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COOPERATION WITHIN THE NORDIC REGION

Cooperation of *Norden* states is deeply rooted in the mentality of the residents of the region and their perception of the surrounding world. Geographical similarities, historical and cultural parallels, as well as the ethnic proximity, if not outward kinship of the states and their societies, make for splendid foundations for a comprehensive and very transparent regional partnership.

One of the most important factors linking or even integrating these countries is undoubtedly their geographical location and common historical tradition. These two elements combined with certain isolation from continental Europe have led to their intensified contacts, and historical experiences built in this manner have positively influenced their later cooperation. *Norden* has managed to create its own system of values, such as the state of law, democracy, special care of the natural environment, cooperation and solidarity. So it is no surprise that the seemingly distant Iceland is a very active participant and member of all mechanisms and structures which the nations of the High North have constructed.

The scale of the population contributed, among others, to the development of direct contacts of the relatively small political class and administrative personnel, which then facilitated the implementation of pragmatic solutions and arriving at the politics of compromise. Also in the case of economy, which is today typically post-industrial and based mainly on services, the countries of the Nordic North for the same reasons since the beginnings of their industrialization were forced to undertake intensive modernization efforts in order to specialize, export and staunchly support the free trade.

The list of conjoint characteristics must be complemented also with the common religion, i.e. Lutheranism, prevalent in the Nordic countries since the Reformation of the mid-16th century. This denomination of Christianity has played an enormously important role in shaping state structures and the system of values of the citizens of the whole region.¹

It is apparent that apart from the integrative aspect the fundamental goal of the cooperation is the idea of undertaking joint actions as opposed to those realized separately by individual Nordic states. And the integration itself is a result of sheer need

¹ See: T. Walat, *M-4 z dzwonnicy*, <http://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/swiat/1521280,1,zamieszka-c-w-kosciele-czemu-nie.read> [November 16, 2011].

and usefulness, rather than an envisaged plan of realization of integrative processes.² The Nordic cooperation provides a teaching platform to learn from one another and make good use of the similarities, as well as differences which are all to strengthen the global competitiveness of both the individual countries and the entire region.³

In the examined context of particular interest here are the principles and institutions which formalize cooperation and the areas of cooperation, always keeping in mind the right assumption that “Cooperation of the Nordic states and their inhabitants, as well as migrations of people between the Nordic countries, are a part of the common history of these countries.”⁴ In addition, two external factors were another catalysts of cooperation between the Nordic states, namely the collapse of the Soviet Union and the changes in the EU (Finland and Sweden becoming members in January 1995). Starting in the 1990s, they proved in practice to have had significant impact on the changes in the formula of Nordic cooperation starting in the 1990s.

Integration processes in the region

In the postwar period, notwithstanding political differences in the region, further new relations and agreements were forging. Prof. Z. M. Doliwa-Klepacki describes this period as a specific one characterized by the integration processes with regard to legislation, culture, social affairs, transport and economy, as well as by formal exclusion of foreign and security policy issues.⁵ In contrast to Western Europe, the integration of *Norden* countries was not comprehensive in all its aspects, i.e. it included only selected areas, while in others it was developed on the basis of the principles of bilateral international cooperation. It is also worth noting that its final framework did not follow presupposed plans, but was rather a result of decisions taken when it was appropriate to do so and based on the emerging evidence and integration needs. In addition, countries of the North did not establish one pan-Nordic organization responsible for further development of integration processes. So it seems that the Nordic countries prefer non-institutional integration, all the more so as the currently functioning Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers do not claim to have any transnational authority or power.

Given international community practices, several issues arise, out of which the three major ones should be identified and posed as questions:

- What role should the Nordic Council play in changing Europe?

² More on the subject in: B. Piotrowski, *Integracja Skandynawii. Od Rady Nordyckiej do wspólnoty europejskiej*, Poznań 2006, pp. 346-392.

³ See: Ch. Ketels, *The Nordic Globalization Barometer 2011*, www.norden.org [May 13, 2013].

⁴ A. Zygierewicz, *Współpraca państw nordyckich*, ”Biuro Studiów i Ekspertyz, Kancelaria Sejmu RP”, no. 1115, January 2005, p. 1; Interesting thoughts are also to be found in B. Piotrowski, *Tradycje jedności Skandynawii. Od mitu wikingów do idei nordyckiej*, Poznań 2006.

⁵ See: Z. M. Doliwa-Klepacki, *Integracja europejska*, Białystok 1999.

- What are the consequences for the Nordic Council of the deepening engagement with the European Union?
- Is there a need in the European Union for a regional cooperation at the governmental and parliamentary level?⁶

The context of past experiences with the European Union indicates that there is a need for a closer cooperation with the European Parliament, giving more consideration to the European issues during various meetings of the Nordic ministers, and a more intensified engagement in broadly defined EU matters.

