

## Nordic Day at EXPO 2005

### - Equality and Innovation as Formula for Growth

“The ability to combine family and work will be a necessary ingredient if we are to preserve the Nordic welfare model, especially in the light of the demographic changes predicted for the future,” the President of the Nordic Council, Rannveig Gudmundsdottir, said as she launched the Nordic Day at the world exhibition, EXPO 2005, in Aichi, Japan. The Nordic Pavilion has proven highly popular, attracting a million visitors during the first three months - a figure far exceeding all expectations.



Speakers at the welfare seminar at EXPO on the Nordic Day, July 2

The main themes of the Nordic Day (July 2), which celebrated Nordic co-operation, were Japanese and Nordic experiences of gender equality and innovation. These themes were discussed at two VIP seminars taking place in the Nordic Pavilion and Rotary Hall. Laila Dávøy, the Norwegian Minister of Children and Family Affairs, was the keynote speaker at the popular welfare seminar taking place in Rotary Hall. She discussed how the family helps generate growth and a healthy balance of payments. Ragnhildur Arnljotsdottir, Secretary General at the Icelandic Ministry of Social Affairs, introduced the new ground-breaking parental leave legislation in Iceland. Professor Okazawa Norio of Waseda University, a well-known scholar of Nordic societies, analysed Japan’s demographic challenge from a comparative point of view.



Laila Davoy (Norway), Minister for Children and Family Affairs, keynote speaker at the welfare seminar

Jan-Erik Enestam (Finland), Minister of the Environment, giving a welcome speech at the Nordic Pavilion

Per Unckel, the Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers, opened the innovation seminar, speaking about co-operation as a method of improving competitiveness. The Finnish Minister of the Environment, Jan-Erik Enestam, gave a talk about business and job creation in the Nordic Region generated by environmental protection measures. Professor Per Belfrage of Lund University went on to explain how setting up Medico Valley in the Øresund Region has given the biotech industry in the Nordic Region a platform upon which to build. Director Kjetil Storvik of the Nordic



Innovation Centre talked about Nordic co-operation on food safety. Motohiro Endo, from Nokia Japan, introduced some of Nokia’s technological focus areas. Both seminars were well attended by representatives from local governments, media, academia, and business.

Ragnhildur Arnljotsdottir (Iceland), giving a speech at the welfare seminar

To mark the Nordic Day, a varied cultural program has been arranged by the Nordic Pavilion both prior to and after the Nordic Day. One of the highlights was

a Midsummer celebration at the pavilion on June 25, featuring Swedish folk dances and various life concerts with Nordic music. Pavilion guides also made and raised a “Midsummer Pole” in front of the pavilion, thereby gaining great attention from guests in the area. July 3-5, there has been arranged a Nordic Film Festival with screenings of video art by the Swedish group Beeoff and Nordic films at Expo Plaza. Further, there is live music and recitals from Nordic children’s books in the Nordic Pavilion July 2-5. Yesterday, Scandinavian Airlines awarded two airline tickets to the winner of a lucky draw arranged on the occasion of the Nordic Day. Last week, guest number million also won a trip to the Nordic region with Finnair.



Rannveig Gudmundsdottir (Iceland),  
President of the Nordic Council,  
inaugurating the welfare seminar

The day before Nordic Day, July 1, two roundtable discussions about gender equality and innovation were held at the Norwegian and Finnish embassies. At both seminars, the Nordic presentations spurred a lively debate among the many attending specialists, so both invited guests and organizers alike were happy with the outcome.