated noise and pollution. This will also encourage a more diverse range of services and activities within walking distance from dwellings and workplaces. The challenges include developing attractive spatial environments in a more compact city, allowing space for constructing housing and renewing dwellings and making establishing new businesses easier.

More efficient use of land and greater economic activity in cities can increase the demand for transport. The challenges of transport cannot be solved solely by increasing capacity. It is crucial to establish a pattern of location that reduces the demand for transport and that is based on environmentally sound transport (in accordance with the ABC concept: ensuring that the right business is in the right location, with ranking according to levels A, B and C). Considering the interaction between the main road network and public transport is important. The role of bicycles as a mode of transport must also be bolstered, especially in large cities and towns. In addition, reducing the growth of motor-vehicle transport requires initiatives to regulate car transport. High priority should be given to reducing the environmental

problems associated with transport and to using cost-effective instruments that can enable environmental objectives to be achieved.

Promoting strategic land-use and transport planning in the largest cities is an important task. This requires comprehensive solutions for investing in and operating the transport system and integrating this with land use.

Objectives

- Strengthening the incentives for improving land use and transforming old industrial, warehouse and harbour sites in cities in the Nordic countries, including models for partnership with the private sector.
- Promoting more environmentally sound modes of transport to ensure accessibility for businesses and the population and to reduce the adverse environmental effects of transport.
- Encouraging strategic land-use and transport planning in urban areas to achieve a pattern of location for businesses and dwellings that promotes public transport.

Activities

- Surveying and comparing the planning instruments and means used for urban development in the Nordic countries with the aim of mutual improvement of knowledge.
- Finding examples of how urban regeneration projects have been organized in cities in the Nordic countries to promote the exchange of experience.
- Producing an overview of the efforts made in strategic land-use and transport planning and other spatial planning aiming to reduce the demand for transport and to promote environmentally sound transport in urban areas.
- Holding joint Nordic seminars on each topic to discuss experience and lay the basis for potential further cooperation.

Expected result

- Increased knowledge on how central authorities and cities in the Nordic countries solve the current challenges associated with urban planning using spatial planning and the associated instruments.

3.3 Border regions – promoting cooperation on spatial planning in border regions within the Nordic countries

Background

Business development, urban development, urban-rural relationships, the transport structure and tourism should receive special attention in border regions, since development does not stop at national borders and regions are created regardless of these borders. Independent cross-border regions are established when goods, services, labour, knowledge and culture are exchanged across national borders. Nevertheless, borders often severely inhibit this process. Various types of country-specific regulation and practice,

such as different rules governing retail trade or the labour market, collide and pose problems for appropriate development in the region. In addition, the borders determine the economic and monetary framework, taxes and fees and often language, culture, habits, products and consumer priorities. Cross-border cooperation in spatial planning is especially important to ensure that the differences in regulation and practice do not result in inappropriate spatial development in these regions.

The Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning in the Nordic countries initiated cooperation on Nordic planning topics in 2000. The first step was to prepare an overview of the spatial planning regulation governing retail trade in the Nordic countries. The cooperation so far has led to the conclusion that consideration should be given to how common Nordic requirements for a planning platform and environmental impact assessment can be formulated and how a consultation mechanism for border regions can be prepared in connection with the planning of retail trade and certain retail trade projects that affect the structure of retail trade in bordering countries.² At their meeting in February 2001, the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning decided to return to the topic of retail trade planning in early 2002 for such purposes as assessing the current situation.

Nevertheless, retail trade is only one topic in which strategic decisions (plans and programmes) can affect development in a neighbouring country or in an entire border region. Comprehensively assessing the challenges relevant to planning in border regions would therefore increase the value of the efforts in Nordic cooperation. The action programme should thus include specific initiatives that can support balanced and sustainable development in border regions.

Objectives

- Promoting balanced and sustainable spatial development in border regions.
- Promoting cooperation between various levels of authority (state, regions and municipalities) in neighbouring countries when spatial plans are being prepared that have cross-border effects in such areas as regional business development, transport and nature and the environment.
- Ensuring cohesion between Nordic initiatives in regional, environmental and transport policy; the structural policy of the European Union; and Visions and Strategies around the Baltic Sea (VASAB) 2010 Plus (see Annex).