At the current stage of European integration development, both the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers have a significant impact on determining the interests of the Scandinavian countries in marine fisheries, agriculture, labor market and the freedom of movement in Europe. The Nordic Council, closely linked to the Nordic Council of Ministers, has a great chance to take on some of the responsibility for matters directly related to decision-making in the EU.⁷ Following the enlargement of the European Union in 2004, regional cooperation plays an important role in the new, wider international environment. The regional forums on cooperation, such as the Nordic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States⁸ or the Baltic Assembly⁹ sharing similar traditions and convergent values, strengthen the existing ties between people in this part of Europe, acting also as ambassadors in the interest of the countries of this region in the EU.

On the occasion of the Nordic Council meeting in 2009, the Swedish historian Gunnar Wetterberg stated in the Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter* (2 November 2009) that the five Nordic states should be integrated, following the example of the Kalmar Union. He argues also that: “There is no doubt that a Nordic Union would have brilliant prospects – but it has to happen first. Certainly, we will have to wait several generations for European cohesion to become a reality. In the meantime, a Nordic Union could mount a more energetic defence of northern countries' values and interests. It would also encourage the region's politicians to make a greater commitment to the EU. So how this goal should be achieved? A plan to construct a single unified state is neither realistic nor desirable, and the notion of the Nordic Union will only find support if

⁶ See: P. Bonnén, M. Søsted, *The Origin, Development and Perspectives of Nordic Co-operation in a New and Enlarged European Union*, <http://www.oezp.at/pdfs/2003-1-02.pdf> [October 25, 2013]; *Norden – Making a Difference? Possibilities for enhanced Nordic cooperation in international affairs. The Norden 2020 project report*, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-b1e-2c24-a6a8c706023371ng=en&id=130407> [July 15, 2014].

⁷ Working together with other subjects in the field of legislation, the Nordic Council may exert parliamentary influence within the EU.

⁸ More on the subject in: I. Śmigierska-Belczak, *Współpraca w regionie Morza Bałtyckiego. Rada Państw Morza Bałtyckiego*, <http://kolegia.sgh.waw.pl/pl/KES/kwartalnik/archiwum/Documents/ISmigierska-Belczak9.pdf> [July 25, 2014].

⁹ *Council of the Baltic States*, http://portalwiedzy.onet.pl/87940,,,rada_baltycka,haslo.html [July 9, 2015].

it is clear that it will value and strive to preserve the individual identity of each of its member countries. On this basis, the obvious first step would be to constitute a confederation with five member countries. Initially, the Nordic Union should be the subject of outline negotiations between national governments, which ought to result in a consensus – or failing that, at least a pledge that all the parties will participate”.¹⁰ In another essay, he emphasizes:,”Nowadays, however, the great powers no longer interfere in Nordic affairs. For the first time in 600 years, the Nordic countries have the opportunity to discuss their collective future in peace and quiet. (...) Today, I would venture that economic and foreign-policy reasons are at least as important. (...) As things stand today, the United Nordic Federation would have 25 million citizens¹¹ and a GDP of approximately \$1,600 billion – about the same as Spain and Canada – making it one of the world's 10–12 biggest economies”.¹²

There has been a significant progress made in the integration of *Norden* countries, quickly reaching the stage at which it is believed that the EU sought it to be since its inception. It is noteworthy that these cooperation mechanisms led to rapprochement between societies, mutual interpenetration and complementarity of the economies, and legal and political systems in the countries which used to be fierce rivals in the past. Today, these countries, not only as subjects of international law but above all as a recognizable, transparent and fully acceptable to all whole called *Norden*, expand their activities, they are able to coordinate their efforts perfectly, open the Nordic region to adjacent areas, deepen relations within the European Union and many other sub-regional cooperation structures and institutions, as well as speak in one voice on major issues of the contemporary world.

At present, G. Wetterberg's vision should be considered premature, though no doubt it gives new impetus to the concept of the integration of the Nordic countries. It has certainly stirred the imagination of intellectuals, commentators and the media revealing at the macro level the added value of the Nordic cooperation.

Regardless of the future of this concept, the five Nordic countries (including the three autonomous territories) closely cooperate with each other in almost all areas, and what is important, they trust one another. That trust was recently tested by at least two events: the economic crisis which brought Iceland to the verge of bankruptcy (the turn of 2009)¹³ and the 2011 tragedy in Norway, viewed by Nordic partners as an assault on their common standards of democracy. J. Strang frames it in the following way: “At Nordic level, co-operation increasingly consists of working together on the Region's

¹⁰ D. Nyheter, *Unia marzeń*, <http://www.voxeurop.eu/pl/content/article/129201-unia-marzen> [November 19, 2012] also: A. Nowacka-Isaksson, K. Zuchowicz, *Unia nordycka: sen czy jawa*, 29-10-2009, <http://www.rp.pl/galeria/69986,2,384469.html#bigImage> [November 19, 2012].

