



# Market situation Nordic Countries.

Switzerland Convention & Incentive Bureau (SCIB)  
[MySwitzerland.com/meetings](https://www.myswitzerland.com/meetings)

# 1 MARKET SITUATION AND OUTLOOK

## 1.1 Economic situation

At the time this report is written, the Nordics are starting to make noticeable headway in repairing the damage from the coronavirus crisis, building on a year of remarkable resilience to global economic turmoil.

The Nordics have stood out from their European peers by containing the fallout on economic expansion, aided by generous welfare systems, widespread digitalisation and a relatively low reliance on tourism.

The comparison with much of Europe is considerable. While oil-rich Norway ended 2020 with its gross domestic product just 1.4% below the pre-pandemic level, the euro region suffered an overall contraction of 6.6% by the time the year was over.

Sweden is among the most open economies and the majority of its trading partners registered rebounding business activity at the start of 2021. The prospect of a trade pickup triggered shifts in forecasts, with the SEB bank opting to lift its growth outlook for 2021 to 4%.

In Denmark, statistics officials revised their most recent GDP data for the fourth quarter to growth of 2.9%.

Norway's oil resource and reliance on the backing of its sovereign wealth fund, the world's largest, already made its economy one of the most insulated to growth shocks globally. Economic forecasts for 2021 have been raised to 3.9%. Economists project that both Norway and Sweden will exceed pre-pandemic levels of output sooner than previously anticipated.

The recovery of the Finnish economy from the Covid-19 crisis has been boosted by stronger-than-expected developments in the second half of 2020. Economic growth in 2021 is expected to be higher than projected in the December 2020 forecast.

All in all, the Nordics have shown noticeably similar economic trajectories, despite divergent approaches to lockdown restrictions throughout the crisis. Sweden, in particular, initially tried to keep its economy as open to business as possible.

The Nordic region is home to a considerable number of unicorn companies (startups valued at over USD 1 billion) with strong financial stability, obviously more resilient in times of crisis. In Sweden, the redundancy support has kept bankruptcies at a steady low level and it is noticeable that the number of newly registered companies has not been affected.

All local currencies have gained momentum towards the Swiss franc and purchasing power for Swiss goods and services has increased.

Sources:

<https://ec.europa.eu>

<https://www.bloomberg.com>  
<https://www.business-sweden.com>  
<http://www.dagensindustri.se/>  
<https://www.bofbulletin.fi/en/>

## 1.2 Coronavirus and general travel demand

Norway is reporting a low number of infections, but keeping strict restrictions. Prime Minister Erna Solberg was personally issued a fine after participating in a family gathering with more than the six people permitted. The recommendation is to not travel.

With borders still closed, the number of infections in Finland is on a steady decline and 27% of the population has already got their first vaccine.

TUI has investigated the trends and patterns for individual travel in the Nordic countries and found in Finland there is an upward booking trend for the 2021/22 winter season whereas bookings for summer are still on a low level and planning time seem to be longer than normal.

In Denmark, society recently reopened after a lockdown. The test capacity is very high and people are getting used to move around more freely again thanks to a new “Coronapas” passport. Travel bookings are still at a modest level, but the plan is that the vaccine passport app will be aligned with the proposed European Green Certificate, which could inspire the Danish population to travel again.

In Sweden, where restrictions and lockdowns have been less strict than the rest of the Nordic countries, the Covid-19 situation is among the worst in Europe. However, vaccination is picking up at a rapid speed and is just about to kick off for the big masses. A huge investment has been made in digital development for the Green Certificate. There has been a strong increase in flight bookings in recent months, as Swedish search engine flygresor.se reports, and TUI predicts travel volumes of 70% compared to a normal year.

## 1.3 Meetings industry situation

We are slowly starting to see some light at the end of the tunnel and the flipside of the pandemic seems to be that the new business landscape and the huge changes within the meeting industry have made what Switzerland offers correspond even better with the Nordic demands:

### **New business models**

Sharing, flexibility and adaptability are key words in our new work environment. We see a strong appreciation for co-working spaces and want to work in less office-like environments. Working remotely has made us discover new ways of doing things and we are embracing the change.

The digital workplace is making it less of an issue to be away from work. Taking staff out of the office for a business event might therefore not be as costly as it once was.

Opportunities for Swiss suppliers could be to offer more flexible meeting arrangements, away from the “half-day/full-day conference room and coffee break” setup. And private locations where both work, meeting and socialising can be combined.

### **Outdoors is the new “in”**

We have become even more used to being outdoors. The strong interest has been noted both in sales of outdoor equipment and visits to outdoor areas. Perceptions are also changing about situations previously typically regarded as ones to take place indoors, such as business meetings. Outdoor meetings or integrated outdoor activities such as yoga, meditation and walks during breaks are gaining in popularity. In Switzerland, business meetings can be held away from crowds, above the clouds, with countless offers to be created in this vein.

