

## **“Cross-border eRegion Development; Regional Perspectives - the Nordic Region”**

Cross-border eRegion development, eScience and ICT-policy relevant issues are important policy priorities in the Nordic countries. In an international context, the Nordic region is advanced when it comes to ICT development and – use, and the regulatory framework conditions for electronic communications are well developed and predictable (all countries have implemented and follow up the relevant EU-directives).

Furthermore, there is a good climate for business development, and the use of ICT, including advance internet-based applications, is widespread both in the private and public sector as well as among the general public. Therefore, the preconditions for eDevelopment in the Nordic region and for closer cooperation between the Nordic region and other parts of Europe and beyond are in place. However, the technological and economic development in the ICT area is rapid, competition is fierce, and policy makers in the Nordic region recognise the need to keep eRegion development high on their agendas.

The **Nordic Research Board (NordForsk)** is one of the main Nordic instruments to follow up on these priorities, and a number of our initiatives and projects are of relevance to eRegion development. NordForsk was established by the Nordic research and education ministers in 2005 as a tool to implement inter-governmental cooperation in the field of research, innovation and researcher education. Our overarching objective is to strengthen and further develop the Nordic region as internationally leading in research and innovation and, thereby, enhancing the international competitiveness of the Nordic countries and the living conditions of the populations in the region.

We focus on research areas in which the Nordic countries are in the forefront internationally, and we base all our efforts on thematic and horizontal areas that are national priorities in the Nordic countries. Our main focus areas are research within Climate, Energy and the Environment, Food, Nutrition and Health, ICT and eScience (highly relevant to eRegion development), Medical science, Welfare research, and research on the Arctic region and polar issues.

NordForsk has three main functions – coordination, funding and policy advice, and our mission is three-fold:

- We seek to **identify important research priorities suitable for joint Nordic efforts** and provide instruments and tools to promote the cooperation.
- **Provide financial support to such joint Nordic research efforts.** We have a number of instruments to finance research cooperation. Researcher networks, researcher training schools, Nordic Centres of Excellence, thematic programmes (with national co-financing), networks within prioritised areas are the most important. In addition we serve as project managers, coordinators or secretariat to Nordic cooperation initiatives and projects within the natural sciences, living labs, research on welfare research, research on food, nutrition and health,
- Serve as an **advisory body to the research and education Ministers, through the Nordic Council of Ministers** on research policy issues.

International cooperation, and in particular European research cooperation is essential in all our activities, and we have several projects ongoing with focus on different aspects of Nordic and European research cooperation. We are very interested to linking up to and cooperating

with other relevant regional initiatives in Europe, and activities within the Danube region could be relevant in this context.

Our main activities in the ICT and eScience field are the following:

A programme on **Nordic-Baltic Living Labs** has recently been established, and the first call for projects was launched this spring. 24 applications were submitted within the deadline March 8<sup>th</sup>. The overall aim of the programme is to facilitate innovation, job creation and business growth in the Nordic and Baltic countries, by providing them with qualitative research in the field of Living Labs and Nordic-Baltic-scale experimentation platforms for new services, business, industries and technologies in the Nordic and Baltic countries and beyond. The programme budget is approximately 2,5 million Euro.

Creating a closer link between research and innovation is a policy priority in all Nordic countries. The Nordic-Baltic Living Labs programme will investigate how this could be implemented, with special focus on user-driven innovation. The programme will stimulate the development of use-friendly, effective ICT services in different sectors, support businesses in developing their ICT export markets, and support the ICT take-up in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

Norway, Iceland, Denmark, Finland, and Latvia participate.

Four projects will be funded from the first call, and we are very much looking forward to their results (more information is available at NordForsk's website: <http://www.nordforsk.org/news.cfm?path=3&id=932>) . Cooperation with other regions in Europe could take place within the framework of this programme in the future.

#### **A larger scale initiative on cross-border Nordic cooperation on eScience:**

eScience can be defined as "research into new ways of using the Internet to do science". eScience encompass the application of ICT in research and in research cooperation within key scientific fields, as well as large scale research cooperation via distributed electronic networks/high speed research infrastructure and the development of next generation's ICT infrastructure.

The Nordic Research Board is now in the process of developing a large-scale project proposal to the Nordic Councils of Ministers in the field of eScience, based on the strong political attention for this subject matter in the Nordic countries. The initiative's overall aims are the following:

- Promote the Nordic region as a leading one regarding infrastructure for eScience, eScience methods and tools and the application of eScience in selected research fields
- Increase the international visibility of and opportunities for Nordic excellent research applying eScience methods and tools
- Establish new Nordic Centers of Excellence
- Create substantial progress within a few selected research fields (responses to Grand Challenges)
- Create synergies between national and international (EU) eScience related research initiatives
- Educate PhD-candidates with expertise needed for future business development and innovation in the knowledge society

European Initiative – Danube Region on the eSilk&eAmber Roads  
Intervention of Marianne Røgeberg, Head of Section, Nordic Research Board (NordForsk)  
Meeting in the European Parliament Brussels, 1st June 2010.

We are now in the process of defining the main action lines, in close cooperation closely with the Nordic national research councils. The eScience globalisation initiative is expected to be launched early 2011 (if a sufficient number of Nordic countries decide to participate). The total project budget is estimated to 11-12 million Euro over three years (2011-2014). The initiative will be developed to follow up key Nordic strategies within the eScience field, such as “the Nordic eScience Action Plan” which was developed in 2008 by an expert group funded by NordForsk. More information is available here: [http://www.dcsc.dk/docs/Nordic\\_eScience\\_Action\\_Plan - 10 concrete actions to implement the Nordic eScience Strategy.pdf](http://www.dcsc.dk/docs/Nordic_eScience_Action_Plan_-_10_concrete_actions_to_implement_the_Nordic_eScience_Strategy.pdf)