

Concept of the Northern Dimension Institute (NDI)

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Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Development work of NDI	1
3	Principles of the Northern Dimension Institute	2
4	Added value of NDI	3
5	Establishment of NDI	4
	5.1. <i>The NDI Coordinator</i>	4
	5.2. <i>The NDI Steering Group (NDI SG)</i>	5
	5.3. <i>The NDI Scientific Thematic Groups (NDI STG)</i>	6
	5.4. <i>Promotion of NDI</i>	6
6	Funding NDI and its activities	7
7	Some examples of the first potential projects of NDI	7
8	Summary	8
ANNEX 1	Stages of preparation of the Northern Dimension Institute	9
ANNEX 2	Internal and external partnerships of NDI	10

1 Introduction

This concept introduces a model for a networked umbrella organization called the Northern Dimension Institute (NDI) that connects universities and research institutes to provide high-quality demand-driven research aiming at serving both the public and the private sectors.

The idea of having an academic and scientific institute for the Northern Dimension (ND) was raised on the ND agenda in the Northern Dimension Senior Officials' Meeting in St. Petersburg on November 21, 2007. Originally, the idea of NDI was generated by St. Petersburg State University (SPbSU). Later on, the concept of NDI has been developed in cooperation with other universities and scientific institutions, and in ND structures.

2 Development work of NDI

In the Northern Dimension Senior Officials' Meeting on November 21, 2007, views were exchanged on the realisation of NDI. A year later in St. Petersburg, in the Northern Dimension Foreign Ministers' Meeting on October 28, 2008, St. Petersburg State University and Lappeenranta University of Technology (LUT) were asked to further process the idea and to propose concrete steps for developing NDI. In the ND Steering Group Meeting in Oslo on March 5, 2009, the representatives of SPbSU and LUT presented "the Joint Idea of Developing the ND Institute".

The concrete development work began on April 27, 2009. The work was made possible by the financing of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. The financing was provided from the Neighbouring Area Cooperation Funds. As one of the first tasks, the coordinator of the project¹ visited several universities and research institutes in the ND region. The reason for the visits was to form the core development working group. Due to the tight timetable, for example Germany and Poland have not yet been visited. Negotiations with potential partners of NDI will be continued during year 2010 and beyond.

In the First Meeting of the NDI Development Group (NDI DG) in Lappeenranta on May 28, 2009, the first concrete tasks were divided among the group. In addition, the participants agreed on concrete further steps and a schedule of up-coming activities. According to decisions made in the Lappeenranta meeting, members of the NDI Development Group actively took part in processing the concept for NDI during June-August 2009.

The Second Meeting of the NDI DG took place in St. Petersburg on September 4th, 2009. The main goals of the St. Petersburg meeting were met in strengthening the collaboration between members of the Development Group and further processing the ideas created and collected by the group.

¹ The coordinator of the project is located at LUT in the Northern Dimension Research Centre (NORDI)

In the Second Senior Officials Meeting of the Renewed Northern Dimension in Stockholm on November 12th, the Chairman's conclusions on the NDI Concept and up-dating the NDI development work stated the following: "They appreciated the report by the initiators of the Institute, the Saint Petersburg State University and Lappeenranta University of Technology, and urged them to continue their work as outlined in their report." Soon after the ND SOM meeting the Constitutive Meeting of NDI was held in Helsinki on November 26th, 2009, and NDI was officially launched.

The representatives of the following organisations have taken part in the development work of this NDI Concept:

- St. Petersburg State University, School of International Relations, Russia
- Lappeenranta University of Technology, Finland
- Helsinki School of Economics, The Center for Markets in Transition, Finland
- University of Oulu, Thule Institute, Finland (University of the Arctic)
- University of Tartu, Estonia
- Vilnius University, Kaunas Faculty of Humanities, Lithuania
- Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania
- Riga International School of Economics and Business Administration, Latvia
- Lund University, Sweden
- Malmö University, Sweden
- Danish Institute for International Studies, Denmark
- Barents Institute, Norway
- Stefansson Arctic Institute, Iceland (University of the Arctic)

This concept is a result of intensive and close international collaboration with universities and research institutes. The active participation of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in Finland, Sweden, and Russia has clarified and helped the work of the NDI Development Group. (Annex 1).