¹¹ The population of *Norden* in 2015 would amount to over 26 million.

¹² G. Wetterberg, *The United Nordic Federation*, <http://euobserver.com/opinion/31188> [December 28, 2011].

¹³ The Nordics supported Iceland's request for a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and made a joint decision to complement it by 2.5 billion USD, and NCM offered additional 14 million DKK.

relationships with the rest of the world. The outside world sees Nordic co-operation as something positive. Even the countries' different relationships to NATO and the EU no longer represent a material obstacle to working together. At European and global level, the increasing importance of the regions has coincided with growing demand for greater democracy in international work. One of the great challenges of our time is to develop international partnerships based on democratic foundations. The Nordic countries have an important contribution to make by taking the lead in such initiatives and engaging in international debate. The peoples of the five Nordic nations share culture, values and a sense of affinity. This unique sense of community should not be taken for granted. Maintaining it requires wide-ranging cultural cooperation, while a visible, aspirational and pragmatic partnership at the highest political level would serve to reinforce the popular sense of community".¹⁴

In his opinion, currently there is no pressing need to establish a construct resembling a federal state. "Rather, it is important to develop new ways of working together at international level, which combine flexible solutions for specific policy areas with the lofty ambitions and democratic transparency of a federal state. (...) Our co-operation has long been based on the principle of consensus, but now we need new structures that the individual countries can opt into or out of. As such, we recommend that the principle of consensus be replaced with a flexible, modular approach".¹⁵

Based on the abovementioned findings, J. Strang formulates key proposals for the Nordic cooperation in the future. He defines them as follows:

- Prioritize specific policy areas by designating them as Nordic Communities (following the NORDEFECO model in the field of defense);
- Make foreign and defense policy a part of the official Nordic cooperation;
- The Nordic Council and Council of Ministers should be realistic in their relationships with the EU (among others, the Nordic countries ought to implement EU directives and regulations in an uniform manner);
- Use foreign and defense policy as a model for rationalization in other sectors;
- Counter the democratic deficit in international cooperation;
- Hold annual debates on Nordic issues in the national parliaments;
- Separate the formal and substantive work of the Council of Ministers' Secretariat (at present it operates as both administrative secretariat and as a driving force for new ideas);
- Make the Nordic Council more political and more Nordic by making party groups the main driving force;
- Use and reinforce the Nordic brand by defining objectives, standards and indices in various areas of policy;
- Enhance opportunities for informal contact between civil servants;

¹⁴ J. Strang, *Nordic Communities a vision for the future*, <http://www.norden.org/en/publications/publikationer/2013-002> [October 21, 2013].

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

- Invest in knowledge about the Nordic Region and in Nordic cooperation in schools (among others, by improving teaching of history, politics, language, and geography of the neighboring countries, as well as by running exchange programs for both teachers and students);
- Make cultural cooperation autonomous (inter alia, by strengthening this cooperation and increasing the budget for the Nordic Cultural Fund).¹⁶

Effects of the cooperation

Among the most important operational sources of the Nordic cooperation model, one could list constitutional tradition, citizen movement activity and civil society organizations, freedom of speech, equality, solidarity and respect for the natural environment. If we combine all of these with diligent work and entrepreneurship, we should obtain the constitutive features of a social construct conducive to productivity, innovation, sense of security and the right balance between the individual and the society.

The NCM interest in economic matters has focused on energy,¹⁷ industrial and trade policies (through the development of contacts among companies in the member states), financial issues,¹⁸ development of transport and communication, and regional policy. Every year, the Nordic Council of Ministers gives both project funding and operational support to Nordic cross-border regional cooperation organizations and committees. The funding will ensure that the acting regions which find themselves on two or more sides of national borders are maintained and developed for the best of the population in the Nordic border regions. Examples of focus areas and project efforts in the border regions which will receive funding from the Council of Ministers could be cooperation in the development and use of renewable energy solutions, the establishment of networks between companies across national borders, tourism cooperation, and work to remove obstacles for freedom of movement across borders in business and innovative projects. The Nordic cross-border funds are allocated according to the Nordic Cross-Regional Strategy.¹⁹

In accordance with the fundamental vision of the Nordic Council of Ministers defined in the regional policy cooperation program,²⁰ the Nordic region should be at the

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ For this purpose, among others, NORDEL was established. Nordel is an association for electricity co-operation in the Nordic countries while Nordic Energy Research is the funding institution for energy research under the Nordic Council of Ministers for Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

¹⁸ States develop common positions and unanimously present them, for example, at the forum of the International Monetary Fund or the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD.

