

**2011**

**Nordic Council of  
Ministers  
Department for Food**

**NRL  
Standard**

## **Nordic Standard on National Reference Laboratories**

This Nordic standard has been elaborated by a working group established by the Department for Food of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The Department for Food is responsible for the implementation of the decisions taken by the Nordic Council of Ministers in the food area.

### **1. Scope and Field of Application**

This standard concerning national reference laboratories in the the food and feed area is intended to describe and illustrate the requirements on national reference laboratories and ways in which the Nordic co-operation in this sector could be arranged. Each of the Nordic countries is small and the responsible analysts in the individual reference laboratories only rarely have national networks to be contacted in order to discuss administrative or technical matters. This standard is intended to facilitate the exchange of information between designated reference laboratories. Such contacts increase the competence of the laboratories.

This standard has an associated (electronic) Appendix containing the names and contact information of designated Nordic national reference laboratories as well as contact information to responsible analysts in these laboratories. The list is kept up to date by the Nordic Committee on Food Analysis (NMKL) and it is necessary to consult NMKL's internet pages [www.nmkl.org](http://www.nmkl.org) in order to have access to the most recent list.

### **2. Requirement to Designate National Reference Laboratories**

The general requirement to designate national reference laboratories and the tasks of these laboratories are contained in Article 33 of the European control regulation, i.e. Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules (hereafter the Regulation).

Article 33 requires Member States to arrange for the designation of one or more national reference laboratories for each EU reference laboratory (EURL). In the area of food and feed there are 21 sectors having a EURL (amendment (EC) No 776/2006 of the Regulation). Two sectors are split into subgroups with the result that altogether 28 national reference laboratories (NRL) are required to be designated. The sectors and subgroups are listed in Appendix 1 to this standard.

### 3. The Designation of NRLs

The NRLs shall be designated by the Member States, which shall communicate the name and address of each NRL to the Commission, the relevant EURL and other Member States. Member States shall on a continuous basis communicate changes to the Commission, the relevant EURL and other Member States

A Member State may designate a laboratory situated in another Member State or European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Member and a single laboratory may be the NRL for more than one Member State. It is possible to designate several NRLs for each EURL and in such cases the Member State must ensure that these laboratories work closely together, so as to ensure efficient coordination between them, with other national laboratories and with the EURL. In the Nordic countries several countries have designated more than one NRL when the NRL activities are based on the matrix, for example “Mycotoxins in food of animal origin” and “Mycotoxins in other foods.”

### 4. Quality Requirements on NRLs

Article 33 of the Regulation states that Article 12 (amended 20.10.2008, (EC) No 1029/2008) of the Regulation applies to NRLs. Article 12 contains the general requirements on laboratories that may carry out the analysis of samples taken during official controls, i.e. the laboratories operate and are assessed and accredited in accordance with specific standards

- ✓ EN ISO/IEC 17025 "General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories"
- ✓ EN ISO/IEC 17011 "General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies".

### 5. NRL Tasks

Article 33 of the Regulation describes the specific tasks of NRLs. These are:

<b>Task according to Article 33</b>	<b>Examples of what the task means in practice</b>
Collaborate with the Community reference laboratory in their area of competence	Participate in relevant meetings and workshops arranged by EURL, and work according to decisions and recommendations made
Coordinate, for their area of competence, the activities of official laboratories responsible for the analysis of samples taken during official food control	Give advice and guidance on methods of analysis to be employed in the analysis of official samples and/or state criteria for the methods, develop and validate analytical methods, follow the analytical-technical development and if needed arrange train-

	ing and workshops for the laboratories which analyse samples taken in the context of official control
Where appropriate, organise comparative tests between the official national laboratories and ensure an appropriate follow-up of such comparative testing;	Inform the official laboratories about suitable national and international proficiency testing schemes. Where appropriate arrange proficiency testings themselves and evaluate the performance of the laboratories in the test. NRL's need to find mechanisms to get access to the results achieved by the official laboratories in these tests.
Ensure the dissemination to the competent authority and official national laboratories of information that the Community reference laboratory supplies;	Inform the authorities, NMKL and the official laboratories on EURL decisions and recommendations as results of correspondence,, workshops and meetings.
Provide scientific and technical assistance to the competent authority for the implementation of coordinated control plans	Participate in projects initiated by the authorities and assist the official laboratories in analytical technical problems.

## 6. The Designation of NRLs in the Nordic Countries

Information is collected in the Table below on the authority designating NRLs, authority responsible for informing the EURL on changes, and the national authority in each country that can agree on the exchange of NRL functions:

<b>Country</b>	<b>NRLs are designated by</b>	<b>Authority submitting changes to the Commission and EURLs</b>	<b>Authority that can agree on the exchange of NRL functions</b>
Denmark	Danish Veterinary and Food Administration (the relevant Ministry is kept informed)	Danish Veterinary and Food Administration	Danish Veterinary and Food Administration
Finland	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	NRL in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Iceland	The Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture	The Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture	The Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture
Norway	Norwegian Food Safety Authority (the Ministry is kept informed)	Norwegian Food Safety Authority	Norwegian Food Safety Authority
Sweden	The Government	The Government	The Government

## **7. Nordic Exchange of NRL functions**

On the basis of the Regulation and the national legislation of the Nordic countries there is nothing to prevent the Nordic countries from exchanging NRL services. Increased and more formal Nordic NRL cooperation is justified since the maintenance of NRL function in all areas requires a lot of resources. Especially in a case where area A for some reason has a low priority in country X, large synergy effects may be achieved if another country Y, which gives the area higher priority can take over the NRL work for country X. Country X could then be responsible for the NRL work in another area for its own needs and for country Y. An NRL offering reference laboratory services to another country must in the area of competence in question operate and be assessed and accredited. Additionally the laboratory should work with development of methods and method validation and if needed arrange proficiency tests. It is recommended that the laboratory also has other research work going on.

Naturally NRL functions can be divided up so that a country takes care of some NRL tasks (for example collaboration with the EURL), but buys or exchanges services related to validation of methods and proficiency tests. For this reason all Nordic countries announce the proficiency tests open to laboratories from other countries, and keep other countries informed on new validations of analytical methods.

A Nordic NRL may offer to serve as the NRL for all Nordic countries.

## **8. Rules for the Exchange of NRL Services**

Offers of NRL services are announced on the webpages of NMKL.

Parties interested in buying services contact the offering party and the parties agree on the prerequisites of the activities. It is important that parties intending to services inform the competent authority (central authorities, ministries) about their plans since any changes in lists of NRLs must be communicated to the Commission, the relevant EURL and other Member States.

NMKL should be kept informed about NRL changes so that NMKL can keep the list of NRLs updated. The national contact persons responsible for communicating changes to NMKL are listed on NMKL's website.