

**Ambition for the future** of the Nordic Research, education, and innovation system:

*The world is in the middle of a pandemic. The Nordic countries have obtained experiences from this period that make us able to meet future challenges better. We must utilize these experiences!*

*Based on our Nordic values of trust, transparency and a belief in democracy, knowledge and education we can create a more common Nordic research-, education- and innovation system that works more efficiently in contributing to the green transition and sustainable growth. We can achieve this with political will, action, and leadership by all of us – both in politics, business life, research, universities, funding organizations, and innovation agencies!*

The challenges and **lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis** has been discussed at a series of webinars during the Fall 2020 with a combined total of 70 top leaders from all the Nordic countries. The top leaders are from universities, research institutes, private companies, innovation agencies, private research-financing funds, public research councils, and ministries. During the discussions, many valuable insights, experiences, reflections, ideas, and proposals were shared concerning how the Nordic countries could have used a strengthened Nordic collaboration to stand stronger in the handling of the pandemic.

Following the webinars, the steering committee has collected these inputs and provided the abovementioned common **ambition for the future** of the Nordic collaboration with the purpose of strengthening the region for future crises – e.g. when it comes to the climate crisis. As the ambition clearly states, *we need action*. Therefore, the group also suggests the following developments and action points.

**At the political level:**

- We should **increase our crisis management** and communicate more cross-nationally regarding research-based advising. The Covid-19 crisis has taught us that we quickly become too introvert, nationally focused and stick to our national systems. We have therefore made too small research studies and we miss the learnings from each other – also from neighbor countries.
- We should **strengthen the Nordic political cooperation** around research, education, and innovation. After Brexit, the Nordic countries have found themselves in a new situation. We need a strong common voice in the EU. The Nordic cooperative structures are in place, but they need to be revitalized.
- We should develop a **new funding model for continuing education** that takes into account lifelong learning and the need for societal transition. This effort can advantageously be Nordic.

**At the system level** – in the research-, education-, and innovation system the existing organizations and their leaders should start acting on the following:

- The universities' **innovation ecosystems** should cooperate much more across – nationally and across the Nordic countries.
- Research funders, public and private research organizations, and private companies should develop the Nordic cooperation structures. This makes it possible to collectively deliver on the new missions in Horizon Europe at a cross-disciplinary and cross-national level. New Nordic missions can also be considered. Together, a strong communication effort about the **mission- and impact orientation** of the future will be made, contributing to more cooperation between businesses, universities, and research organizations.

- The universities should establish Nordic partnerships to lift **lifelong learning** to a higher level. We need flexible and readily accessible high-quality competence development. The digital transition during Covid-19 can be utilized now.

Specifically, **at the Nordic level, NordForsk** will embark on:

- **Continuing the webinar series** which easily and flexibly increases the Nordic collaboration and knowledge.
- Beginning the following initiatives with participation from all the Nordic countries:
  - A **common Nordic top leadership development program** focusing on the work with realising the ambition for the future. This is for top leaders in the entire research-, education-, and innovation system, and is also open for private businesses and research funders.
  - A development project with the purpose of establishing a common **Open Nordic University**, which is digitally accessible to all citizens in the Northern region.
  - A development project that assesses the possibilities of establishing a common Nordic research-, education- and innovation program concerning **digitalization and societal transition** – e.g. in the green transition.
  - A solid common Nordic **uncovering of the strongest research-innovation clusters** in the Nordics.

These initiatives and the overall ambition for the future of the Nordic region also build on the “[Action Plan 2021-2024](#)” from the Nordic Council of Ministers, aiming for the Nordics to become the most sustainable and integrated region in the World.

The following people have participated in the webinar series, support the above-mentioned developments, and will work for realizing the abovementioned ambition.

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