

# **NORDIC PUBLIC HEALTH PREPAREDNESS AGREEMENT**

The Governments of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden,

agreeing on the necessity of cooperation between the health and medical authorities in the contracting states in order to increase the capacity of the Nordic countries to deal with emergencies and disasters, such as natural disasters and events (accidents and acts of terror) involving, for instance, radioactive emissions, biological substances and chemical substances,

desiring to ensure effective assistance when a Nordic country suffers an emergency or disaster and assistance is not covered by other Nordic multilateral and bilateral agreements, such as the agreement between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden of 20 January 1989 concerning cooperation across territorial boundaries to prevent or limit damage to people, property or the environment in the event of accidents (the “Nordic Rescue Services Agreement”),

desiring a framework agreement that is conducive to cooperation on concrete contingency preparedness,

further promoting improved cooperation in the area,

have agreed to enter into a Nordic Public Health Preparedness Agreement worded as follows:

## **Article 1**

### Definitions

For the purposes of this Agreement, the expressions below shall have the following meaning:

a) “Nordic country”

any of the contracting states and the autonomous regions of the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland, in so far as these regions have given their consent to participation in the cooperation,

b) responsible authority

in Denmark:

Ministry of the Interior and Health

in Finland:

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

in Iceland:

Ministry of Health and Social Security

in Norway:

Ministry of Health

in Sweden:

the Government (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs), or the authority determined by the Government.

## **Article 2**

### Purpose

This Agreement shall provide a basis for cooperation between the Nordic countries for the purpose of preparing and developing health and medical care preparedness so as to be better able to deal with emergencies and disasters, such as natural disasters and events (accidents and acts of terror) involving, for instance, radioactive emissions, biological substances and chemical substances.

## **Article 3**

### Scope

This Agreement applies to cooperation between the responsible authorities in the area of health (and social services). The cooperation encompasses:

- a. preparation of contingency measures and
- b. assistance on occasions when one of the contracting states suffers an emergency or disaster.

This Agreement is of a supplementary nature and shall therefore not apply in cases where assistance is covered by the Nordic Rescue Services Agreement of 20 January 1989.

The distribution of the administrative and financial consequences arising from cooperation on health and medical care preparedness referred to in Article 3(a) shall be agreed on a case-by-case basis.

In the case of cooperation referred to in Article 3(b), the provisions of the “Nordic Rescue Services Agreement” concerning financial compensation shall be applied as far as possible.

This Agreement shall not constitute an obstacle to Nordic countries fulfilling their obligations under international law or participating in international cooperation.

Within the framework of this Agreement, the responsible authorities may enter into agreements in individual areas.

## **Article 4**

### Commitments of the participating countries

The Nordic countries undertake to:

1. provide assistance to one another upon request, as far as possible under the provisions of this Agreement,
2. inform one another, as promptly as possible, of measures they plan to implement, or are implementing, that will have or are expected to have a significant impact on the other Nordic countries,
3. promote cooperation and as far as possible remove obstacles in national legislation, regulations and other rules of law,
4. provide opportunities for the exchange of experience, cooperation and competence building,
5. promote the development of cooperation in this area,
6. inform one another of relevant changes in the countries’ preparedness regulations, including amendments of legislation.

## **Article 5**

### Application of the Agreement

The Ministers for Health and Social Affairs in the contracting states shall meet at regular intervals to discuss problems in the area covered by the Agreement. The country chairing the Nordic Council of Ministers is responsible for ensuring that such meetings take place.

The practical implementation of this Agreement requires the responsible authorities to maintain direct contact with one another.

Each year the responsible authorities shall together evaluate the development and implementation of this Agreement. This should be done, where possible, in conjunction with existing forums and meeting activities.

## **Article 6**

### Entry into force

This Agreement shall enter into force thirty days after all the contracting countries have notified the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in writing that they have approved the Agreement.

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs shall notify the other States Parties and the Nordic Council of Ministers in writing of the time at which the Agreement was received and the time at which the Agreement will enter into force.

## **Article 7**

### Termination

A party to the Agreement may terminate the Agreement by submitting written notification to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which shall notify the other States Parties of the time at which any such notice of termination has been received. Termination shall enter into force six months after notice has been received.

## **Article 8**

### Deposit of the Agreement

The originals of this Agreement shall be deposited at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which in turn shall provide certified copies to the other States Parties.

Done at Svølvær on 14 June 2002 in one copy each in Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish, each text being equally authentic.

For the Government of Denmark

For the Government of Finland

For the Government of Iceland

For the Government of Norway

For the Government of Sweden