3 Principles of the Northern Dimension Institute

The Northern Dimension Institute (NDI) is an open network community of universities and research institutes combining expertise in the priority sectors of the ND policy², i.e. providing high-quality research (and later also education) in the fields of energy and the environment, public health, logistics, and culture and higher education³. However, NDI is an open format and, if required, parties interested can continually develop the ideas further also in other interest areas.

² The ND Policy refers to the Political Declaration on the Northern Dimension Policy and the Northern Dimension Policy Framework Document

³ Research themes connected to the Northern Dimension partnerships: The Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP), and The Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS), the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics (NDTLP), and the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture (NDPC).

The creation and transfer of knowledge for NDI is based on active collaboration between the partners of NDI and its interest groups. Thus, NDI continuously follows the ND Policy to maintain close interaction between decision-makers, researchers, and business. Furthermore, NDI facilitates the achievement of joint research applications by partner universities e.g. to major European and Nordic sources of financing.

During the first years of NDI, the main focus will be on enhancing research on topical ND issues among its partners. Later, educational cooperation (e.g. PhD and Master's degree studies), including the production of educational material, will be developed and promoted.

4 Added value of NDI

NDI creates added value for policy-making, the academic world, and regional development. The main contributions can be summarised by stating that firstly, in its initial phase, depending on basic funding for activities and project funding for research, NDI

- 1) creates new research partnerships for cross-border cooperation and regional development in the ND region;
- 2) conducts research of high policy relevance focusing on the priority sectors of the ND and contributes to the development of instruments to implement the ND policy (such as the ND partnerships);
- 3) brings together already existing networks of universities and research institutes;
- 4) enhances international research and offers a forum for working in multi-national research groups. By providing internationally recognized research, the partners of NDI have possibilities to improve the research in their organizations, and contribute to regional development work;

In addition, depending on sufficient funding for research and other activities, NDI

- 1) supports decision making in the ND Policy framework by producing research of high policy relevance. This includes gathering together existing research projects and results of importance to NDI and producing tailored research for ND policy-makers;
- 2) provides research expertise in assessing the results of the ND initiatives and their sustainability;
- 3) increases the visibility of the ND Policy and Partnerships;

4) serves as a platform or/and a think-tank for knowledge exchange from experts and political decision-makers. Since NDI joins together the EU countries which have the longest borders and, thus, rich experience in political, economic, and socio-cultural interrelations with non-EU countries, NDI members can offer high-quality expertise to political decision-makers and contribute to formulating a strategy and policy for the development of the ND region.

5 Establishment of NDI

NDI combines the expertise of the participating organisations, but has a rather simple management organization. NDI has a Coordinator and a Steering Group, which support and guide the activities among NDI partners, and interactions between NDI and its interest groups. The post of the Coordinator as well as the post of the Chairman of the Steering Group is passed from country to country. The suggested duration of the coordination is three years, and the period of operation of the NDI Steering Group is two years. In this way, the continuation of sharing knowledge within and outside NDI can be guaranteed, and the memory of the institute maintained. (Annex 2)

5.1. The NDI Coordinator

To make NDI work efficiently, cohesive and active coordination is of the essence. The leading coordination is based on one person or more working in the premises of their university or institute. The NDI Steering Group chooses the coordinating organisation (partner university or institute), and further, the organisation chooses the NDI Coordinator. The tasks of the leading coordinator are:

- 1) To enhance the communication of the NDI community and inform it of ongoing and planned projects and other actions connected to NDI (mainly via an up-dated web site, emails and telephone, but also traveling is required);
- 2) To maintain and create connections to universities and institutes;
- 3) To collect information connected to the expertise of NDI partners and potential partners, and to enhance the formation of thematic groups;
- 4) To promote and deepen public awareness about NDI;
- 5) To help in organizing the meetings of the NDI Steering Group, and to participate in the Steering Group meetings;
- 6) To help in organizing seminars and conferences based on NDI research.

