

An invitation to small and medium-sized towns and urban regions to participate in a joint Nordic project on sustainable urban development

Small and medium-sized Nordic towns are invited to participate in a Nordic network on how to achieve successful sustainable urban development. The deadline for applications is 29 May 2017. This project is one of the Norwegian chairmanship projects in the Nordic Council of Ministers and cooperation is sought with towns in all the Nordic countries.



Photo: Marianne Gjørsv

Norway holds the presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2017 and one of its main priorities is “The Nordic Countries in Transition”. The presidency project “Attractive towns. Green redevelopment and competitiveness in Nordic urban regions. Towns that provide a good life for all” is one of several initiatives to promote Nordic competitiveness, green redevelopment, the transition to a low-emission society, integration and a good environment for public health. The project is led by the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Care Services and the Ministry of Climate and Environment.

DKK 9 million is available for 2017-2019 for the project, which aims to:

Prepare a joint Nordic strategy for how towns and their surrounding areas can become more attractive through the development of vibrant and inclusive urban environments that are economically, environmentally and socially sustainable. Key elements here are environment- and climate-friendly solutions, social balance and equal opportunities for all, good social and public health services, cultural activities, vibrant town centres, historical-cultural objects and environments, good blue-green structures, urban spaces and architecture, coordinated land use and transport solutions and attractive job opportunities.

In the preparation of this joint Nordic strategy, we particularly wish to involve small and medium-sized Nordic towns. This collaboration will be in the form of small working groups in which Nordic towns together can define challenges and develop good working methods and solutions across sectors and administrative levels in order to achieve quality and sustainability. The composition of

the groups and the choice of topics will be determined in collaboration with towns involved in the project. This work will enhance knowledge and assessment of urban quality and sustainability.

The network will serve as a common Nordic forum for policy makers and experts to collect, share and develop knowledge of attractive urban regions.

Our basic idea is that two towns from each of the Nordic countries will be involved. All the towns will be able to use part of the project funding for research and development. The participating towns must also contribute some funds and resources.

We welcome applications from small and medium-sized towns and urban regions in all the Nordic countries

Integration, crime, environmental and health conditions and social differences are challenges that can be faced in our Nordic towns. Many central areas of small and medium-sized Nordic towns are struggling with empty premises, abandoned shops, shabby facades, few places to meet and a lack of urban life. It contributes to making towns less attractive and people to feel less safe.

We are looking for small and medium-sized towns that have been particularly involved in developing attractive and inclusive urban environments that are economically, environmentally and socially sustainable. We are interested in cooperating with towns that can demonstrate intersectoral and interdisciplinary work, potentially also across administrative boundaries. The importance for interaction between towns and their surrounding areas to economic development, and experiences of involving citizens and other actors in new ways, are particularly relevant factors.

In this context, small and medium-sized towns are defined as any other towns than the four largest ones in each country. This does not apply to Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland.

It is quite acceptable for a town to make a joint application in collaboration with other towns or local authorities within or outside the same region. We ask for a short but well-reasoned application of up to four pages.

The application should include a brief statement of the key challenges in the urban region concerned. We would like to gain an idea of what towns and urban regions are good at, what they need to work at, and local experiences that can make a positive contribution to Nordic collaboration.

It is also interesting for us to receive information on previous work conducted in terms of various types of studies (urban life surveys, public health profiles, green areas, transportation, cultural heritage, etc.) and the networks in which towns and urban areas are already participating. Previous use of indicators of achievement can also be useful information.

Selection of towns for the network will be based on an overall assessment of problem issues and preparatory work in each individual case. We would like the sample to reflect the diversity of challenges and initiatives found in Nordic small and medium-sized towns.

The deadline for applications is Monday 29 May 2017

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