Activities

- In cooperation between the Nordic authorities responsible for spatial planning, designating relevant border regions based on certain planning criteria, such as trends in retail trade; business development and the labour market; establishing and moving businesses; and cooperation on

² For more information, see *Planning for retail trade in the Nordic countries*, available at www.mem.dk/lpa/landsplan/Detailhandel/retail_trade_in_Nordic_countries.pdf or from one of the Nordic Ministries responsible for the Environment.

transport policy, tourism and cross-border interests in protecting nature.

- Initiating investigations to assess the existing plans and policies in border regions that have cross-border effects and to assess the geography of border regions.
- In cooperation with the Nordic authorities responsible for spatial planning, identifying (visualizing) the regional pattern of development and the development opportunities in border regions.
- In cooperation with the Nordic authorities responsible for spatial planning, preparing for the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning in the Nordic countries:
 - mutual consultation mechanisms in connection with strategic decisions (plans and programmes) with cross-border effects, such as those on the structure of retail trade in neighbouring countries; and
 - a political document on the desired development of regional policy in Nordic border regions.

Expected results

- Development of knowledge on the border problems relevant to spatial planning in the Nordic countries.
- A Nordic agreement or protocol on strategic environmental assessment and mutual consultation mechanisms for strategic decisions (plans and programmes) with cross-border effects (in accordance with Appendix VI to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context).
- A Nordic policy document on the trends in planning and regional policy that should be promoted in border regions and in bilateral or trilateral agreements concerning specific border regions.

3.4 Developing methods and research – spatial planning for promoting sustainable development

Background

Efforts to achieve sustainable development require a perspective that includes many sectors of society. The efforts of these sectors intersect in the spatial dimension of territory. Spatial planning therefore has an important role locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

On 21 July 2001, European Union directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment entered into force. This is also known as the SEA (strategic environmental assessment) Directive. Based on this directive and the expectations that both planning and strategic environmental assessment should contribute to sustainable development, it is important to initiate a joint Nordic research and development project. The project would especially focus on how strategic environmental assessment can be linked to spatial planning.

Important questions related to the need for joint Nordic research and development directly related to spatial planning include the following:

- How can strategic environmental assessment be implemented within the existing planning procedures in each country and how can the countries learn from one another?
- How can implementation of strategic environmental assessment strengthen the efforts to integrate environmental considerations in planning?
- How can the interests in development and the interests in protecting the environment be balanced within the framework of strategic environmental assessment?

Spatial planning to promote sustainable development can include several new planning methods and practices in the future. Both daily planning practice and the content of planning need to be reassessed from the perspective of sustainability. The following are examples of issues that may require more attention in the future in relevant planning contexts:

- planning for housing because of the effects of climate change;
- planning for management, protection and use of the landscape for such purposes as protecting biological diversity;
- planning for energy production, energy conservation and energy recovery;
- planning for increasing the ecological efficiency of agriculture, forestry and other sectors based on natural resources;
- planning the use and development of the marine environment and coastal ecosystems based on a societal perspective and a perspective on promoting biological diversity (integrated coastal zone management);
- planning for measures to create incentives with the aim of internalizing the costs of pollution into the economics of local industry; and
- planning water catchment areas to increase water quality and increase recipient capacity (for example, see the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (2000/86/EC) of the European Union).

Developing spatial planning instruments that contribute to planners being able to view spatial processes and institutional reforms in an integrated manner is crucial in a long-term perspective. New integrated spatial planning methods that include institutional analysis and design, improved and more transparent methods for participation and delegating authority and responsibility could be part of the planning instruments for promoting sustainable development in the Nordic countries.

The proposed Nordic research and development programme will encourage research in the fields mentioned below with the aims of assessing the barriers and opportunities related to developing planning practices that promote sustainability and of analysing the suitability and procedural requirements of various methods in relation to sustainable development.

Some of these methods have arisen from a reorientation of the environmental sciences as a result of increased attention focused on biological diversity, risk and resilience. Research using a group of ecosystem management approaches is therefore needed to test whether and how they can be implemented in planning and how they need to be modified to realize their potential.