Furthermore, it is suggested that the leading coordination should be complemented with co-ordination from one to two member organisations, and sharing the coordination responsibilities should be agreed on among the acting coordinators.

5.2. The NDI Steering Group (NDI SG)

The NDI Steering Group consists of representatives of the participating universities and institutes, and public and private organisations. The NDI Steering Group has meetings on an average two times per year (depending on funding). In addition, email and internet meetings are recommended. The chairmanship rotates periodically from one ND country to another.

The following tasks are set for the NDI Steering Group:

- 1) To sense and propose research ideas for NDI;
- 2) To ensure that the objectives set for NDI are met and the agreed projects and measures are carried out as planned;
- 3) To promote the topics of ND research in the funding programs (e.g. EU Framework Programs);
- 4) To monitor the activities of NDI;
- 5) To organize seminars and conferences based on NDI research;
- 6) To choose the coordinating organization;
- 7) To decide setting up working groups or task forces at expert level involving all or some of the partners of NDI;
- 8) To liaison between regional governmental and non-governmental organizations (energy, public safety, cyberinfrastructure, e-trade, etc.), research funding organizations (EU-level, Nordic-level, Russia, etc.), and partner universities and institutes.

5.3. The NDI Scientific Thematic Groups (NDI STG)

Scientific thematic research groups are to be created in priority sectors of the ND Policy. Every group has a leader, a key person that monitors the work of the group. The leader of the thematic group interacts with the NDI Steering Group and participates in its meetings. In initial phase, the tasks of the Scientific Thematic Groups consist of the following activities:

- 1) To sense the demand for research, generate joint research ideas and engage in research projects;
- 2) To apply for funding for joint research projects;
- 3) To look for new inter- and multidisciplinary directions for the group;
- 4) To create guidelines for political decision-making;
- 5) To consult public and private bodies on ND issues;
- 6) To promote educational cooperation.

When necessary and depending on funding, thematic sub-groups will be created and case-specifically coordinated.

5.4. Promotion of NDI

In order to establish a well-functioning network with light administration, the flow of information has to be organized effectively.

Firstly, creating an informative, up-dated, and interactive **web site** is of great importance. The web site administration is permanently located in one place (partner university or institute), but all of the partners of NDI share responsibility in producing contents for the site.

Secondly, since publishing is a crucial function of NDI, **an NDI bulletin or newsletter** (in digital format) needs to be established during the first years of NDI. Later on, a journal (in digital format) of NDI research is suggested to be launched.

Thirdly, different marketing materials will be created once the institute starts to function. A logo for NDI is needed for identification and promotion, thus supporting the creation of a brand for the institute. NDI aims to become a brand that benefits its partners and is recognized for its activities. Marketing material in the form of informative brochures is also needed to support the emergence of the brand and to expand NDI and public awareness of it.

6 Funding NDI and its activities

To make fulfilling the tasks of NDI possible and to maintain its operations, **basic funding** is needed for coordination and steering group activities:

- 1) Coordination including the NDI Coordinator's salary, travelling costs, and administrative costs in the organisation where the Coordinator is situated;
- 2) Steering group activities i.e. support for travelling costs of the members of the NDI Steering Group and the leaders of the Scientific Thematic Groups to NDI Steering Group meetings.

The organisation of basic funding is one of the most fundamental problems to be solved already during the initial phase of the existence of NDI. Research and other activities of NDI are mostly based on collaborative projects receiving separate funding from different research funding sources.