¹⁹ More on the subject: *Grenseregional strategi 2009-2012*, <http://www.norden.org/en/nordic-council-of-ministers/council-of-ministers/nordic-council-of-ministers-for-business-energy-regional-policy-mr-ner/strategy/grenseregional-strategi-2009-2012> [July 15, 2014].

²⁰ *Nordiskt regionalpolitiskt samarbetsprogram 2009–2012*, Köpenhamn 2009.

forefront of development of new and more effective regional policies. This means strengthening, and even expanding the role of regional policy in the development of a more innovative Nordic region. It should result in the strengthening of the environmental, economic and social potential for sustainable development at regional and local levels, as well as in densely and sparsely populated areas.

One thing is certain: “Nordic regional policy also faces outwards to its neighbours, and contributes to regional political co-operation in Europe amongst others through membership in the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR). The Nordic cross-border regions are a model for other European border regions today. Moreover, the official Nordic co-operation has helped to highlight the Nordic countries in relation to the EU, the Baltic Sea Region, North Calotte and the Arctic”.²¹

In the fall of 2003, Nordic Prime Ministers adopted a set of guiding principles for the development of NCM international initiatives²², which to a greater extent are focused on European political affairs. Therefore, this partnership concentrates on coordination of Nordic cooperation to make it closer to the EU and practical plans to make the structure of the Nordic cooperation complement the European partnership.²³ These guidelines also define mutual relations with the countries of the Baltic Sea Region and North-West Russia,²⁴ adopting them as the main objectives of the pan-Nordic program, according to which the cooperation should be developed. As for the Nordic cooperation with other international organizations, the challenge identified was making the decisions made by the individual governments as close and convergent as possible. The need to avoid unnecessary separation of actions by the regional organizations was also emphasized.²⁵

Currently the development of the Nordic cooperation seems to be focused on the challenges and opportunities of globalization, especially in the issues of: energy, environmental protection and climate. This is strongly reflected in the specific activities and initiatives undertaken by the Nordic Council of Ministers, where one of the leading themes is openness towards neighbors, particularly in the High North.

²¹ *Nordic co-operation on regional policy*, www.norden.org [January 10, 2012] See also a very interesting material *State of the Nordic Region 2013, Nordregio Report 2014*, <http://www.nordregio.se/Publications/Publications-2014/State-of-the-Nordic-Region-2013/> [December 19, 2015].

²² The guidelines are fully presented in: *The International Nordic Region – Nordic Cooperation in a European Framework*, www.norden.org/pub/sk/showpub.asp?pubnr=2005:770 [December 19, 2015].

²³ Compare: B. Lindroth, *Norden – en ny Vision. En redovisning av ett intervjuprojekt*, Växjö 2008.

²⁴ See: H. Zettermark, M. Hägg, C. von Euler, *The Baltic Room. Extending the Northern Wing of the European House*, Stockholm 2000; Swedish National Defence College – a very interesting insight into the European security architecture and the possible implications for the Nordic-Baltic arena.

²⁵ See: *The International Nordic Region – Nordic Cooperation in a European Framework*.

The Nordic cooperation enhances our understanding of the living conditions in the Arctic and similarities in the approach to the economy of the Northern regions, for example, by providing assistance to reindeer herders. It focuses on expanding knowledge on environmental pollution, heavy metals and climate change in the region.²⁶ The Nordic support for the University of the Arctic improves the indigenous population's opportunities for education. Since the Nordic Council of Ministers builds on transparency and cooperation, there are important instruments and significant support measures at its disposal. Every year a number of Nordic organizations and associations support the Arctic cooperation.²⁷

The Nordic Council, or rather the Nordic Council of Ministers, as the latter is more focused on the region, as an institution acting on behalf of and for the good of the Nordic sub-region, has unique ties with the Arctic. The NCM policies address the climate change issues by funding research programs in the High North and promoting sustainable economic and social development. The most characteristic here is the human dimension of all the problems. Demonstrating typical Scandinavian sensibility and concern for the well-being of the societies, the Nordic Council supports their development and strives to ensure their share of benefits arising from the climate change. Particular attention is paid to the Inuit and Saami communities, since those populations and their way of life are most vulnerable to the threats posed by the climate change.

Nordic cooperation in the Arctic takes place both at parliamentary and intergovernmental levels. Nordic parliamentarians address the Arctic issues in the Nordic Council. In addition, the parliamentary cooperation in the Arctic and the Barents Region is realized through the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (SCPAR).²⁸ SCPAR organizes, amongst other things, the Arctic Parliamentary Conference²⁹ every other year. The committee's membership consists of parliamentarians from seven Arctic countries and representatives of the European Parliament.³⁰ The governmental cooperation is pursued through the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Arctic Council and in cooperation with the EU.

