

# Thematic strategy: International Activities in the Norwegian Public Roads Administration

June 2017

## 1. Introduction

By instructions of 2011, the Norwegian Public Roads Administration (NPRA) is to “follow up international activities related to agreements, development aid, rules and regulations, research and the exchange of experience etc.”<sup>1</sup>

The present document sets out the aims of our international activities, specifies focus areas and activities, and describes organisation, division of responsibilities and use of resources. The NPRA’s corporate strategy and allocation letter from the government make up the framework for our activities. This document replaces our policy document from 2009 and will be revised as required. We refer to our quality system for descriptions of processes for the implementation of activities.

## 2. Aims

Our international activities have three aims:

- They are to provide the NPRA with new knowledge to strengthen and enhance professional development in our organisation.
- They are to ensure improved coordination of cross-border plans, projects and transports in the Nordic countries and the High North.
- They are to contribute to the development of rules and regulations within the field of roads and road traffic in Norway through influencing such development and meeting Norway’s commitment to implement EU regulations within the framework of the EEA agreement.

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<sup>1</sup> Under the instructions of 2011, development aid is part of NPRA activities. However, road transport is no longer a priority issue in Norwegian development aid policy, and the NPRA has consequently terminated its development aid work.

### **3. Focus areas**

Our international activities comprise three focus areas with associated activities that are linked to the overall aims.

#### **3.1 Knowledge acquisition**

We depend on knowledge<sup>2</sup> from the world around us in order to develop our people and organisation, while also holding a professional responsibility to share our knowledge with the world. We need to acquire knowledge from other countries based on two different types of need. The first type of need is to keep up with or be at the forefront of developments, and to find out if we may learn from other countries, while the second type of need springs from a lack of knowledge in our own organisation and in Norway in general when it comes to solving a specific problem.

The exchange of knowledge takes place in different fora and by different methods as described below.

#### **Participation in international organisations**

##### **Multidisciplinary organisations**

The NPRA is a member of three multidisciplinary organisations: The Nordic Road Association (NVF), the Conference of European Directors of Roads (CEDR) and the World Road Association (PIARC). Participation in these organisations is to be coordinated for optimal benefits.

The NVF facilitates Nordic cooperation within the road sector, with members from public authorities, consultants, contractors, interest organisations, and research/educational institutions. The work of the NVF follows four-year strategic plans, and knowledge exchange takes place in various committees and ad-hoc working groups.

CEDR is a platform for cooperation among road administrations in Europe. It is not affiliated to the European Commission, but its work is largely based on EU transport policy. CEDR has rolling three-year action plans that comprise working groups, workshops, project work and R&D projects.

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<sup>2</sup> Knowledge is here defined to include information, professional skills and experience.

PIARC is a worldwide organisation and offers opportunities for knowledge exchange and contact with professionals from other parts of the world. It includes members from the public as well as the private sector. Our participation in PIARC to some extent involves the transfer of knowledge to low and medium income countries, as this is an expressed goal for PIARC. The work of PIARC follows four-year strategic plans where committees and ad-hoc working groups are appointed.

### **Specialist fora**

The multidisciplinary organisations do not cover all specialist fields where we need to keep track of international developments. We therefore participate in a number of specialist organisations and networks in the Nordic countries, in Europe and globally when this serves our needs.

### **Research and development**

National priority areas for R&D are to be strengthened through participation in international R&D fora. This gives us access to knowledge networks, financial resources and opportunities for demonstration and testing.

In the Nordic region, we participate in NordFoU whose task is to initiate joint Nordic research projects. NordFoU is based on an agreement between Nordic road administrations on joint implementation and funding of R&D projects.

In Europe, our cooperation partners are European road administrations, through the CEDR Transnational Road Research Programme, and the Forum of European National Highway Research Laboratories (FEHRL), which is an association of research laboratories linked to national road administrations. FEHRL also gives us access to R&D activities in the United States and Australia through their associated memberships.

On request from the Ministry of Transport and Communications, we are involved in EU research programmes and in the OECD International Transport Forum (ITF).

### **Bilateral cooperation**

Cooperation with road authorities in another country, in the form of knowledge exchange, R&D cooperation etc., will be based on the identification of joint challenges within fields of expertise where each party may learn from the other. However, due to our relatively

extensive involvement in international organisations and R&D projects, the need for bilateral cooperation agreements is less obvious.

### Work exchanges, study trips and conferences

A work exchange in a road administration or organisation abroad normally lasts between a few weeks and a year, and provides an opportunity to acquire in-depth knowledge. We participate in an exchange programme in CEDR where employees in European road administrations may work for up to a few months in another country's road administration. A work exchange is also possible through bilateral agreements with other countries' road administrations.

Study trips provide opportunities to learn about methods and techniques and how things work in practice. Conferences (including congresses, seminars etc.) are well suited for participants to acquire an overview of state-of-the-art knowledge, innovations and new ideas.