7 Some examples of the first potential projects of NDI

1) Projects related to the establishment of NDI:

- Promotion of NDI: Creating and establishing effective interactive information channels, and marketing material for NDI
- Formation of NDI thematic groups: enhancement of research exchange and workshops among researchers, and mapping of existing networks and actors

2) Research projects of NDI:

- Critical comparative analysis of the policy priorities of the Nordic Council of Ministries, the Council of Baltic Sea States, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Arctic Council
- Study of emergency logistics: development of a theoretical and practical base for logistics for civil emergency situations in the border areas, implemented in cross-border collaboration

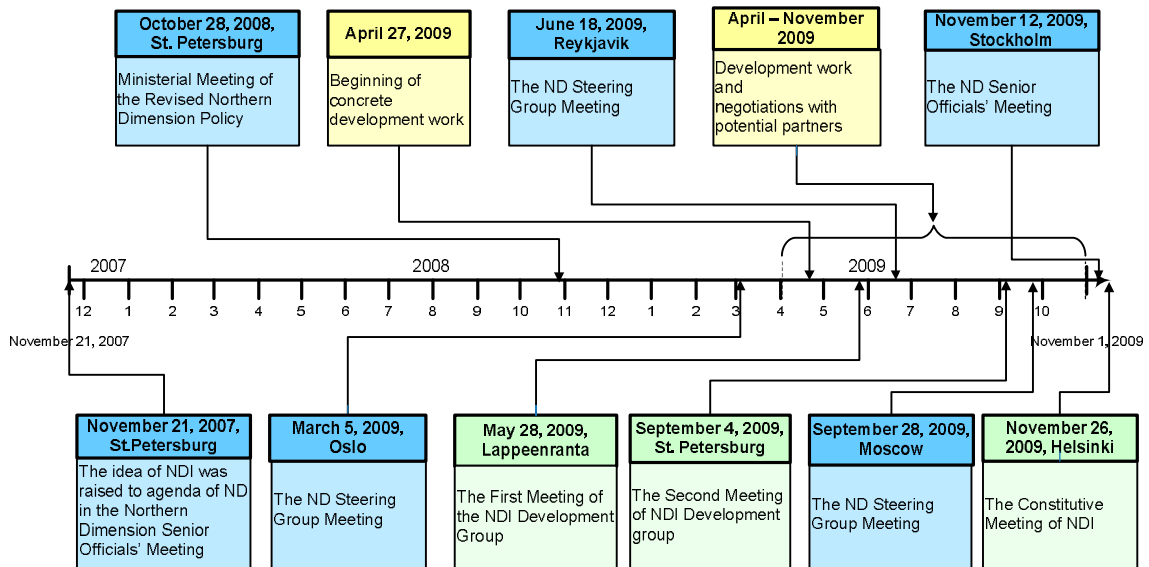
8 Summary

The Northern Dimension Institute (NDI) is an open networked umbrella organization of universities and research institutes. The main goal of NDI is to promote organized multidisciplinary research in the ND Policy priority sectors: energy and the environment, public health, logistics, culture and higher education. Thematic research groups are to be created in each of the above-mentioned priority sectors, but also other areas of interest can be brought to the agenda of NDI. The Institute continuously follows ND policy-making to maintain close interaction between decision-makers, researchers, and business.

NDI brings added value to its partners, policy-makers, and regional development. In its initial phase, NDI brings together universities, research institutes, and already existing academic networks, thus creating new partnerships among researchers to provide studies of high policy relevance. Later on, NDI increases the visibility of the ND Policy and Partnerships and contributes to their development. In addition, NDI can serve as a platform or a think-tank for knowledge exchange for experts and decision-makers.

The management of NDI consists of the NDI Coordinator, the person whose primary tasks are to enhance communication and to coordinate internal and external information flows, and the NDI Steering Group, which consists of representatives of the participating universities, institutes, and academic networks, and public and private organizations. The Steering Group is mainly concerned with monitoring the implementation of NDI activities. Moreover, effective information channels need to be created in order to guarantee the existence of NDI and to make its activities possible.

ANNEX 1 Stages of preparation of the Northern Dimension Institute



ANNEX 2 Internal and external partnerships of NDI

