

NABC and AEC: More sustainable Arctic business

The Nordic business federations have established a *Nordic Arctic Business Council* (NABC), where 20 Nordic companies with Arctic business interests give their input on how the Nordic countries can facilitate and speak with a stronger voice on sustainable economic development underlining environmental soundness as a prerequisite for a license to operate in the Arctic region.

The work of the NABC will feed into a number of policy venues. First of all, NABC will be able to give advice to Nordic governments on how to ensure better Arctic framework conditions for Nordic companies. This input can be given directly to individual Nordic governments, but also to the Nordic Council of Ministers.

However, the work of NABC will also feed into the work of the Arctic Economic Council (AEC), where businesses from the eight Arctic Council member states and permanent observers have joined forces to improve the Arctic business environment. The work of AEC is aimed at facilitating Arctic business-to-business activities and responsible economic development, as well as the sharing of best practices through arctic to arctic approach, technological solutions, standards and other relevant information.

NABC considers the work of the AEC highly important for promotion of sustainable economic development and advocates close cooperation between the AEC and the Arctic Council in all issues related directly or indirectly with business in the Arctic region.

NABC underlines, that the Arctic Council and the Arctic Economic Council programmes should continuously support sustainable economic and financial development and continue executing the Arctic Economic Councils' overarching themes by launching the working groups efficiently without any undue delay.

In order to ensure the improved framework conditions for sustainable Arctic economic development, NABC's businesses highlighted three main elements at their founding meeting in Copenhagen in May 2014. First of all the infrastructure in the Arctic region needs to be improved to better facilitate Arctic transfer of people, goods, services and data. This will require increased investments in infrastructure, which can come from both existing financial institutions of Arctic Council member states, but also from private investment funds. And if the public and private partners join forces, the public-private partnerships will be able to attract significant investments to the Arctic region.

Secondly, businesses highlighted the need for improving regulatory cooperation across the Arctic. By streamlining technical standards for Arctic equipment, developing new Arctic regulation in joint cooperation and spreading knowledge on good regulatory practices, it will be possible to create an interconnected Arctic region.

Thirdly, businesses highlighted the need for improving the availability of qualified workforce in the Arctic. Education is key towards ensuring this, but it is equally important to ensure that the workforce can move easily across the Arctic region. This precipitates the much needed investments in infrastructure as well as regulatory cooperation highlighted above.

The areas highlighted by NABC are given to Nordic businesses representatives as an input to the AEC

At the AEC first meeting it was decided to establish a number of working groups to address Arctic business development:

- Infrastructure (maritime transportation; communications and IT; aviation)
- Energy (oil, gas and renewable sources)
- Mining
- Tourism
- Fishing
- Human resources investments and capacity building

Each working group has been tasked with analyzing the business area/sector through the lens of one or two overarching themes including:

- Establishing strong market connections between the Arctic states;
- Encouraging public-private partnerships for infrastructure investments;
- Creating stable and predictable regulatory frameworks;
- Facilitating knowledge and data exchange between industry and academia; and
- Traditional indigenous knowledge, stewardship and a focus on small businesses.