

The Nordic Road and Transport Research Program enters its 5th year

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Finnra

NordFou vej&trafik

- Nordic road administration experts co-operate in many r&d projects and programs. As the field of co-operation extended globally, there was a need to organise Nordic co-operation on a more systematic basis.
- In December 2004, the Nordic Road Administrations' Directors General signed a framework agreement on road and transport research and development, the NordFoU vej&trafik agreement, "to strengthen scientific and technological contributions within the sphere of authority of the Nordic Road Authorities"

The co-operation model

- In a NordFoU project, two or more road authorities agree on project ownership and designate one to have project responsibility.
- Co-operation follows the "common obligation" model: the responsible administration handles all financing, invoicing the other authorities for their share, makes all contracts, regardless of country of origin, and oversees all outputs.
- The results are owned by the participating authorities, and disseminated to all NordFoU member countries.

Activities since 2005

- A slow program start - five projects implemented:
 - The Nord2000Road Engineering Model (finalised)
 - The ETSI project for bridge life cycle optimisation (ongoing)
 - Disturbance from lighting during road works at night (ending)
 - Pavement performance modeling (ongoing)
 - Bridges without waterproofing (started)
- A number of project ideas under preparation, i.e.
 - Road surface texture for low noise and rolling resistance
 - Evaluation of tunnel safety projects in the Nordic context
 - End-of-contract functional specifications for long duration PPP and other contracts

From ideas into projects

- Some reasons that ideas have not developed into common projects:
 - climate change: the initial national program grew so large that there were no resources left for involving other countries
(but returned to the international market via ERA-NET ROAD!)
 - safer roadside geometry: the national projects had proceeded before the co-operation mechanism could be set up,
 - for some other ideas: difficult to express them in a way that would engage the interest of other countries or the project manager's reluctance to submit the idea to co-operative management.
- the ideas easiest to implement have been those based on previous co-operation

Modes of operation

- The Nordic Steering Group meets once, the Preparatory Group three times a year; chaired by the lead country, which also provides a secretariat.
- The overall framework is based on a research priority list.
- A set of project and program documents
 - forms for project idea, proposal, project plan and contract
 - reports on project status and final project evaluation
 - the program annual report.
- For dissemination: a website, www.nordfou.org, and publication in the Nordic Road & Transport Research Journal

Finances

- A designated share of r&d budgets:
 - not a binding commitment
 - not additional to ordinary r&d funding
 - an indication of the space available for this type of projects
- Average annual level is ca 0.2 M Euro for each country
 - costs for researchers and consultants, mainly shared equally, but a lower share for Iceland, taking account of the scale difference.
 - administrations participate with personnel for project management, meetings and dissemination; each carries its own costs.
- Total project volume ca 1.8 M Euro
 - ca 50 000 Euro per project and participating country

NordFoU today:

- NordFoU vej&trafik is a stable program with strong links to the Nordic Road Administrations' tradition of co-operation.
- The connection to the Nordic Road Association is reinforced by the Association's new strategy
- The Road Administrations take account of NordFoU in their r&d policy development.
- NordFoU has unified the methodology for co-operation and offers a set of tools for r&d managers.

To date, NordFoU has produced

- On process
 - a common obligation structure, with 3-5 participants per project
 - a standardised contract model
 - a set of project documents
 - an annual management routine, with rotating chairmanship and secretariat
 - a home page with a continuous updating mechanism.
- On substance
 - a priority subjects listing
 - one finalised project, Nord2000Road
 - four projects under way
 - a set of project proposals under preparation.

Towards systematic, integrated r&d co-operation:

- Development needed:
 - The flow of project ideas to finalised proposals, contracts and collaboration is still intermittent and depending on periodic campaigns.
 - Project managers are not familiar with the methodology.
 - The most time-consuming process is now identifying and clearly expressing the true common interest.
- A powerful perspective:
 - International co-operation as a key element in developing national networks of excellence.
 - NordFoU vej&trafik mechanisms develop in parallel with and probably in increasing integration with ERA-NET ROAD.