

Background Twin Town Climate Cooperation 2007-2011

In 2007 the nordic cities of Aalesund, Lahti, Randers, Akureyri and Västerås met in Aalesund, Norway. Since then, we have had yearly meetings and we have had the chance to visit each town and learn more about each other. The topic for every meeting/conference have been "Climate change" and we have all signed a "Nordic climate declaration" which is the foundation in our cooperation. *See text below.* " All five member cities agree that the twin town climate cooperation is very useful. However, in Randers in 2010 we also agreed that it is crucial to the continuation of our work to develop a more structured and focused method of cooperation. Therefore, representatives from each city formed a steering group which since then has worked on establishing guidelines to improve the efficiency of our cooperation. These guidelines will describe how we wish to develop our cooperation.

NORDIC CLIMATE DECLARATION

The twin towns of Lahti, Västerås, Randers, Akureyri and Ålesund urge all Nordic cities and municipalities to take climate challenges seriously and to create local measures to meet these challenges.

I Our objective is to:

- Have cities and municipalities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Encourage cities and municipalities to invest in sustainable energy and transport solutions.

II Our initiative is based on:

- Information from the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, indicating that human activities essentially promote global warming, and that it is a serious threat to both nature and people.
- The fact that even though climate change poses a global challenge that must be solved via binding international treaties, local measures are still important, and cities, municipalities and communities have a key role in implementing local measures.
- The view that knowledge, skills and attitude are important when trying to influence decision makers to take necessary measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

III We want to:

- Encourage all cities and municipalities in the Nordic countries to draft local climate plans defining mandatory local strategies and measures.
- Actively aim at changing attitudes, for instance through information campaigns on climate change, etc.
- Ensure sustainable development in the community.
- Make community planning, as well as other planning and administrative documents into practical and mandatory tools in the work against climate change.

IV In particular, we want to focus on these local environmental measures:

- Economic steering mechanisms
- The energy sector – for reducing the use of fossil fuels
- Measures promoting energy-efficiency
- Private and public transport
- Efficient utilization of land areas through planning
- Reduction of waste and recycling
- Work to change attitudes and increase knowledge.

V We urge

- all cities and municipalities in the Nordic countries to support this declaration and to create networks at the twin city level to address the climate challenge.

Next step: 2012-2016, and the link to the formal Nordic co-operation

The formal cooperation between the Nordic countries is amongst the oldest and most extensive regional cooperations in the world. The political cooperation is built on common values and a willingness to achieve results that contribute to a dynamic development and increase Nordic competencies and competitiveness.

The Nordic Council was formed in 1952. The Nordic Council, along with the Council of Ministers, works toward joint Nordic solutions that have tangible, positive effects – known as Nordic synergies – for the citizens of the individual Nordic countries.

The Nordic Council of Ministers is the forum for Nordic governmental cooperation and was established in 1971. Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden have been members of the Nordic Council of Ministers since 1971. The purpose of intergovernmental cooperation in the Nordic Council of Ministers is to work toward joint Nordic solutions that have tangible positive effects – Nordic synergies – for the citizens of the individual Nordic countries.

The issues of globalization, climate and freedom of movement have been highest on the agenda over the last couple of years.

Protecting the environment has always been a Nordic priority. The Nordic Region works together to achieve the EU's climate goals and to show how a sustainable Nordic model can combine reduced emissions with economic growth. Energy efficiency and renewable energy have a natural place in this work.

The Nordic countries have cooperated on the challenges of the climate changes over a long period. The climate question has come into focus through the Nordic Council of Ministers' globalization initiative. Global climate negotiations, research and innovation, energy efficiency and the increased use of renewable energy sources are central themes in the Nordic climate work.

The Nordic Prime Ministers have signed a **Declaration on a sustainable Nordic Region** (October 28, 2008). They agree that climate change and work to promote sustainable development are among the most important challenges we face.

The Nordic Region has a long-standing tradition of working together to seek common answers to common challenges. We have derived strength from comparing experiences and learning from each other, as well as from basing our work on all that which unites us.

The declaration sets up a series of targets to achieve sustainable development. One of the targets is about Climate change:

- work to stem climate change and help prepare our region and the rest of the world for the changes that will be needed.

One of the prioritized areas 2009–2012 is “Nordic local authorities’ cooperation on local sustainability Strategies”. The Nordic countries will:

- contribute to strong cooperation and exchange of experiences on local sustainability strategies and Agenda 21 between individual local authorities, across national borders and at a grassroots level
- ensure that particular consideration is given to small communities and Arctic local authorities, with respect to their special problems and limited economies.

Next step for the twin town cooperation

We wish to take advantage of the Nordic idea and the history of our countries working together and helping each other when we face new challenges such as the global issue of climate change. We believe that working together will help us achieve more than if we work individually.

We would like to continue to meet in a similar way as before, but there is a need to become more focused around a common theme or themes. We have taken our different conditions, circumstances and interests into account. It is important for all of us to learn from each other, gain inspiration, get new ideas, see what others have succeeded in obtaining, and to share good practices.

Our twin town cooperation represents the local level and is our contribution to the Declaration on a Sustainable Nordic Region that the Nordic prime ministers have signed in 2008.

Objectives

Our foundation is the Nordic Climate Declaration (by the Nordic twin towns) and the Declaration on a Sustainable Nordic Region (by the Nordic Council of Ministers)

The objective of Twin Town Climate Cooperation is to share ideas about climate solutions. We use it to exchange experiences, both good and bad, and to learn from each other. We believe we will achieve more working together than if we work separately.

