# Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture – NDPC

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As chairperson of the Northern Dimension ad-hoc Expert Group on a Partnership on Culture, I would like to present a possible concept of a Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture - NDPC - and the current situation concerning the process of an establishment of such a Partnership.

## “Green Light” for the Establishment of an NDPC

The second Senior Officials Meeting of the renewed Northern Dimension took place in Stockholm on 12th of November 2009. The meeting was hosted by Sweden, holding the EU Presidency. The meeting took place with the participation at Deputy Foreign Minister or equivalent level of the four Partners: the European Union, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation. Also representatives of the Regional Councils in the North, the International Financial Institutions (IFI) and other institutions and bodies of the Northern Dimension Partners participated.

*At this meeting, the Senior Officials decided to establish the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture, based on the recommendations of the Northern Dimension Steering Group and the conclusions of the ad-hoc Expert Group examining the desirability of a Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture.*

## Background

As presented by Ms. Maija Lummepuro, Finland, the renewed Northern Dimension Policy and the Kajaani process are essential. Here could also be added the Nordic Council of Ministers’ Strategy for Globalization. As an introduction to this presentation, it could be recalled that Finland, holding the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2007, proposed that an assessment be made of the desirability to establish a Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture. A Nordic Policy Group was set up to elaborate the initiative. A report on “Why establishing a Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture is desirable” was presented to the Northern Dimension Steering Group in autumn 2008.

In their joint statement at the Northern Dimension Ministerial meeting in Saint Petersburg on October 28th, 2008, the Ministers emphasized the considerable potential for cultural cooperation in the area of the Northern Dimension. They instructed the Northern Dimension Steering Group to setup an ad-hoc Expert Group to examine the issue and assess the feasibility of such a Partnership.

The ad-hoc Expert Group presented its conclusions and commendations in its report by mid September 2009. The main objective of the Partnership will be to function as a focal point for networks, projects and other cultural activities in the Northern Dimension area with a view to keeping interested actors continuously informed of plans and activities and for avoiding overlap.

## Next phase 2010 – Preparatory Committee for Modalities

According to the conclusions from the Stockholm meeting 2009, the Partnership stands ready to provide a platform for exchange of information and best practices, for promoting coordination and cultural cooperation between the four Regional Councils in the North and for facilitating a dialogue between cultural actors and the business community with a view to fostering cooperation and the development of the creative economy.

At the meeting, the Senior Officials instructed the ND Steering Group to convene a Preparatory Committee to finalise the organisational structure of the NDPC with the aim to make it fully operational by the time of the second ND Ministerial Meeting.

The Senior Officials appreciated the valuable support given by the Nordic Council of Ministers during the preparatory phase and its generous decision to increase its support for 2010. In this context, they welcomed the initiative to hold a conference for the launch of the NDPC in Saint Petersburg in the spring of 2010.

In order to follow up the meeting in Stockholm, a first informal meeting of the Preparatory Committee is planned for, in the beginning of 2010 in Copenhagen. Secretarial support to the Expert Group was given by the Nordic Council of Ministers during 2009. Also for the coming process on modalities for the Partnership, the Nordic Council of Ministers will give support for year 2010. For year 2011 and onwards however, a sustainable solution for the financing must be reached by Partners.

## On the Concept of NDPC – Conclusions by the Ad-Hoc Expert Group

In the middle of September the ad-hoc Expert Group presented its conclusions and recommendations in its report “Examining the desirability of a Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture”. The task for the Group was to focus on issues related to a Partnerships’ raison d’être: What could a Partnership bring? What is the added value? What could be the role of a Partnership? The Expert Groups’ deliberations have been characterized by openness and dialogue with potential stakeholders representing government (national, regional and local) and the private sector as well as different sectors of cultural life (state and non-state) and various other organisations active in Northern Europe.

The Expert Group concluded that the establishment of a Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture is highly desirable and timely. The Expert Group has defined that the overall objective of the Partnership would be to function as a focal point for networks, projects and other cultural activities in the Northern Dimension area. The Group took a step-by-step approach and recommend a start up in a small scale - the Partnership may grow by its own merits and in relation to available resources.

A Partnership could, as an actively managed point of information, assist to promote coordination and cooperation between the Regional Councils in the North to avoid overlapping and to supplement the efforts of national authorities.

A Partnership could facilitate the dialogue between cultural actors and the business community – in order to seek areas of mutually beneficial cooperation and the development of the creative economy.

As a major objective, the Expert Group found that a Partnership can facilitate assessment of the financial viability of projects and facilitate access to multiple sources of financing and to mobilise public-private funding for collaborating projects.

Moreover, depending on funding possibilities, the Group concluded that a Partnership, step-by-step, can find itself more resource demanding objectives like e.g. conducting market analyses; developing tools to create tailor-made cultural tourism in the Northern Dimension region. Another example could be capacity building for marketing and entrepreneurship for artists, for cultural institutions and for operators in the field.

