

Memorandum of Understanding

Purpose of the network

The Northern Sparsely Populated Areas network (NSPA) is an important tool for cooperation and interest promotion between the four northernmost regions of Sweden (Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Jämtland Härjedalen, Västernorrland), the seven northernmost and eastern regions of Finland (Lapland, Northern Ostrobothnia, Central Ostrobothnia, Kainuu, North Karelia, Pohjois-Savo and South Savo) and three northernmost regions of North Norway (Finnmark, Troms, Nordland). Sparse population, harsh climate and long distances represent the main challenges for the NSPA regions, and they have specific challenges and opportunities relating to global changes globalisation, climate change and demographic change. The region has a population density of only 4.9 inhabitants per km², something that is not found in any other part of the European Union.

Since these regions share common challenges and objectives they are working together to raise awareness of the NSPA region in the EU institutions, to influence EU policy and to provide a platform for exchange of best practice. The NSPA network has promoted the NSPA region actively since 2004, and the cooperation has increased, making the NSPA network an acknowledged and established European network.

The NSPA is a network oriented towards the EU institutions and activities are mainly done with the objective to influence EU policy. The NSPA network has mainly worked with policy areas such as regional and cohesion policy, transport policy, regional state aid, Arctic and northern issues, raw materials, EU financial instruments and smart specialization.

Composition

The NSPA network is a cooperation between elected assemblies on the regional level in the regions mentioned above.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee (SC) is composed by ten members, of which one is the chairman.

The SC is responsible for steering the direction of NSPA cooperation, approving joint positions and other documents and representing the network vis-à-vis external actors.

The membership of the SC is allocated as follows:

Regions	Kainuu, Lapland, Northern Ostrobothnia and Central Ostrobothnia	North Karelia, Pohjois-Savo and South Savo	Finnmark, Nordland and Troms	Jämtland Härjedalen and Västernorrland	Norrbotten and Västerbotten
Members	2	2	2	2	2
				Total:	10

The Steering Committee members are nominated by the regions. The Brussels offices are responsible for communicating the appointment of new Steering Committee members to the secretariat of the Coordination Group, which updates this information on the NSPA website.

Chairmanship of the Steering Committee is rotated on a 2-year basis among the regions as shown below:

North Sweden	North Norway	East & North Finland	Mid Sweden	East & North Finland
2019-2020	2021-2022	2023-2024	2025-2026	2027-2028

Coordination Group

The Coordination Group (CG) is composed by the Directors of the Brussels offices of the NSPA regions. The CG coordinates the EU-oriented activities of the NSPA network.

One Brussels office is responsible for chairing and acting as the secretariat of the CG. The chairmanship of the CG corresponds to the chairmanship of the SC, and thus rotates every second year. The chairman of the GC also supports the SC with secretarial services.

The Coordination Group participates in the meetings of the SC, without voting rights.

Contact persons

Each region is to appoint a contact person. The contact person is responsible for disseminating information from the SC and the CG to the home region.

In such cases where the NSPA cooperates in a way which is not directly EU-oriented and activities mainly take place in the home regions, the contact person are responsible for coordinating activities.

Forum

At least annually, NSPA holds a Forum in one of the member regions. The purpose of the Forum is to gather the Steering Committee, other regional politicians and civil servants and external audiences to discuss the NSPA network cooperation or EU policy areas of relevance to the NSPA network. The cost of the Forum is borne by the hosting region. Some costs for accommodation and food may be invoiced to participants.

The Forum rotates among the Brussels offices according to the following scheme:

North Norway	North Sweden	East & North Finland	Mid Sweden	East & North Finland
2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
2024	2025	2026	2027	2028

Shared costs

Shared costs of NSPA Brussels offices are divided by the same method as seats in the Steering Committee ($\frac{2}{5}$ ^{ths} for East & North Finland EU Office, $\frac{1}{5}$ th for North Norway European Office, $\frac{1}{5}$ th for Mid Sweden European Office and $\frac{1}{5}$ th for North Sweden European Office). Shared costs are managed by the CG. Shared costs which have not yet been divided are settled by the

CG in the end of the year. Working lunches and dinners may be divided based on participants, as has been the tradition.

Responsibilities overview

Steering Committee

- Elects the Steering Committee chairmanship every 2 years
- Decides on prioritised issues for shared activities
- Approves common positions drafted by GC

Coordination Group (CG)

- Coordinates the NSPA network EU-oriented activities
- Promotes the NSPA regions in Brussels
- Plans and executes shared activities in Brussels
- Drafts common positions

CG chairmanship and secretariat

- Chairs CG meetings
- Acts as secretariat for SC
- Maintains a list of Steering Committee members, including a mailing list
- Maintains a list of Regional Focal Points, including a mailing list
- Manages the NSPA website and e-mail account

Regional contact persons

- Receives and disseminates information from the SC and the CG.