The issues of High North are an inherent part of the Nordic Council work program, given the close ties not only geographical, but also historical and economic of the NC members with the Arctic. The first comprehensive action program on the protection of the environment and cultural heritage of Greenland, Iceland and Svalbard was estab-

²⁶ *The Arctic needs climate first aid!* Norden - the Top of Europe, www.norden.org [April 19, 2012].

²⁷ More on the subject in: *Economic value of Nordic ecosystems assessed*, <http://www.norden.org/en/news-and-events/news/economic-value-of-nordic-ecosystems-assessed> [February 14, 2013].

²⁸ The latest meeting took place in Strasbourg, 16-17 December 2015. Cooperation in education and research, and economic cooperation in the Arctic, were among the topics on the agenda, <http://www.arcticparl.org/> [January 2, 2016].

²⁹ The Eleventh Conference was held in the Whitehorse, Canada 9-11 September 2014.

³⁰ The conference also includes Permanent Participants representing Indigenous peoples, as well as observers.

lished in 1999.³¹ In the same year, under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Nordic Arctic Research Programme (NARP) was founded, dedicated to promoting Nordic cooperation between research centers pursuing their activities in the Arctic, and sponsoring new scientific projects in three thematic blocks: *Natural Processes on Land, at Sea and in the Atmosphere*, *Biological Diversity and Environmental Threats in the Arctic* and *Living Conditions of the Inhabitants of the Arctic*. Running until 2003, NARP had sponsored 63 research projects over the span of the program for the amount of 31 million DKK.³² Somewhat earlier, in 1996, the Arctic Cooperation Programme was launched, carried out by the Nordic Council of Ministers, which included the development of methods for cooperation between the Arctic states.³³

One of the most important documents on Arctic policy issued by the Nordic Council of Ministers was called Sustainable Development in the Arctic. The Nordic Council of Minister's Co-operation Programme 2012–2014, was published on March 5, 2012.³⁴ It declares continuation of the policy announced in the 2009 report, though establishes the advancement of the inhabitants of the region as its priority, which is consistent with regarding the welfare of society and its individual members as the supreme value shared in all Scandinavian countries. In addition, five areas of cooperation have been identified:

- **Population:** the program aims to promote sustainable development by meeting the challenges posed by urbanization and demographic changes. It is also important to ensure social cohesion, eliminate problems arising from the integration, improve living conditions through public health programs, combat contagious and infectious diseases, and guarantee food security. As has always been the case with the cooperation programs in the Arctic, in the Sustainable Development in the Arctic particular attention is given to indigenous peoples, their well-being and lives, as well as their adaptation to the new conditions brought about by climate change and globalization;
- **The Environment and Nature:** the main task is protection of the unique natural system of the Arctic and its biodiversity;
- **Climate:** the program will support initiatives that contribute to combating the effects of climate change in the Arctic and dissemination of the knowledge

³¹ *Nordic Action Plan to Protect the Natural Environment and Cultural Heritage of the Arctic – Greenland, Iceland and Svalbard*, <http://www.norden.org/en/publications/publikationer/1999-029> [May 5, 2012].

³² K. Strand, *Rapid changes in the Arctic. Results book of the Nordic Arctic Research Programme (NARP)*, Copenhagen 2006, pp. 9-10.

³³ *New Arctic Cooperation Programme*, <http://www.norden.org/en/publications/publikationer/2002-424>, [May 10, 2012]; see also: O. S. Stokke, *Nordic Council of Ministers' Arctic Co-operation 2003–2005: An evaluation*, Copenhagen 2007, p. 21.

³⁴ See: *Resolution of the European Parliament on the Strategy of the EU for the Arctic (2013/2595(RSP))*, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52011IP0024> [May 10, 2015].

about its causes. It is also of utmost importance to develop local and regional adaptation strategies and share the generated information and data;

- **Sustainable Enterprise Development:** the Arctic Cooperation Program will promote the development of business based on sustainable use of resources and innovative activities, especially in the area of renewable energy sources, infrastructure, and information and communications technology. An important objective is also facilitating interactions between enterprises and society within the framework of Corporate Social Responsibility;
- **Education and Skills Enhancement:** it encompasses promotion of initiatives increasing educational levels and enhancing the skills of local inhabitants, as well as supporting organizations in the region engaged in this effort. Special attention and care will be given to the Arctic's youth and indigenous people through promoting understanding of the challenges and opportunities posed by globalization and climate change, as well as measures supporting the people of the Arctic in the development of a sustainable community.³⁵

This document exemplifies the ongoing commitment of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers to the development of scientific research and public interest initiatives in the High North. It also reiterates its commitment to the environmental protection. It should be noted, however, that these initiatives pertain almost exclusively to the Nordic part of the Arctic, so it is in those areas above all that they will have impact on the natural environment and the welfare of the Arctic communities.

