



The Strategic Orientation of the NFS 2015-2019

This is a comprehensive strategic policy document for the NFS for the congress period 2015-2019. It was adopted by the Executive Board at a meeting in Helsinki on 26th November 2015.

The policy document is based on points of view and conclusions emanating from the NFS congress in Køge, Denmark on 27-29 May 2015. The congress delegates from the affiliated member unions worked with and discussed trade union challenges and areas to develop in the future from a broad perspective.

The strategy is in two parts. **“The Strategic Direction of the NFS between 2015-2019”** and **“The Overall Focus of Activities 2015-2019”**.

The strategic direction describes the challenges faced by the entire Nordic, European and global trade union movement focusing on three main areas. It focuses on issues and challenges that are common to all unions and that are perceived as long term. The aim is to highlight and point at the important overarching areas without taking a stance or determining which arena or the resources that should be used to deal with them.

The aim of the **overall focus of activities** is to determine on the basis of the strategic direction the main direction and the prioritised areas of activity for the mission and tasks of the NFS during the congress period. The focus is on two main prioritised areas and the document also includes a description of the tasks and mandate vis-à-vis different actors and arenas that are relevant to the collaborative work of the NFS.

At its autumn meeting, the NFS will adopt an action plan and the budget for the following year based on the strategy. The action plan is based on the strategic orientation and the operational assessments that are made by the Presidency, Presidium and General Secretary of the NFS. Thus, the strategic direction, the overall orientation of activities and the annual action plan form a cohesive whole that provides both strategic continuity as well as the flexibility required for the activities of the NFS over time.

The strategy is also based on the policy documents that were drawn up before and as a consequence of the first congress of the NFS in Ålesund 2012. The documents that still apply and that have governed the overall activities of the NFS since 2012 include:

- The NFS Declaration on the Future
- The NFS Future Group – Report
- The NFS Future Group – Nordic Priorities
- NFS Cooperation with the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council

The Strategic Orientation of the NFS from 2015 to 2019

Introduction

The Nordic collective bargaining model with extensive labour market regulation through collective agreements is unique, both from a European as well as a global perspective. It has succeeded in creating growth and jobs in the Nordic Region and evened out income gaps. A central part of the model and the way it works is the cooperation between the social partners and the social dialogue. A high level of trade union affiliation, strong independent social partners, a broad scope in agreements and constructive cooperation between the social partners are necessary prerequisites for stability, predictability and industrial peace. The model also facilitates the handling of structural change and conversion in the common Nordic labour market.

The model shows that it is possible to successfully combine economic growth and competitiveness with a comprehensive welfare state and far-reaching economic equality, even for small open economies like the Nordic economies where foreign trade is very important. Moreover, the establishment of strong well-functioning welfare states depends on this model.

The welfare state in the Nordic Region rests on universal principles and entails equal opportunities for all, social and sustainable development, solidarity, equality, gender equality and financial security. These are core values that enjoy high legitimacy and strong public support. The public provision of welfare including universal education and a high level of education is central for the advancement of social investment through employment and production. Good welfare systems have also contributed to increased gender equality, which in turn has led to a high level of employment.

The overarching aim of the NFS is to promote a sustainable, inclusive and just working life, socially, financially and ecologically, in the Nordic Region, Europe and globally. The NFS operates in a broad perspective for trade union and democratic rights and freedoms, and the development and the reinforcement of the Nordic collective bargaining model. The point of departure is full employment, sustainability, strengthening the rights and conditions of the workers, job security, development opportunities in working life and an improved working environment, reduced environmental impact and enhanced efficiency of resources.

The task of the NFS is to ensure close cooperation between the affiliated member unions. The cooperation shall promote the interests of trade union members in a broad sense through the exchange of experience, advocacy and collaboration on common goals. The basis for the cooperation is the common interests of the affiliates.

A sustainable inclusive working life

Fundamental human rights are an important point of departure for a sustainable Nordic labour market; the equal value of every person and equivalent rights and opportunities as expressed in the core conventions of the ILO. A sustainable Nordic labour market model is guaranteed by respecting trade union and democratic rights. The model and the core conventions shall therefore be complied with at the local, regional and international levels. Gender equality is also a central basis for a sustainable and inclusive working life.

A trade union challenge that is shared jointly is to work towards full employment and with international cooperation that aims to reinforce the rights and conditions of the workers. This means that the Nordic trade unions must take an active role in the process of change, which also presupposes that they work actively to achieve good conditions in order to maintain the trade union level of affiliation in the Nordic countries.

Full employment also leads to the best preconditions for an inclusive Nordic labour market that takes all groups in society into account, secures gender equality and integration. With the trade union aspirations that we have in common in the Nordic Region, it is important to create the preconditions for an equal and inclusive working life where all are equal, where consideration is taken of different types of needs and where we work against segregation. Working to create solutions to ensure that migrants and refugees who come to the Nordic Region shall have access to the labour market and that there are good conditions for integration is also very important.

