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## **Nordic Region Still Leads Network Readiness Index – but for How Long?**

*A New Report, Sponsored by Cisco, Examines Data Behind Region's Success and Asks, 'How Long Will the Stars Keep Shining?'*

LONDON, Dec. 18, 2007 – A report based on research from the World Economic Forum and INSEAD, published today, highlights the continuing dominance of the Nordic region in measures of information technology readiness but also points to factors that could undermine this success. As competition becomes truly global, advanced economies realize that their success depends on the acquisition, building and sharing of knowledge. To accomplish this in a sustainable manner, a country must invest in educational systems, information networks, innovations and incentives that focus on developing a knowledge-based society.

One measure of a country's readiness to benefit from information and communications technology (ICT) has become accepted as the most authoritative indicator of progress in this area: the **WEF-INSEAD Network Readiness Index, or NRI** ([www.insead.edu/v1/gitr/wef/main/home.cfm](http://www.insead.edu/v1/gitr/wef/main/home.cfm)). Since the index's inception in 2001, the top 10 positions have been dominated by the five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden):

- There have always been at least four of the five Nordic nations in the top 10 and consistently three in the top five.
- Finland occupied the top spot in 2001 and has never been outside of the top five.
- Since 2002 Denmark has improved its ranking by at least one place every year, culminating this year with the No. 1 spot.

Cisco commissioned the report to investigate the secret of this success and to help define a route for other nations to improve their network readiness. The report re-examines the key data



behind the rankings to uncover common approaches, critical success factors and potential best practices.

Key insights from the report include:

- The high quality of the Nordic ICT infrastructure, combined with positive political and regulatory frameworks, has been critical in maintaining the leadership of the Nordic nations in the NRI.
- The development of ICT skills among individuals, businesses and government organizations on a consistent basis has led to success, especially in Finland and Denmark.
- The increasing usage and acceptance of Internet-based and converged services is also a driver of high rankings for the Nordic nations in the NRI.

However, the report also examines some of the current and potential weaknesses that could lead to a slide down the ranking scale for the Nordic region. Other nations, including the United States, Singapore, Switzerland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, are competing hard for the top rankings. Key advantages that these nations have over the Nordic region include:

- Simpler and more streamlined processes for starting and running businesses
- More openness to investment in and use of technology from overseas
- Lower communications costs (including broadband subscriptions)
- And, in Switzerland and Singapore in particular, higher-quality general and science-specific education

Commenting on the report, Niels Furu, vice president of the Nordic region at Cisco, said: “The continued high ranking of the Nordic nations in this authoritative index is remarkable, especially considering the highly competitive and fast-moving nature of today’s global society. What we have found is that common best practices underpin this success and that other nations, and indeed organisations, can learn from and adopt them. There are also challenges that the Nordic region must face if it is to maintain its pre-eminence in this area, and these too serve as



useful guides for other audiences seeking to emulate its progress. As globalisation moves on, all countries, regions and organisations will need to continually invest in the infrastructures, processes, skills and usage of information technology to build, share and benefit from their knowledge assets.”

“While many countries around the world are competing to attract investment and talents, the Nordic countries have proved able to sustain successful knowledge-based strategies through a unique combination of largely self-generated IT infrastructure, human skills and technological innovation,” said Bruno Lanvin, the main author of the report. “Other advanced countries are catching up quickly. In the coming years, the weight of countries like India, with large cohorts of highly skilled engineers, will also start to be felt. To maintain their ‘e-readiness advantage,’ the Nordic countries will need to prove as imaginative and dynamic as they have been in the past. This will require increasing attention to existing strengths, including the quality of life in safe and environment-friendly societies, but also to possible new sources of creativity and initiatives: for example, from cities and other subnational components of civil society.”

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**Note to editors:**

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