Another group of planning instruments has arisen from institutional analysis within the framework of several disciplines, especially ones confronted with the empirical problems of public goods and common property resources. Research on institutional analysis and design is therefore required. Intellectual, administrative, political and cultural institutions influence planning systems, legislation, the professions that participate in planning and at what levels and how environmental, economic and social issues are weighed in relation to one another. Transformation towards sustainable development requires creating new content in planning but also establishing the institutions that can maintain this direction in the long term. The research foreseen here concerns not only institutions in relation to planning and decision-making but also designing fundamental property rights in relation to natural resources and sustainable development.

A third group of planning instruments has arisen from the planning and organization of international development institutions in conjunction with the need for comprehensive efforts to rebuild entire societies after war or other catastrophes. Research is needed on integrated resource planning, which links conventional sector-based national resource management and planning social welfare initiatives for urban and rural populations.

The need for integrative planning practice and methods for integrating various fields of knowledge is generally the key to spatial planning intended to promote sustainable development. The spatial planning of the future needs to develop approaches that are more integrative. This applies clearly to planning aquatic and marine environments at various levels. But the demand may become even greater within sectoral planning and regional development planning since planning to promote sustainable development is still in its infancy and since strategic environmental assessment has not yet been implemented very extensively.

Objectives

- *Short-term objectives (phase A).* Directly supporting *Sustainable development – new bearings for the Nordic countries* (the Nordic strategy for sustainable development) and the Nordic Action Programme for Cooperation on the Environment for 2001–2004. A pilot project will therefore be carried out with the aim of achieving an overview of the status of strategic environmental assessment and especially how it is linked to spatial planning in the Nordic countries. Based on this project, a research and development project will be formulated for which specific funds will be sought.
- *The long-term objective (phase B).* Developing new spatial planning instruments and contributing to new planning practices that can help politicians, users of resources and the public to choose more sustainable development paths in a long-term perspective. This is based on the assumption that sustainable development centres on people as an integral part of a life-supporting ecosystem. This, in turn, implies the need for more effectively including integrated resource planning, ecosystem considerations and institutional design as planning instruments. Thus, the Nordic efforts may be viewed as part of the overall efforts of the United

Nations, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Union aimed at initiating a process of transformation towards the institutional and practical realization of all the resolutions on sustainability adopted since the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development of 1992. Phase B may also be viewed as contributing to preparing the next Nordic programme of work and next Nordic strategy for sustainable development (2005–2008) in which institutional solutions and new planning instruments should be included. The objective is to propose new methods, activities and practices to improve the harmonization of environmental planning, spatial planning and regional policy planning.

Activities

- *Phase A.* A pilot project on the status of strategic environmental assessment and especially its relationships with spatial planning and the associated challenges in the Nordic countries will be carried out in 2001 and 2002. Nordregio is responsible for this. The individual Nordic countries, with support from Nordregio, will prepare overviews of the various types of strategic environmental assessment that are being implemented, especially within spatial planning and regional development planning as well as sectoral planning. The Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Regional Policy has granted DKK 300,000 (EUR 40,000) for the pilot project. Funds for continuing the project should be contained within the framework of the funds designated for phase B.
- *Phase B.* Phase B is a proposed research programme that will be started simultaneously with phase A. The intention is to propose that the research and development programme be organized as a joint activity of the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Regional Policy, the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Environmental Affairs and Nordregio, which would jointly comprise the programme committee. To minimize the transaction costs, Nordregio, as a programme management institution, would organize the practical aspects of the programme. Nordregio would be responsible for the scientific and administrative implementation of the programme and for ensuring the delivery of the expected results. The programme committee and the programme management institution would subcontract defined and limited research and development tasks to be carried out by research institutes and universities in the Nordic countries. The research and development programme proposed here, costing about DKK 4 million (EUR 540,000) per year, would be funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers through various relevant committees and institutions to promote optimum cooperation between various Nordic institutions.

Expected results

- *Phase A.* The results of the pilot project will be presented at a workshop. The workshop will aim to exchange experience and to discuss which research and development issues are the general focus of interest in the Nordic countries. The analysis and the workshop discussions will be documented in Nordregio's publication series. A proposal will be put forward on a project for research and the development of methods on a

topic of interest to all the Nordic countries. The continuation of this project comprises part of phase B.