Nordic cooperation in the Arctic covers a wide range of issues and areas, inter alia: environment,³⁶ health, energy supply,³⁷ culture, education, IT, scientific research and promotion of economic development. In addition, within the framework of the Arctic Cooperation Program, the Nordic Council of Ministers collaborates with countries of the Arctic Council, EU³⁸ and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council³⁹ (BEAC, Barentsrådet). The NCM created a detailed program and strategies, as well as registered many accomplishments in the region, and in addition to it, it has also formed the Arctic Expert Committee, which makes recommendations on formulation, implementation and continuation of the Arctic policy. The primary responsibility for coordination lies with the Ministers for Nordic Cooperation, but all proposals for projects or initiatives related to

³⁵ *Sustainable Development in the Arctic. The Nordic Council of Minister's Co-operation Programme 2012–2014*, <http://www.norden.org/en/publications/publikationer/2012-403> [September 1, 2012].

³⁶ *New report maps Nordic climate emissions*, www.norden.org [February 14, 2013].

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ The Nordic Council: *The EU should set more ambitious climate targets before 2030*, <http://www.norden.org/en/news-and-events/news/the-nordic-council-the-eu-should-set-more-ambitious-climate-targets-before-2030> [July 3, 2013].

³⁹ More on the subject in: R. S. Czarny, *The Barents Cooperation: Progress in the Making*, [in:] *The Northern Spaces – Contemporary Issues*, eds R.M. Czarny, R. Kubicki, A. Janowska, R. S. Czarny, Warszawa–Kielce 2012, pp. 45-64.

the Arctic must be first approved by the appropriate ministers within the Nordic Council of Ministers.⁴⁰

The strong commitment of the states to the Arctic matters is considered natural. Their initiatives are prepared mostly by the Cooperation Programme for the Arctic (of the Nordic Council of Ministers), which develops projects and actions. The Nordic Council of Ministers has already managed to produce and publish the new program titled *Nordic Arctic Cooperation Programme 2015–2017*.⁴¹ This program is an invitation to apply for funding continued as well as new projects for the year 2016. It is to support processes, projects and initiatives promoting sustainable development and serving peoples of the Arctic in a changing environment created by globalization and climate changes.⁴²

As write the authors of the program: “Within the overall objectives and focus areas introduced below, the following will be prioritised in the period 2015–2017:

- Activities that include Arctic and Nordic involvement and are within the framework of the objectives focus areas and criteria set by the Arctic Cooperation Program.
- Activities that follow up on and disseminate the results from Nordic initiatives concerning the Arctic, including results from the Arctic Cooperation Program.
- Activities that are in line with current political priorities, including those of the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Arctic Council and of the respective Arctic strategies of the Arctic states”.⁴³

In this unique and vulnerable region, the Nordic states have not only obvious interests but also a long history of joint problem solving. Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and the Faroe Islands reached an agreement (in 2006) on the matter of a disputed area in the North Atlantic, that is southeast of Spitsbergen “The point was that in accordance with the law of the sea, all four could make legitimate claims to it, but they finally reached an agreement”.⁴⁴ Norway and Denmark signed a historic agreement on the maritime delimitation of the shelf and sea zones (encompassing the area of 150 000 km²) between Greenland and Spitsbergen (the division was made in accordance with the principle of so-called Median Line, the very same one advocated by Norway in its negotiations with Russia on the delimitation of disputed zones in the Barents Sea). The agreement does not include the issue of authority over the shelf and the sea.

⁴⁰ For example, the Nordic Council of Ministers for the Environment (Nordiska ministerrådet för miljö (MR-M), where the Nordic international cooperation on environmental protection is realized.

⁴¹ *Nordic Arctic Cooperation Programme 2015–2017*, <http://www.nordregio.se/arcticprogramme> [January 11, 2016].

⁴² *Ibidem*.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ *Topmøde på Grønland om Arktis, Norden*, <http://www.norden.org/webb/news>, [October 15, 2012].

Thus, the Nordic cooperation on the Arctic is needed both in the context of the EU and in its regional and global dimensions as well. Even if there are differences among the Nordic states as regards the region, when the EU is considering what actions should be undertaken in the Arctic, naturally Norden countries ought to play the leading role.⁴⁵ Moreover, a double membership of some countries, both of NATO and the EU, should secure the compliance of strategic actions with the interests and needs of the Nordic states. The environmental developments in the Arctic have significant impact on the Nordic states. Therefore, in practice, this group of countries ought to be entrusted with and made responsible for implementing the Union projects in the region. These countries should attempt, if not exert pressure on the EU, to introduce very strict environmental norms on research and exploitation of natural resources in the region. Their well-known reputation regarding standards of environment protection ought to allow for joint development of detailed solutions for the European Union.