Aims during the period 2012-2016

- To gain more value in the climate work
- To support local climate work
- To share experiences and use network to get help with climate questions
- To help achieving our individual climate goals
- To contribute to the Declaration on a Sustainable Nordic Region

Individual Climate goals in our cities today:

	Goals	Year
Akureyri, Iceland	Reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases by 30 000 tonnes or about 2 ton CO ₂ per inhabitants before the year of 2020. (Emissions of greenhouse gases is mostly due to transport and traffic as well as from organic waste from domestic consumption.)	Goals until 2020
Aalesund, Norway	Emissions of greenhouse gases in Ålesund shall be reduced by at least 20 % by 2020, compared to the level in 2003. (Emission per inhabitant: from 3,6 ton to 2,5 ton.) Electricity consumption in Ålesund shall be stabilized at 2009 level. By 2020 the use of district heating in Ålesund shall be increased to at least 20 % of the total energy consumption at 2009 level.	Goals until 2020
Randers, Denmark	75% lower CO ₂ emissions compared with 1990 level. 75 % renewable energy. = 2 ton CO ₂ per inhabitants and 190 000 tons in all.	Goals until 2030
Västerås, Sweden	Geographic area: Emissions of greenhouse gases in Västerås shall by 2020 have reduced by 60% per inhabitant compared to 1990 = 3,5 ton CO ₂ per inhabitant	Goals until 2020

	Västerås City Council as a municipal organization: Emission of greenhouse gases caused by Västerås City shall by 2020 have reduced by more than 60% compared to 2009 = less than 34 000 tons in total.	
Lahti, Finland	<p>B) Lahti is a pioneer in sustainable development and an internationally renowned environmentally focused city.</p> <p>B1) Halving Lahti's greenhouse gas emissions from the 1990 level (Kyoto protocol) by 2025.</p> <p>B2) Developing a dense community structure that promotes sustainable development, as well as an excellent system of public transport and bicycle and pedestrian traffic.</p> <p>B3) Promoting low-energy and ecological construction and housing, as well as related development and business.</p>	Goals until 2025

Organization and planning

- A theme will be decided for every single year during the period 2012-2016.
- Each town will choose a sub-theme to work with.
- Conference once a year: Seminars, learn from each other, best practices. Presentation of each towns' results. Evaluation of the work and initial planning for the next year.

In the annual conference each city gives a report on what has been done since the last conference and the outcome of their work. This offers an opportunity to exchange experiences, best practices and new ideas. All towns can choose who and how many representatives they send to participate in the conferences, but a broad participation is desirable, so that there are representatives from each town in all seminars/workshops. On top of seminars and workshop the conference will be filled with appropriate study visits.

The steering group will manage the overall planning of the conferences. Each town will be responsible for planning a seminar/workshop on the selected project theme, with the support from the towns' representative in the steering group. The steering group should also give advice and support the twin town which is hosting the conference.

The town that is hosting the next conference is responsible for the videoconferences; both inviting members and making the agenda. The host town is also responsible for planning the conference and the workshops, with help from the steering group.

The steering group is responsible for finding the best date for the conference. Between the conferences the steering group meets regularly in video meetings and Yammar.

Steering group:

Akureyri, Iceland	Aalesund, Norway	Randers, Denmark	Västerås, Sweden	Lahti, Finland
Helgi Már Pálsson	Kirsti Anita Røsand Lillebø	Anne Rodil	Johanna Olsson	Päivi Sieppi Kari Porra

Order of succession and themes

2012: Västerås: Sustainable transport

2013: Aalesund: Town planning

2014: Lahti: Communication (campaign/information/citizens involvement)

2015: Randers: Climate adaptation

2016: Akureyri: See Climate declaration and find theme that match (*the steering group*)

Subthemes 2012:

Akureyri, Iceland	Aalesund, Norway	Randers, Denmark	Västerås, Sweden	Lahti, Finland
Energy, traffic and waste. Minimize the emissions of greenhouse gases from organic waste and transport and traffic and at the same time, maximize the benefits of creating valuable products in the form of environmentally friendly fuel and fertiliser.	Public transportation. We are starting to work on our Public Transportation Plan.	Electric bike, and how to reduce use of gasoline with education of drivers in the municipality and correct tire pressure also for citizens.	Electric cars. Infrastructural challenges.	Environmental information about climate change - how to increase awareness and involve the public.

Participants

- Primary group: Civil servants and politicians.
- Secondary group: Local companies and organizations, and others of interest

Each town decides separately if the politicians are to participate. The theme can be too specific for the politicians but it is important that they support the network even if they do not participate.

Number of participants

We try to reach a minimum of 5 persons participating from each town.

Make sure that the people who attend the conference are relevant to the theme at hand.

Time of year and duration

April to June or after the middle of October

Duration: maximum of three days. Try to plan the start and end of the conference according to the arrival and departure times so that we don't have to spend more time than necessary travelling.

Accommodation

The host town makes arrangement with a hotel.

Financing

The host town pays all costs connected with the conference such as meeting rooms, transport during study visits and official conference meals (lunch and dinners).

The visiting towns pay all travelling costs, accommodation and any activities outside or before/after the official programme.

It is not crucial to get funding but the steering group will look at different options within the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Language

Nordic languages are used whenever possible. English is used when needed.