## Nordic Cultural Forum in Finland

As part of the process of the assessment by the Expert Group, about 100 participants representing cultural practitioners, actors and operators, experts from Regional Councils and various other organisations active in Northern Europe, convened in Dipoli, Finland on 11 and 12 of September 2009 and took part in the discussions on a Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture. The purpose of this Nordic Cultural Forum on the Northern Dimension Partnership was to focus on the questions related to creative economy and cultural cooperation in the Northern Dimension region and to examine the feasibility and desirability of establishing a Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture. The Forum supported the establishment of the Northern Partnership on Culture, as well as its main objectives.

Following the successful Nordic Cultural Forum on Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture in Helsinki in September this year, a second conference will be organised for the launch of the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture. As it was already mentioned above this event is to take place in Saint Petersburg in the spring of 2010.

## The Overall Objectives of the Partnership

To function as a focal point for cultural networks, projects and other cultural activities in the Northern Dimension area. This includes:

* Providing a platform for exchange of best practices, dialogue and meetings with stakeholders representing government (national, regional and local) and the private sector as well as different sectors of cultural life (state and non-state);
* Facilitating a dialogue between cultural actors and the business community in order to seek areas of mutually beneficial cooperation and the development of the creative economy;
* Promoting coordination and cooperation between the four Regional Councils in the North with a view to avoiding overlap;
* Providing a point of information allowing relevant actors to keep each other continuously informed of their plans and activities;
* Keeping a comprehensive list of e-mail addresses to relevant actors up-to-date.
* A major objective of the Partnership is also еo facilitate assessment of the financial viability of projects and access to multiple sources of financing and also to mobilise public-private funding for collaborating projects.

Depending on funding possibilities, the Partnership can also set itself more resource demanding objectives, including:

* To arrange for ND cultural products to be presented to international audiences in festivals, exhibitions and similar events;
* To conduct analyses of what different audiences in various countries and regions would like to experience in the ND area;
* To create tools to develop tailor-made cultural tourism in the ND region;
* To promote and organise cultural activities with a focus on people-to-people contacts;
* To encourage capacity-building in the field of marketing and entrepreneurship for artists, cultural institutions and operators.

## The Recommendations of Ad-Hoc Expert Group

1. The establishment of a Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture is highly desirable and timely.
2. The Partnership should thematically focus on the Northern Dimension region and therefore be open for participation of all ND Partners and other actors in the region. Belarus should be also invited to participate.
3. The overall objective of the Partnership is to function as a focal point for networks, projects and other cultural activities in the ND area.
4. As an actively managed point of information, the Partnership will help, inter alia, promote coordination and cooperation between the four Regional Councils in the North to avoid overlapping and to supplement the efforts of national authorities and also to facilitate a dialogue between cultural actors and the business community in order to seek areas of mutually beneficial cooperation and the development of the creative economy.
5. The Partnership will also, as a major objective, facilitate assessment of the financial viability of projects and access to multiple sources of financing and also to mobilize public-private funding for collaborating projects.
6. A number of more resource demanding objectives have been identified as also highly desirable provided that required funding possibilities can be secured, including i.e. arranging for ND cultural products to be presented to international audiences in festivals, exhibitions and similar events, conducting analyses of what different audiences in various countries and regions would like to experience in the ND area and measures facilitating the development of tailor-made cultural tourism in the ND region.
7. A consultancy study commissioned by the Nordic Council of Ministers to determine the interest of e.g. the film, music, visual arts and tourism businesses in the creation of major cultural projects under the auspices of a Northern Dimension Partnership concluded that the cultural sector with great interest follows the development of the NDPC initiative. The majority of cultural enterprises and projects in the ND region are small and mostly funded by public funds. The NDPC could open up new mechanisms for mixed public- private funding and thus have a positive effect on how the national funding and support schemes could develop to meet the challenges the creative economy is facing. In the cultural sector there are also ambitions to develop cultural services for experience tourism and joint sector-specific initiatives to promote culture and art from the ND region internationally.
8. Following the successful Nordic Cultural Forum on Northern Dimension Partnership on culture in Helsinki on 11-12 September 2009, and subject to approval by the upcoming Senior Officials Meeting in Stockholm, a second Nordic Cultural Forum on Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture with wide participation of cultural stakeholders is envisaged to take place in Saint Petersburg in the spring of 2010.
9. A two-level structure should be set up consisting of High Level Meetings to take strategic decisions and a Steering Group to monitor implementation of measures and projects. The High Level Meetings, which may take place at the level of Ministers of Culture or at the level of Senior Officials, and the Steering Group should be assisted by a small Secretariat. Support given by the Nordic Council of Ministers has been much appreciated and the Nordic Council of Ministers’ willingness to possibly consider a continuation of its valuable support is most welcome.
10. The Expert Group encourages all interested parties to explore how they can support the Partnership and its objectives.
11. The Partnership should be based on an appropriate legal agreement to be finalized by May 2010, with a view to entering into full operation on 1 January 2011.
12. The Expert Group proposes that the work should be continued, under the guidance of the Northern Dimension Steering Group, with a view to finalizing the modalities of the Partnership.