- *Phase B.* Phase B will establish a research and development programme on the topic of spatial planning to promote sustainable development. This programme will investigate the following topics concerning their potential contribution to spatial planning for promoting sustainable development: institutional analysis and design, integrated resource planning, integrated planning practice and ecosystem management methods. This research and the evaluation of these topics are expected to lead to a point at which recommendations can be made on the implementation in the various Nordic countries, including the next phase of the Nordic strategy for sustainable development. In addition, evaluation of the first phase of the Nordic strategy for sustainable development (2001–2004) is also expected to produce several valuable results as input for developing new methods and practices. Together these comprise important contributions to spatial planning for promoting sustainable development, and they can therefore be demonstrated and tested in the next phase of the strategy for sustainable development. Research and development in the programme are expected to generally contribute to guidance and methods that can be integrated into the existing general structure of spatial planning in each of the Nordic countries.

4 Administration and financing

The Nordic Forum of Leading Officials for Spatial Planning will follow up the implementation of the action programme and will report on the progress in implementation to the Ministers responsible for the Environment and for Spatial Planning of the Nordic countries.

Each project is to be financed individually. The cooperation with Nordregio will be promoted, and financing for some projects can be applied for from the Nordic Council of Ministers (Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Regional Policy and Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Environmental Affairs) and the Interreg III programme of the European Union.

The Nordic Forum of Leading Officials for Spatial Planning is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the action programme.

One country will be designated as being responsible for implementing each of the four projects mentioned in the action programme.

- Sweden will be responsible for project 3.1: New bearings for the Nordic countries – spatial planning and sustainable development.
- Norway will take responsibility for project 3.2: Urban policy – sustainable urban development.
- Denmark is taking responsibility for project 3.3: Border regions – promoting cooperation on spatial planning in border regions within the Nordic countries.
- Finland is responsible for project 3.4: Developing methods and research – spatial planning for promoting sustainable development.

Annex

Initiatives to promote sustainable development within Nordic and European cooperation

This annex presents several initiatives within Nordic and European cooperation that are already working on aspects of sustainable development such as programme objectives, strategies or specific projects. Thus, the proposals made within the Nordic cooperation on spatial planning can be placed in a larger perspective.

The Nordic strategy for sustainable development: Sustainable development – new bearings for the Nordic countries

The Ministers responsible for the Environment in the Nordic countries adopted the Nordic strategy for sustainable development in November 2000 and presented it to the Ministers responsible for Nordic Cooperation for approval. The strategy emphasizes the necessity of integrating environmental considerations and the principle of sustainability into the relationships between sectors of society. The strategy contains objectives and initiatives for 2001–2004 and long-term objectives for sustainable development in the Nordic countries until 2020. The objectives and initiatives are formulated for five cross-sectoral action areas (climate change; biological diversity, genetic resources and natural and cultural environments; the sea; chemicals; and food safety) and for six sectors of society (energy; transport; agriculture; business and industry; fisheries, hunting and aquaculture; and forestry). This division of society into sectors does not produce a number of clearly delimited sectors. The strategy provides an overall framework and the starting-point for preparing Nordic strategies for sectors or cross-sectoral action areas and Nordic action plans.

The Nordic strategy for sustainable development builds on the concept of sustainable development defined in connection with Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and the work of the World Commission on Environment and Development. The strategy underscores the environmental dimension of sustainable development but also indicates that the social dimension must be included in the further development of the strategy.

The Nordic Action Programme for Cooperation on the Environment for 2001–2004 follows up the Nordic environmental obligations arising from the Nordic strategy for sustainable development. The Action Programme covers the priority areas of this strategy for 2001–2004 and focuses on several environmental issues and cross-sectoral issues. The priority issues are outlined: general and specific objectives, activities and expected results. The Action Programme is intended to contribute to increasing the integration of environmental considerations within the various sectors of society.

The Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Regional Policy

The Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Regional Policy has initiated several projects focusing on exchanging experience, disseminating expertise and building knowledge. One project led by Nordregio covers sustainable regional development in the Nordic countries. In addition, cooperation has been initiated with the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Industrial Policy on developing the concept of sustainable tourism in the Nordic countries.

In connection with the Nordregio project on sustainable regional development in the Nordic countries, it has been proposed that the links between economic, social and environmental sustainable development should be described more clearly in the Nordic cooperation on border regions and in joint Nordic initiatives. The Nordic strategy for sustainable development should focus more on the influence of economic development and spatial planning on sustainable development, especially at the regional level.

