Norden and Nordic cooperation

Allow us to introduce Nordic cooperation to you. It stretches across five countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden – and the three autonomous regions of the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Aaland. The Norden Association, an NGO with a 98-year history of promoting Nordic cooperation, and its folk high school, Nordens Biskops-Arnö, have the pleasure of inviting you to a one-day seminar that will be held on 8 June at one of the most beautiful places in the Stockholm area – the island of Biskops-Arnö, situated in Lake Mälaren 60 km north-west of Stockholm. The seminar is supported by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the embassies of Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway.

The Nordic countries have a total population of about 25 million inhabitants spread over a vast geographical area and speaking several different languages (although 18 million of us can understand each other), different relations with the EU and NATO, economies built on different industrial structures and a shared history filled with wars. Yet relations are close at all levels and our relationships resemble those of a family of strong personalities – not always uncomplicated, but nonetheless bound tightly together.

Explaining our relationships to people outside the family is not always easy, but we intend to give it a try. For us, the Nordic region is much more than Scandinavia (which strictly speaking refers only to Denmark, Norway and Sweden). It is a tight mesh of numerous cross-border ties at all levels of society, characterised by bottom-up cooperation and unquestioned recognition among its inhabitants.

Norden in a changing Europe

The recent years’ calamities in Europe have come one after the other – the financial crisis, the migration challenge and now Brexit. The Nordic countries have been influenced by all three. The question we would like to address at this seminar is of another kind: can the Nordic countries, with their well-established cooperation and common identity, be a part of the solution for the future of Europe? Can the cooperation built on multilevel governance and involvement of often divergent perspectives bring more concordance in Europe?

A panel representing the five countries will discuss challenges and possibilities from several perspectives, such as to what extent will Brexit have an impact on our future in Europe? Is parliamentarian cooperation more necessary in a changing Europe? How might our transatlantic relations develop during Mr. Trump’s presidency? To what extent will gender equality have an impact on cooperation in Europe?

This year’s moderator is Ms Anne-Francoise Hivert, a ‘Le Monde’ journalist with an extensive knowledge of the Nordic countries. As always, we invite non-Nordic moderators to bring in a fresh, and often unexpected, perspective to our discussions.
Norden in a changing Europe
Programme – Thursday, 8 June

08.30         Bus departs from the City Terminal

09.30         Registration/coffee

10.00         Welcome
Mr Mats Hellström, Chairman of the Board, Nordens Biskops-Arnö. Former Minister for Trade and County Governor of Stockholm

10.10         This year’s topic from a French point of view
Ms Anne-Francoise Hivert, Journalist with ‘Le Monde’

10.30         Panel discussion
The Nordic countries and Brexit
Dr Juha Jokela, Programme Director – the EU research programme, Finland

Transforming social norms by engaging men in gender equality
Ms Ásdis Ólafsdóttir, Lead author of the Barbershop Toolbox on mobilising men for gender equality, Iceland

The transatlantic link
Dr Ulf Sverdrup, Director of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Norway

Parliamentarian cooperation – a tool to strengthen the Nordic countries
Mr Håkan Svenneling, MP, Left Party, Sweden

12.35         The history of the Nordic countries – an exposé
Dr Gunnar Wetterberg

12.50         Concluding remarks by the moderator

13.00         Lunch in the Gothic Hall, a medieval hall dating back to 1320, the oldest hall of this kind still in use in Sweden. The lunch will be followed by a guided tour.

15.00         Bus departs for Stockholm

16.00         Bus arrives at the City Terminal