



Coordination of Nordic Building Regulations

Unlocking the
Nordic Construction Market

Workshop, Sheraton Hotel, Stockholm, 27 October 2025



Summary

The workshop **Coordination of Nordic Building Regulations** brought together leading stakeholders from the Nordic construction sector to discuss opportunities for coordinating building regulations and developing a common Nordic construction market.

The discussions demonstrated that such a development requires clear political decisions. At the same time, the potential benefits are considerable in terms of increased competitiveness, strengthened innovation capacity, and more cost-efficient construction.

Several concrete proposals were presented, including Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs), coordination of climate assessments, and a gradual harmonisation of regulations.

Åland was highlighted as a potential test bed and bridge-builder, where its own planning and building legislation is already being used to combine Finnish legislation with Swedish building regulations.

Overall, the workshop showed that the Nordic countries have strong conditions for developing a more integrated construction market and serving as an international role model.

About the Workshop

In connection with the Nordic Council Session at the Swedish Parliament from 27–30 October, the workshop **Coordination of Nordic Building Regulations** was held on 27 October at the Sheraton Hotel in Stockholm.

The workshop was organised by the Nordic Council of Ministers' Border Obstacle Council, the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), and the Svinesund Committee in cooperation with several partners.

CEOs and senior executives from construction companies, architectural firms, developers and other key stakeholders gathered to discuss opportunities for increased coordination of building regulations across the Nordic countries.





Background and Context

An important background to the workshop is the declaration adopted by the Nordic ministers responsible for housing and construction in 2018 concerning a common Nordic construction market. This direction has subsequently been reaffirmed by successive governments and aligns with the Nordic Prime Ministers' 2019 vision of making the Nordic Region the world's most sustainable and integrated region by 2030.

Many contributions during the day emphasised that a process aimed at coordinating building regulations and establishing a common Nordic construction market ultimately requires political decisions. The potential benefits are significant. A more integrated market would create a larger and more dynamic market for construction and housing development, facilitate cross-border business activities, stimulate housing construction and reduce costs.

The conditions for such development are also more favourable than they have been for a long time. The construction sector is undergoing major transformation through industrialisation, digitalisation and increasing use of AI-based services.





Introduction and Perspectives

Fredrik Karlström, Chair of the Border Obstacle Council, opened the conference and emphasised that the efficiency of the built environment sector affects almost every other part of society, including growth, mobility, trade, industrial production and education.

He highlighted that the Nordic countries share similar climatic conditions, building traditions and high standards for quality, environmental performance and safety, making them well suited for closer cooperation.

Particular attention was given to Åland's experience of combining Swedish, Finnish and Ålandic regulations. Building projects on Åland effectively operate as legal Nordic hybrids and may serve as a model for future cooperation.

Anders Ahnlid, Director-General of the National Board of Trade Sweden, described how differing national regulations discourage many SMEs from operating across borders. He stressed the importance of greater harmonisation, particularly in relation to Eurocodes and technical standards.

Helle Redder Momsen, presented the Nordic Sustainable Construction programme, focusing on harmonised life-cycle assessments and climate-impact calculations for buildings.

Dr. Kjell Nilsson and **Annika Daisley** presented a roadmap for transforming the vision of a common Nordic construction market into reality. They emphasised the need for political decisions at ministerial level and coordinated processes covering climate, energy and accessibility.



Panel Discussion – “Every Rule Kills Innovation”

Magnus K. Persson of Skanska argued that the path forward should be “first standardisation, then harmonisation”. He stressed that harmonisation is a strategic measure that enables a more rational, innovative and sustainable construction industry.



Daniel K. Siraj of OBOS highlighted the costs generated by border obstacles, differing regulations and unnecessary bureaucracy. He advocated Mutual Recognition Agreements for professional qualifications, arguing that a certified electrician in Sweden should automatically be recognised in Norway and Finland.





Jimmy Bengtsson of Veidekke proposed exploring a Nordic Tax Agreement to facilitate labour mobility across the Nordic construction sector.