## **3.2 Cooperation in the Nordic region and the High North**

Nordic transport administrations have joined forces to establish a more structured cooperation on cross-border plans, projects and transports. So far, there has been cooperation on individual projects/routes. However, there has been little cooperation on strategic choices and priorities in the work to prepare national transport plans in order to coordinate plans and budgets.

The High North is an important priority area for the government. The Barents Euro-Arctic Pan-European Transport Area (BEATA) focuses on transport cooperation in the Barents region. It is to contribute to developing an efficient transport system that facilitates increased mobility across borders in the region. Members of BEATA are Norway, Finland, Sweden, Russia and the European Commission, and the Norwegian Public Roads Administration assists the Ministry of Transport and Communications in protecting Norwegian interests. As a part of the BEATA cooperation, the four countries have developed a joint transport plan: The Joint Barents Transport Plan. The intention is to incorporate this plan into the National Transport Plan.

## **3.3 EU legislation and obligations under the EEA agreement**

The EEA agreement of 1994 commits Norway to adopting EU legislation. The Norwegian Public Roads Administration (NPRA) is to adapt its activities to the EEA strategy and six-month EEA work programmes of the Ministry of Transport and Communications. We are to

keep track of initiatives in the EU that may affect our areas of responsibility. In consultation with the Ministry, the NPRA participates in committees and working groups in order to influence the development of rules and regulations. Furthermore, the NPRA is to disseminate information on, and implement, adopted directives and policies related to NPRA responsibilities.

EU related work is also carried out through participation in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the European Committee for Standardization (CEN). Adaptation of standards is in principle voluntary, but EU legislation may in some cases make the adoption of international standards mandatory.

## **4. Organisation, division of responsibilities and use of resources**

### **4.1 Organisation and division of responsibilities**

#### **Responsibilities of the Director General's Staff (Directorate of Public Roads)**

The Director General's Staff is responsible for the development and organisation of the NPRA's international activities. It is to coordinate participation and cooperation that takes place across different NPRA units:

- Participation in multidisciplinary organisations (NVF, CEDR, and PIARC)
- Bilateral cooperation agreements with organisations/institutions in other countries
- Participation in selected international conferences (see below)
- Study visits from abroad (see below)
- Cooperation in the Nordic countries on cross-border plans, projects, and transports

#### **Responsibilities of other units**

**Units in the Directorate of Public Roads** are responsible for keeping track of and participating in international activities within their respective fields of responsibility. This includes participation in specialist fora, R&D cooperation, EU/UNECE regulatory work etc. NPRA Regions may be involved as required.

With regard to EU/UNECE regulatory work, the coordinating responsibility lies with the departments concerned. The work on European regulations will be an integral part of the regulatory work for those departments that hold such responsibility within different areas. These departments are to have an EEA coordinator that participates in an internal EEA forum. The Director General's Staff does not have a coordinating function but is the point of contact for the Ministry and the internal disseminator of general information.

**The Human Resources and Administration Department** is responsible for the CEDR staff exchange programme.

**The NPRA Regions** are to keep the Director General's Staff in the Directorate of Public Roads informed of international activities that take place on a regional level.

**The NPRA Northern Region** has a particular responsibility for cooperation in the High North. Cooperation and consultation with the Directorate is required with regard to cross-border plans, projects and transports of national interest.

### Participation in conferences

In order to avoid too high attendance at certain conferences, the Director General's Staff is to coordinate the selection of participants. This applies to the following conferences:

- NVF Via Nordica – every four years
- PIARC World Road Congress – every four years
- Transport Research Arena (TRA) – every two years
- Transportation Research Board (TRB) – every year
- ITS World Congress – every year
- Velo-City – every year

### Study visits from abroad

The Director General's Staff is responsible for receiving study visits from abroad when there is no other unit that would be the natural host for the visit. Visits from other countries' public authorities are to be given priority over visits from private organisations and parties. A document describing the procedure for visits to the NPRA is available on our website.

## 4.2 Use of resources

We are to be conscious of our use of resources in all international participation and cooperation, and our level of activity must be in line with our staff and budget situation at any given time. All participation takes place within the budget of the unit involved. Resources for EEA work are included in our resources for regulatory work in general.

In recent years, the use of web-based cooperation and communication forms has increased. International as well as national stakeholders are now increasingly facilitating the use of web-based events (meetings, seminars etc.). It is also becoming increasingly possible to

follow conferences via social media (e.g. Twitter), allowing participation without physical presence.

Increased use of ICT within international cooperation will lead to reduced time and travel costs, and thus to more cost-efficient cooperation forms and acquisition of knowledge. At the same time, cooperation and knowledge sharing is to a great extent based on trust, which is most easily built through physical presence. A combination of physical and virtual cooperation and communication forms will therefore be necessary.