

Finland, lost to Russia in 1809 was under Russian governorship until 1917. With the exception of the Second World War where certain land had to be succeeded to the Soviet Union, Finland has remained within the same boundaries as at 1809.

Finland's position has always been critical with a not always peaceful neighbour. After the Second World War a close link to the Soviet Union created specific conditions involving a balance from a political point of view but also a very important position as a major trading partner of the Soviet Union vis-à-vis the western world. With the changes and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Finland has gained a new but still very important position as a bridge between East and West. With a strong and efficient industry such position is of vital importance also for the future of the EU relations with the states of the former Soviet Union.

Nordic Laws

It has been quoted by one of the more distinguished authors and professors of law, Mr Stig Strömholm, that "all the legal systems" of the Nordic countries have often been put "together as a branch within the family of Roman-Germanic Law". Mr Strömholm then confirms the correctness thereof but at the same time points out that there are significant differences between the Nordic laws and the Roman-Germanic laws and also in between the Nordic countries themselves. Therefore it is clear that too much of simplification in the interpretation of the Nordic laws may lead to very dangerous situations which differences may be revealed only when it is too late.

It is noteworthy that another description has been that the Nordic laws sit between the Anglo-Saxon system and the Continental system. This is at the same true as well as dangerous. In spite of a long tradition of codification of laws, precedents do in fact form a very important basis for the legal environment and there is in fact a tradition of so called "rubber paragraphs" meaning very general directives to be interpreted in specific cases. For example this is the case in Sweden with respect to taxation and environmental regulations.

Nordic Co-operation – Nordic Council

The inter-Scandinavian legislative co-operation began in 1872. When Finland departed from Russian governorship, Finland took an active part in the progress of Nordic co-operation. A usual way of preparing laws has therefore been to work by commission in specific legislative projects, the results being Nordic law products, identical or close in form but sometimes deviating by legal practice that has not been sufficiently correlated.

The Nordic Council has been an important administrative body in the law making process. It was set up in 1952 by the Nordic countries consisting

of, as stated Finland, Iceland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway. The impact of the Nordic Council may from a political point of view be small but it has had an important role in the legislative process.

EFTA and EU

When the European co-operation became a fact in the early 1950's, certain of the European countries, being either neutral during the Second World War or having other specific economic interests to adhere to, formed its own free trade area, not as unified as the European Customs Union or European Economic Community – the EEC named EFTA, European Free Trade Area. The original members of EFTA were Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Austria and Switzerland. While the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark joined the EEC in 1973 and Spain, Portugal and Greece in 1983 the remaining members of EFTA confirmed its existence. As Europe became more and more integrated and with the dissolution of the Soviet Union controlled eastern block it soon became apparent that membership was vital to all the EFTA countries, albeit the national characteristics. The movement lead to first the formation of the European Economic Area (EEA), acceding Sweden, Finland, Austria, Iceland and Liechtenstein and the further accession of Finland, Sweden and Austria to the European Union (EU). In spite of the fact that the Nordic area is a world apart, it is still a very European area of Europe.

Other Nordic Co-operation-Utilities

In the utilities market there are a number of fields of co-operation, one of the more important within the field of energy. Other fields could be found for example in large infrastructure projects or transport services. The bridge under construction between Sweden and Denmark – the Öresund Fixed Link – is one example of large scale co-operation, the Scandinavian Airline Systems (SAS) is another example of Swedish, Danish and Norwegian co-operation. On the environmental side several projects aim at cleaning the Baltic Sea where heavy pollution, from among others the former eastern block countries have caused large environmental problems. Another field of co-operation have been postal services, rail transport and natural gas.

Passport and Right of Residence and Work

For many decades there has been a free labour market within the Nordic area, including the right to travel without restrictions and passports for Nordic citizens in the Nordic region.