A Nordic challenge is to develop the labour market model so that it includes people in all types of employment. A strategic area is to develop the labour market of the future where workers have a greater say when it comes to their own working environment and to facilitate the everyday lives of members by striving for better conditions, even where working hours are not fixed and where work is not fixed to a specific place or a fixed organisational structure. It is important that there is a sensible balance between the flexibility needs of the employers and the employees' requirements regarding predictability and good conditions.

The freedom of movement provides people and companies/operations with new opportunities which can contribute to progress and innovation but which also require better tools against social dumping and the grey and black economies. It is important to find solutions and strategies which ensure that employees work and companies operate under the same conditions in the Nordic labour market and as far as possible in our immediate neighbouring countries. A further challenge shared by trade unions is the work on improving the coordination of and solutions for people who move across borders.

Globalisation affects both society as well as the labour market and requires us to find new solutions. Trade unions participate in negotiations at different levels and at the same time progress is being made in different directions all at once. Collective bargaining is increasingly being conducted at the local level. The importance of regions in development work is growing and at the same time we face the immediate challenge of EU directives and international agreements. The challenges lie in the international context, in the development of the Nordic tripartite dialogue and at the national level.

Sustainable welfare and education

The Nordic Region needs a strong welfare model for a sustainable and competitive future. The public provision of welfare is of central importance for employment and production. A strong public sector lays the foundations for the necessary investments in lifelong learning, education and training, research, sustainable infrastructure, childcare and care for the elderly, and universal welfare systems. All this creates the framework conditions for a high level of employment, high productivity, development and sustainable growth. Gender equality also depends on good welfare services.

A solid basic education and a well-educated population are the basis for a competitive and sustainable economy. A further prerequisite for an equal society where everyone is offered the same opportunities is the compensating mission of universal education.

Higher education must be expanded with a high level of quality. In order to promote Nordic competitiveness, a concrete joint Nordic action plan on research and education cooperation should be drawn up – this will promote the supply of Nordic excellence, simplify cooperation between universities and university colleges and will benefit innovation.

Further training for professionals within the framework of their employment, without a deterioration in the basic preconditions for earning a living, is essential for lifelong learning, which is becoming increasingly important to ensure that the labour market is able to keep up with rapid global development. This needs to be done by taking the requirements and needs of tomorrow into consideration and cooperating and interacting with publicly controlled systems and the social partners.

Rapid, environmentally friendly and cross-border communication and transport routes contribute to the sustainable regionalisation of knowledge and growth regions in the Nordic Region and require common solutions for the cooperation of the Nordic community institutions.

An income insurance system, for people who are unemployed and/or on sick leave, is a fundamental precondition for a welfare society. Together with an active labour market policy this helps the unemployed to find new jobs and at the same time it helps those on sick leave to be able to return to work more quickly through rehabilitation.

Sustainable growth and competitiveness

Full employment through sustainable growth and competitiveness is a top priority for the Nordic trade union movement and the basis of a well-functioning welfare society.

Job creation and knowledge enhancement to stimulate sustainable growth are central focus areas in the Nordic trade unions' joint work on training and skills enhancement, investment issues, competitive preconditions, innovativeness and the development of research. A central point of departure for this joint work is to safeguard and to start from the need for social protection and to ensure that fundamental conditions and rights are respected. The Nordic countries are small open economies and also sensitive to economic disturbances in the world around them. An important point of departure for growth and a high level of employment in the Nordic Region is the ability to adapt and work with conversion under socially solid conditions. Education and training, an active labour market policy and transition support measures regulated in collective agreements are good examples of tools that help to strengthen our competitiveness, lead to a high level of employment and to security during change.

Socially successful companies are competitive, which in the long term contributes to making the Nordic Region a sustainable and competitive region with a high level of employment. A joint challenge from that perspective is making the link between the demand for human and democratic rights and the operations of companies.

The sustainable use of resources and collective agreements that contribute to green conversion and development are other central strategic points of departure. Investments that promote green conversion are very important and promote technological innovations at the same time as new job opportunities are created.

An important area for the joint trade union agenda is the increasingly rapid structural change coming from without, the development of the internet, digitisation and robotics. It is development that drives and brings down barriers to competition from the Nordic, European and global perspectives. This entails both opportunities as well as challenges for the Nordic Region that will fundamentally change the preconditions of working life, its contents and its knowledge and skills needs. The common Nordic labour market must be characterised by a strong ability to adapt and to be innovative, and by technical and information technological development. This does not only place high demands on the ability to work with conversion, the level of education and recurrent, regular lifelong learning but also the ability of the Nordic trade union movement to identify and predict new skills needs and where new jobs can be created. The identification of areas where there are driving forces working for innovation and development is also a crucial area.