### **Sustainability – climate change**

The sustainability discussion is of ongoing importance and climate is the top issue. Travelling and destinations are considered with this in mind and the development of business trips will probably be towards fewer, longer trips and with relatively short travel distances. The Nordic countries are well connected with Switzerland, with short, direct flights to many cities. The fact that so much can be experienced in Switzerland given the small size of the country is of greater appeal.

### **Small is the new big**

In the past, larger meetings and events have often been more lavish and elaborate, while the smaller ones have been simpler and carried out on a smaller budget. After the pandemic, we will notice a higher number of smaller events with significantly more time and money spent than before. This is partly because many will be hesitant to arrange or participate in large events, even after the restrictions have been lifted. There is a possibility that a meeting which previously would have demanded larger hotels and capacity than Switzerland could offer will now be split into several events, suitable for Switzerland.

### **Defining exclusivity**

Large events for only a few, cinema for one, a restaurant with only one dinner table, lots of space and fresh air, quality time and a slower pace – these are all examples of sought-after values and experiences.

Room service will be transformed into a completely tailor-made experience, keeping it safe, familiar and intimate. And clients will be willing to pay for it. Working from home, we have become used to having things the way we want. There has been a boom in homemade, hand-crafted, locally produced things. Back to basics is suddenly the high end. Things we are familiar with and know well make us feel safe in turbulent times. We rate local and regional, becoming more aware of the origin of food, products, etc. Things Switzerland is famous for are now topping the list of priorities.

TUI Norway made an SEO analysis within travel searches and found the following trending words: togetherness, sustainability, dream travel, security, workation and intimacy.

### **Security**

It is possible the Nordic traveller has been considered a naïve and untroubled character, with a sense that things will be taken care of – counting on general insurance and suppliers' conditions and annoyed if there are too many rules and inflexibility. The pandemic has made clients become more careful and aware of risks. Questions concerning all kinds of safety, security and conditions will get more attention. The uncertainty throughout the pandemic has forced flexibility on Swiss suppliers. Possible clients and suppliers can meet "halfway".

Confidence in authorities is still considered high in the Nordics and though a good 70% say they are ready to travel, they will only do so once the authorities give the "go ahead". This is according to a travel study by Schibstedt.

### **The corporate market**

- The industries that have benefited from a strong domestic market despite – or thanks to – the coronavirus pandemic, include the construction industry, e-commerce, transport and logistics. However, there will be a possible loss of consultants and business services as large companies give notice. Startups, fintech, and sustainability-oriented companies are generally still on a good track. With our local presence, we can monitor and pinpoint these sectors and communicate with them. We also cooperate with relevant contacts in the MICE industry to join forces in targeting their clients.

**Sources:**

[www.reiseliv.no](http://www.reiseliv.no)

[www.herromar.se](http://www.herromar.se)

Client conversations

## 1.4 RFP situation in the Nordic countries

Still, 99% of agencies are on furlough even though there is talk of an increase in requests. The general input from agencies is that postponed groups have now been cancelled. Savings might have been made, though, which could result in better budgets for upcoming events.

## 2 TARGETS

Well-known sources, own experiences and personal recommendations are decision-making factors when choosing a destination. This means it is important for us to build and maintain a close and personal relationship with MICE business individuals and companies to keep Switzerland top of mind for corporate events. To use ambassadors, i.e. previous travellers and loyal clients, in communication can also be a strong asset. Therefore, we invest in well-established relationships and stand by our customers in difficult times to assure them they can count on Switzerland.

We achieve this through:

- Personal, continuous communication with clients
- Themed webinars with clear, inspiring and personal messages
- E-newsletters with a personal touch and exclusive tips and recommendations
- Personal offers, in connection with local destination partners for clients to discover Switzerland individually
- When possible: small and exclusive gatherings to present destinations/regions in a creative, enjoyable and personal way
- Small study/educational trips (international trips coordinated by head office)
- Maintaining a market presence, daily contact with key clients
- Presence in MICE media and selected business media
- Networking and research within targeted business areas

### 3 CURRENT DATABASE SITUATION

The separation of high-end, individual travel agencies and pure MICE clients has reduced the number of clients in our database. This enables a more targeted communication with our clients so that we can remain relevant. We also pay special attention to updates in the industry relating to the many Covid-19 redundancies and the database is constantly being cleansed on the basis of feedback, responses and autoreplies to invitations, letters and mailshots.

We aim for a deeper contact with existing clients and to reach further within those organisations. The database is at the same time broadened in this direction and we hope to see an increase again by next year.

We are also identifying business-relevant media and MICE media for further processing. We furthermore aim for high interaction rates with clients that are in the database.

The classification system of A, B and C clients is being overseen for a more targeted communication.

Kind	Contacts 2021	Contacts 2020	Contacts 2019
Agencies	1,196	1,428	1,648
Corporates	224	219	204
Association	54	63	68
Media	35	33	14

### 4 DETAILED MARKETING ACTIVITIES

Further details of past, present and future marketing activities can be found on [www.stnet](http://www.stnet), which can be accessed by using your personal username and password.