European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) and Expert Group on the Urban Environment

The European Union approved the European Spatial Development Perspective in 1999, and the Member States thereby focused in a new manner on territory as a new dimension in European policy. The ESDP describes a concept for balanced and sustainable development of the territory of the European Union. It emphasizes that sustainable development means not only environmentally sound economic development but also balanced spatial development. This means that social and economic objectives for developing a geographical territory must consider environmental and cultural functions to achieve sustainable development. The policy guidelines for the spatial development of the European Union outlined in the European Spatial Development Perspective are as follows:

- development of a balanced and polycentric urban system and a new urban-rural relationship;
- securing parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge (by promoting integrated transport and communication systems that support polycentric development); and
- sustainable development, prudent management and protection of nature and cultural heritage.

The European Spatial Development Perspective has thereby emphasized the potential of spatial planning in contributing to a sustainable future.

The European Union's Expert Group on the Urban Environment has worked with the concept of sustainable urban land use. In this context, a working group assessed all the programmes of the European Commission that are related to spatial planning. The working group focused on reusing urban land and reducing urban sprawl, integrated land use and the compact city, environmentally sound urban transport as well as consideration for the architectural and cultural heritage, increasing biological diversity and establishing green urban spaces.

Baltic 21 and Visions and Strategies around the Baltic Sea (VASAB)

Baltic 21 is a long-term partnership in the Council of the Baltic Sea States that is attempting to develop and implement a regional Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea region with the aim of achieving sustainable development in this region. Despite great differences between the economic, social and ecological development in these countries, they have agreed on common objectives for development in the region. The focus is on regional cooperation between seven business sectors, in the educational sector and in spatial planning. The processes related to Baltic 21 are characterized by long-term initiatives, regional cooperation, openness, transparency and democracy. The aim of specific initiatives is to support and supplement international, national and local initiatives in the Baltic Sea region.

VASAB 2010 (Visions and Strategies around the Baltic Sea) is a joint project of the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea countries initiated in 1992. This cooperation aims to achieve a common concept of

spatial planning in the Baltic Sea region. The common visions and strategies for spatial development describe the future urban system (“pearls”), the mobility network (“strings”) and natural features, cultural landscapes, islands, coastal zones and border regions (“patches”). There are joint projects on urban development and urban cooperation, development zones in relation to infrastructural development, urban-rural cooperation, sustainable tourism and management of coastal zones and the natural and cultural heritage.

The objectives and the action programme from 1994–1996 have been revised in the action programme VASAB 2010 Plus. One new initiative is a demonstration project on how spatial planning can contribute to sustainable development. The 5th Conference of Ministers Responsible for Spatial Planning and Development in the Baltic Sea Region approved VASAB 2010 Plus in September 2001.

European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT)

The European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning under the auspices of the Council of Europe approved the Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent in September 2000. The principles emphasize a territorial dimension of human rights and democracy and are based on subsidiarity, reciprocity and vertical cooperation. The objective is to achieve an acceptable standard of living for the populations of the Member States of the Council of Europe. Development policy is intended to strive for economic growth by increasing the integration of regional and transport policies and by promoting cooperation between the public and private sectors.

The document includes the following principles for sustainable spatial planning:

- balanced regional, social and economic development based on a polycentric model of development;
- the development of urban systems and urban-rural partnerships that produce synergy effects for business and increase the access of rural populations to urban functions;
- development of the pan-European transport network, which will support interregional development and integrated transport;
- reduction of the environmental problems associated with specific sectoral policies (such as agriculture, forestry and transport) and regenerating derelict areas; and
- active public participation in spatial planning processes.

The 12th Session of the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning in Hanover, Germany in September 2000 agreed on the importance of cooperating across the borders of Member States of the Council of Europe on specific projects that might be funded by the European Union.

The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (Helsinki Commission – HELCOM)

HELCOM is the first international organization dedicated to protecting the marine environment in the Baltic Sea. HELCOM was established in 1974 based on the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment in the Baltic Sea Area (HELCOM Convention) adopted the same year by the Baltic countries. In 1992, HELCOM initiated the Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme. Several working groups focus on preparing strategies, monitoring, marine pollution, land-based pollution, nature protection and management of coastal zones. Sustainable development is now a specific focus for all HELCOM activities.