Digital development has a long-term impact also on the development of collective agreement regulation and its contents. Alongside ordinary terms like employees and employers, the trend with regard to the growing sharing economy reinforces the existence of different types of employment, e.g., self-employed and contractors. Nordic cooperation can in that context act as a platform for the exchange of ideas and experience regarding these challenges.

From the international perspective, the Nordic economies are often described as successful and as role models, which means that the Nordic countries are able to contribute with constructive proposals for sustainable growth and competitiveness in international arenas. This applies not least when international trade agreements are being drawn up. A central part of this is that these agreements take trade union and human and democratic rights and freedoms into consideration. Another is that global trade and investments shall contribute to welfare, social development and full employment. It is therefore especially important for the Nordic Region to cooperate internationally to achieve common goals and to generate more of an impact on Nordic issues as regards both sustainable growth and competitiveness and social security and regulations that safeguard fundamental rights.

The overall focus of the activities of the NFS between 2015 and 2019

In order to actively influence developments and respond to the joint challenges faced by the trade union movement in the Nordic countries as regards the work being done for workers' rights, the work of the NFS focuses on two priority areas. These are based on the NFS policy document adopted by congress in 2012 and the strategy for the current congress period. The first area is the Nordic collective bargaining model which is the most important tool to achieve growth and competitiveness and which creates jobs, social security, stability, equal opportunities, gender equality, flexibility and the ability to work with conversion. The second is the mobility of labour which is an important driving force that develops but also poses a challenge to the labour market models of the Nordic countries.

The Nordic collective bargaining model

- As working life undergoes changes, the NFS shall work to maintain, develop and defend the Nordic collective bargaining model based on the interests of the workers. The NFS shall prioritise the enhancement of a broad knowledge of the unique characteristics and advantages of the model.
- The NFS shall pursue the issue of functioning tripartite cooperation at the Nordic level. The question of encouraging employer representatives to participate more actively shall be in particular focus as well as the issue of evaluating the cooperation with the employers on a continuous basis.
- The NFS shall keep abreast of the development of European policy and legislation and identify the areas that have an impact on the Nordic collective bargaining model.
- The NFS shall keep abreast of the impact of events in the world around us and globalisation on the Nordic collective bargaining model and highlight the strengths of the model as regards the creation of full employment based on financial, social and green conditions.
- The NFS shall underline that a high level of affiliation is one of the fundamental conditions of the Nordic collective bargaining model.
- The NFS shall monitor and follow the development of the Nordic welfare model where it has an impact and touches upon labour market issues and the Nordic collective bargaining model.

The mobility of labour

- The point of departure for the NFS is that mobility shall take place with decent, fair and equal conditions and in accordance with the principle of equal treatment.
- The NFS shall through cooperation and the exchange of experience between affiliates identify and counteract social dumping and the effects of the black and grey economies in the Nordic Region and in neighbouring countries.
- The NFS shall work for mobility in the Nordic labour market to increase employment and to reinforce Nordic competitiveness. Thus, the NFS shall also work to decrease border obstacles that are linked to working life.
- The NFS shall identify opportunities and challenges in order to secure decent and fair conditions for workers in different types of employment. This shall be done through cooperation and the exchange of experience, and from the perspective of a changing working life.
- The NFS shall work to find solutions that at the national level facilitate establishment and integration in the joint Nordic labour market.

- The NFS shall work to strengthen trade union rights in neighbouring countries by, for example, enhancing knowledge about the ILO and fundamental democratic rights in working life.
- The NFS shall also work for the development of trade unions in neighbouring countries and encourage companies and operations to take their social responsibility from the Nordic, European and global perspectives.

Based on the overall focus of activities the NFS shall

- Draw up a joint position for all the NFS affiliates on important Nordic issues.
- When the need arises adopt statements and policy documents where there is a strong consensus between affiliates.
- Through analyses, conferences, the exchange of experience and collaboration between affiliates contribute to and promote good preconditions for positive trade union development at the national, Nordic, Baltic Region, European and global levels.
- Have a continuous dialogue with the relevant Nordic actors.
- Cooperate with the relevant authorities, politicians and representatives of employers on issues that are important to the NFS.
- Be the platform for the coordination of European issues for the affiliates.
- Be the platform for the coordination of Baltic Region issues for the affiliates by, for example, developing the BASTUN network.

The NFS works together and coordinates initiatives with the following:

With an independent mandate in relation to:

- The Nordic Council of Ministers
- The Nordic Council
- Other relevant actors in the Nordic Area

With the task of coordinating meetings, activities and a rotation order for Nordic representation on behalf of the affiliates in relation to:

- The ETUC
- The ITUC
- The ILO
- The TUAC

With the task of developing trade union cooperation in the Baltic Region, establishing contacts and areas for cooperation as well as following up and influencing political ventures within the framework of the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region in relation to:

- BASTUN
- The BSLF/CBSS
- Other relevant actors in the Baltic Region.