In addition, the Arctic Cooperation Program of the Nordic countries is complemented with their cooperation with Russia which is a neighbor in the same geographical zone. Through constant and pragmatic relations of the Nordic states with Russia, it is often advocated that these countries should be assigned a leading role in developing the EU strategy towards Russia. An obvious question arises here: Is that strategy clear enough? It is a legitimate question in the situation when Russia does not even pretend to hide the possibility and its desire to use energy as a political tool in instigating divisions in Europe.

The role to be played by the Nordic countries within the Union towards Russia can be defined as a task to depoliticize (to the largest possible degree) the relations and direct them towards a pragmatic cooperation focused on problem solving. This is the kind of regional and cross-border cooperation with Russia which, differentiates the Nordic countries from other member states in the Union. Therefore, the Nordic countries keep lobbying in the EU for a new approach towards developing relations with Russia. This approach would discard the notion of a mutually agreed upon grand strategy for cooperation, advocating for basic cooperation and reducing barriers or obstacles as they emerge.

For years, such a regular cooperation has built trust and mutual respect on the political level, in business and in a civic society, all of which seems to be particularly significant in long-term Norden – Russia or EU – Russia relations.

Conclusion

The cooperation of the Nordic countries is a natural progression of the existing, centuries-old tradition of working together in this region. Hence of interest are principles and institutions that formalize the cooperation and its areas always keeping in

⁴⁵ Compare: J. Käppylä, H. Mikkola, *The Global Arctic: The Growing Arctic Interests of Russia, China, the United States and the European Union*, http://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/347/the_global_arctic/ [September 1, 2013].

mind that “cooperation of the Nordic countries and their inhabitants, as well as migrations of the population within the Nordic states are integral part of the shared history of these countries.”⁴⁶

Although the states of *Norden* have never called to life any institution of supranational competencies, the frame and principles of their cooperation include social, economic,⁴⁷ legal and cultural⁴⁸ aspects, as well as such fields as environment protection,⁴⁹ transport and communication. Their cooperation, in accordance with Article 40 of the Helsinki Treaty⁵⁰ should be based on actions realized within the Nordic Council, the Nordic Council of Ministers, meetings of prime ministers, ministers of foreign affairs and other departments, and institutions supporting regional cooperation⁵¹, as well as the collaboration of local authorities.

Today, these countries cooperate not only in the abovementioned matters, but also on issues of global and regional security, humanitarian aid and development cooperation, as well as through their diplomatic activity within the framework of the UN, NATO and the EU, and their participation in the UN peacekeeping operations.

The outcomes and importance of this cooperation stems to a great extent from common values, forms and methods of perceiving and interpreting the contemporary world and its problems, as well as from distinctive spiritual bonds. It is reflected in the practice, which includes an entire spectrum of problems from taxes and social insurance to the so-called *gender*⁵² issues. The scope and scale of this cooperation provide a platform for seeking joint solutions to challenges and problems that cross national boundaries.

At the summit in Iceland (May 27, 2014), the Prime Ministers of the Nordic countries described the Nordic cooperation as a natural platform of work to meet the challenges facing the Scandinavian region, Europe and the rest of the world. They acknowledged that the European economy was slowly recovering, although the challenges remained. In their view, the economic crisis has once again demonstrated the viability and relevance of the Nordic model with its open societies, thriving econo-

⁴⁶ A. Zygierewicz, *Współpraca państw nordyckich*; B. Piotrowski, *Tradycje jedności Skandynawii*.

⁴⁷ See also H. O. Hagen, *Growth in the Nordic Business Sector*, Copenhagen 2008.

⁴⁸ See: *Sektor program. Kultur, medier och idrott*, Sveriges ordförandeskop i Nordiska ministerrådet 2008, Köpenham 2007, pp. 1-20.

⁴⁹ See: *Höga ambitioner för miljön – nordisk och internationellt*, Fakta om nordisk samarbete, www.norden.org/pub/sk [September 12, 2010].

⁵⁰ Treaty of Co-operation between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (the Helsinki Treaty); see also D. Rossa-Kilian, *Region Morza Bałtyckiego obszarem rozwoju i współpracy – w świetle dokumentów*, Toruń 2007, pp. 227-245.

⁵¹ One of the most interesting organizations of this kind is Föreningen Norden led by Kristina Persson.

⁵² See, for example, S. Zahidi, *What Makes the Nordic Countries Gender Equality Winners?* http://www.huffingtonpost.com/saadia-zahidi/what-makes-the-nordic-cou_b_4159555.html [January 3, 2016].

mies, highly developed welfare systems, small economic differences, equal opportunities and a flexible labour market. These virtues of the Nordic society reflect the common values, which are based on democratic principles and respect for human rights.