Cathrine Holgersson of Sveriges Allmännyttan emphasised the challenge of affordable housing and highlighted the successful Kombohus initiative as an example of standardised procurement reducing costs.



Architect **Gert Wingårdh** argued that excessive regulation inhibits innovation, summarising his view with the statement: “Every single rule kills innovation.”

Erik Söderholm promoted industrialised construction methods as a way to improve quality, reduce costs and lower climate impact while integrating circular and sustainable principles from the earliest stages of projects.



Modern Building Regulations and Reforms in the Nordic Region

Anders Sjelvgren of the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning and Jyrki Kauppanen from Finland's Ministry of the Environment explained that Sweden and Finland have introduced simplified regulatory frameworks through different approaches.

Sweden has revised its building regulations to focus on performance requirements and outcomes rather than detailed methods. Finland has introduced a new Building Act that simplifies permitting procedures while strengthening climate-related requirements.

Niclas Svensson described how industrialisation, automation, digitalisation and artificial intelligence are accelerating change in the construction sector and naturally promoting more open and integrated markets.

A Common Nordic Construction Market – An International Role Model

Ricardo Ferreira from the European Commission's Border Focal Point discussed the importance of addressing border obstacles and supporting cross-border economic structures.

Lena Henriksson of Nordic Innovation highlighted the opportunities for innovation, trade and competitiveness that could result from common building regulations. Reduced barriers and more harmonised regulations would create a larger and more integrated market, enabling Nordic companies to strengthen the region's global competitiveness.



Proposals and the Way Forward

Key proposals discussed during the workshop included:

- **Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs)** allowing Nordic countries to recognise each other's assessments of construction products and structures.
- **Cooperation related to Nordic defence expansion projects**, including military facilities, barracks, training centres, hangars and naval infrastructure.
- **Pilot projects and best-practice initiatives**, including the Åland model and other legal Nordic hybrids.
- **Coordination of climate declarations**, climate assessments and interpretations of new EU legislation.
- **Coordination of tax rules and labour mobility measures**, including discussion of a Nordic Tax Agreement and rules related to the 183-day taxation framework.



Åland as a Bridge-BUILDER and Test Bed

At a meeting on 5 November 2025, the Nordic housing ministers discussed a bottom-up process in which Åland could serve as both a bridge-builder and a test bed.

Åland already combines Finnish legislation with Swedish building regulations and may also draw inspiration from Danish, Norwegian and Icelandic regulations.

Rather than addressing the entire regulatory framework at once, a step-by-step approach was proposed, beginning with selected thematic areas such as health, hygiene and noise.

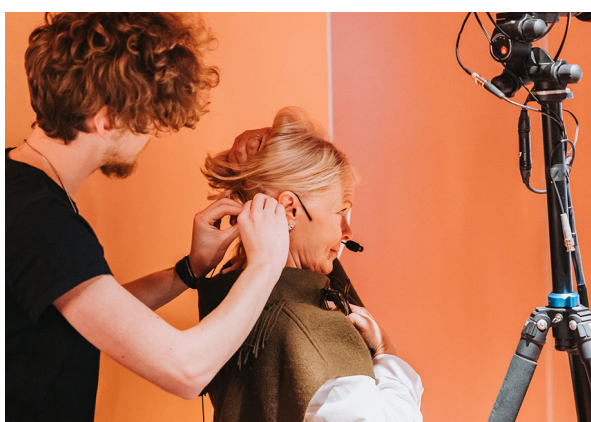
Attention Surrounding the Seminar

The seminar attracted considerable media attention. On the same day, **Dagens Industri** published the debate article “How We Create a Common Nordic Construction Market”.

Fastighetstidningen also reported on the initiative, highlighting calls from Nordic industry organisations for stronger political action.

More information is available through the Nordic Council of Ministers.





Annika Daisley
Svinesundskommittén

Niclas Svensson,
Rådet för Industriellt byggande

Kjell Nilsson
Nilsson Landscape