In their statement, Prime Ministers concluded among others that: “We, the Nordic Prime Ministers, reaffirm our commitment to the strong co-operation that exists between our countries. Nordic co-operation has long traditions and has produced important results in many fields, both within the formal framework of the Nordic Council of Ministers and in our informal co-operation”.⁵³

Heads of governments assigned priority to the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers in areas such as bio-economy and health, and to strengthening the position and competitiveness of the region. To realize these objectives, the Nordic countries should maintain and improve the competitiveness of their economies, while safeguarding and developing the welfare states to address the challenges of the new millennium. “When we stand together, we are in a stronger position to address climate change, including the Arctic, and to provide policy input to the European arena on other major political challenges of our time, such as economic growth, welfare issues, education and sustainable energy production and supply”.⁵⁴

The Prime Ministers also expressed their concern about the developments in Ukraine during the past few months, especially as regards security and energy issues, and respect for the principles of international law. In their view, this new situation calls for a stronger Nordic as well as European and transatlantic cooperation.

In my opinion, the matters discussed could be aptly crowned by the words of Dagfinn Høybråten, Secretary-General of the Nordic Council of Ministers, who stated the following: “The prime ministers’ explicit confidence in our work to reinforce and vitalise the ability of the Nordic co-operation to play an even greater political role, both in the Nordic region, Europe and the rest of the world, is naturally pleasing, and it boosts our vigour to contribute to a stronger Nordic region”.⁵⁵

⁵³ In the original: “Vi, de nordiska statsministrarna, bekräftar åter det starka samarbete som finns mellan våra länder. Det nordiska samarbetet har en lång tradition och har gett viktiga resultat på många områden, både inom Nordiska ministerrådets formella ramar och inom vårt informella samarbete”. *Statsministrarnas toppmöte: Norden kan påverka mer*, <http://www.norden.org/sv/aktuellt/nyheter/statsministrarnas-toppmoete-norden-kan-paaverka-mer> [May 29, 2014].

⁵⁴ In the original: “När vi står enade är vi i en starkare position för att ta itu med klimatförändringarna, däribland Arktis, och för att ge politiska impulser till den europeiska arenan när det gäller andra stora politiska utmaningar i vår tid, såsom ekonomisk tillväxt, välfärdsfrågor, utbildning och hållbar energiproduktion och energiförsörjning”. *Ibidem*.

⁵⁵ In the original: “Statsministrarnas uttryckliga tillit till vårt arbete med att stärka och vitalisera det nordiska samarbetets förmåga att spela en ännu större politisk roll både i Norden, Europa och resten av världen, är självklart glädjande och ger oss ytterligare kraft att bidra till ett starkare Norden”. *Ibidem*.

Summary

COOPERATION WITHIN THE NORDIC REGION

The cooperation of the Nordic countries is a natural progression of the existing, centuries-old tradition of working together in this region. Although the states of *Norden* have never called to life any institution of supranational competencies, the frame and principles of their cooperation include social, economic, legal and cultural aspects, as well as such fields as environment protection, transport and communication. Today, these countries cooperate not only in the abovementioned matters, but also on issues of global and regional security, humanitarian aid and development cooperation, as well as through their diplomatic activity within the framework of the UN, NATO and the EU, and their participation in the UN peacekeeping operations. The outcomes and importance of this cooperation stems to a great extent from common values, forms and methods of perceiving and interpreting the contemporary world and its problems, as well as from distinctive spiritual bonds.

Keywords: Cooperation, Nordic Region, integration processes

Streszczenie

WSPÓLPRACA W REGIONIE NORDYCKIM

Współpraca państw regionu nordyckiego stanowi naturalne rozwinięcie dotychczasowej, wielowiekowej kooperacji państw tego obszaru. Mimo że państwa *Norden* nie powołały do życia żadnej instytucji o ponadnarodowych kompetencjach, ramy i zasady ich współpracy obejmują aspekty społeczne i ekonomiczne, prawne, kulturalne oraz dziedziny typu: ochrona środowiska, transport i komunikacja. Dziś państwa te współpracują nie tylko w zakresie wyżej wymienionych zagadnień, ale również w sprawach globalnego i regionalnego bezpieczeństwa, pomocy humanitarnej, współpracy rozwojowej, aktywności dyplomatycznej w ramach ONZ, NATO i UE, biorą udział w operacjach pokojowych ONZ. Efekty i znaczenie tej współpracy to w znaczącej mierze następstwo wspólnoty wyznawanych wartości, formy i metody postrzegania współczesnego świata i jego problemów oraz określonej formy więzi duchowej.

Słowa kluczowe: współpraca, państwa nordyckie, proces integracji

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The date of submitting the paper to the Editorial Staff: March 28, 2016.

The date of initial acceptance of the paper by Editorial Staff: April 11, 2016.