

Nordplus
and the
work of the
**Programme
Committee**

Nordplus and the work of
the Programme Committee
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Welcome to Nordplus

Welcome to Nordplus. This guide is an introduction to Nordplus and the work of the Programme Committee. As a committee member you will be involved in the management of a broad setup of education and training programmes supporting international collaboration and exchanges between schools, organisations and universities in and between the Nordic and Baltic countries.

Nordplus is the single largest initiative of the Nordic Council of Ministers within the area of education and training. It consists of five individual sub-programmes, involves eight countries and three autonomous regions and spans over the full education area from primary education and kindergartens to higher education and adult learning.

Each year approximately 600 applications are submitted to Nordplus involving transnational partnerships of around 3.000 schools, colleges, universities and organisations. And each year grants with a total of approximately 9.5 mio. euro are allocated to the best of the applications.

We hope you will enjoy working with Nordplus and Nordic-Baltic cooperation in education.

Resources

The Nordplus website

The common website serves the purpose of profiling and disseminating information about Nordplus, the funding possibilities available and achieved results. Here information, tools and documents relating to Nordplus are made available for potential applicants, project coordinators and the public in general. It also contains project articles, deadlines and call for proposals, results of application rounds and other types of news.

The Nordplus handbook

The Nordplus handbook is the applicants' guide to all Nordplus programmes. It specifies the framework, requirements, funding options and selection criteria for applications for each of the five programmes. The Handbook is available on Nordplusonline in a Scandinavian and an English version.

Partner search

Through the partner search database potential applicants can search for relevant project partners or create a profile with their own project idea in order to be found by others.

The partner search database is available on Nordplusonline.

The project database

The project database contains information on all approved applications from 2012 and onwards. It provides information on the project, partnership, grant and contact information to the project coordinator. It is possible to filter on programme, year, type of institution and field of education. The project database is updated every year with the recently approved applications. It is available on Nordplusonline.

Espresso - the Nordplus application and reporting system

Espresso is the online system for submitting applications as well as reporting on finalised projects.

The administration's assessment of applications is also carried out through Espresso and information on applications and granted projects are available here for all administrators in order to support the work of the Nordplus offices in providing guidance to potential applicants and assisting ongoing projects.

Espresso can be accessed on Nordplusonline.

Table of Contents

The Nordplus Programme Committee	8
Nordplus and the programmes	12
The Nordplus administration	17

The Nordplus Programme Committee

The Programme Committee is responsible for the allocation of grants in each year's application round in all five sub-programmes, the realisation of the objectives and the strategic management and development of the programmes.

Mandate

Within its mandate which is laid out in the Nordplus Programme Document and decided by the Committee of Senior Officials of the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Programme Committee sets out the main direction and aims for the Nordplus programmes.

This involves:

- decision on granting of applications
- decisions on adjustments of rules and requirements for applying and participation in Nordplus
- decision on adjustments of programme objectives, actions and budgets
- discussion of and deciding on other issues and questions for Nordplus of a more general, principal or strategic nature brought forward by the Nordplus administration, members of the committee, the Committee of Senior Officials or the Nordic Council of Ministers secretariat
- monitoring Nordplus activities and reacting on possible challenges or issues occurring in the programmes
- decision on the annual performance targets for Nordplus for the Nordic Council of Ministers budget
- contributing to the profiling of Nordplus and dissemination of information about Nordplus and its results.

The Programme Committee is empowered to make adjustments in the budgets within a 10 % band for each of the sub-programmes. It can also decide to redistribute unused funds between sub-programmes. Both decisions require that sound strategic reasons have been established during the programme period.

The Programme Committee may delegate decisions to the Programme administration. The decision on grants for applications of preparatory visits in Nordplus Junior, Nordplus Adult and Nordplus Nordic Languages in the autumn has been delegated to the administration.

Adjustments or changes of the Nordplus programmes beyond the mandate of the Programme Committee must be decided by the Committee of Senior Officials (EK-U).

Members and composition

The Programme Committee consists of two members from each of the participating countries appointed by the national Ministry of Education. One member acts as specialist to ensure specific competences and knowledge in relation to one of the sectors or areas represented by the Nordplus programmes. The other member acts as generalist to keep a broader and more general perspective on the workings of the programme.

In order to ensure a coverage of all fields of expertise, the programme/sector/area expertises are distributed in the following way among the participating countries:

PROGRAMME (SECTOR/AREA) OF EXPERTISE	COUNTRY RESPONSIBLE
Nordplus Junior (primary and secondary education)	Finland, Iceland, Lithuania
Nordplus Higher Education (higher education)	Sweden, Estonia
Nordplus Adult (adult learning)	Norway, Latvia
Nordplus Nordic Languages (Nordic languages)	Denmark

The representatives of Aaland, Faroe Islands and Greenland act as observers.

All countries appoint substitute members.

The secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers keeps and updates a list of all members. All changes must be forwarded to the secretariat.

Meetings

The Programme Committee meets twice a year. The first meeting is held at the end of April, while the second meeting takes place in October.

The meeting in April has a main focus on the Committee's decision of grants for applications submitted by the universal deadline of 1 February. The main administrators present the grant proposals for each programme to be decided on by the Committee. Other current issues will also be on the agenda.

The meeting in October focuses on more strategic issues concerning the

development of the programme. This includes presentations and discussions of significant tendencies or challenges identified during the recent application round, presentations and decision on new initiatives from the administration, results or status of ongoing or finalised initiatives and presentations of relevant reports or surveys. The meeting also contributes to the preparation of the upcoming call for proposals in November.

Both meetings are normally all-day meetings.

Decisions in the Programme Committee are normally taken at the meetings by consensus. In exceptional cases decision by written procedure will be initiated allowing for decisions to be taken in between meetings.

Agenda and supportive documents are prepared by the main coordinator in close dialogue with the chair and co-chair of the Programme Committee and the main administrators.

Meeting language: The committee meetings concern all Nordplus programmes and involve members of all countries. Therefore the meetings are held in English with agenda and supportive documents also in English. The exact dates of the meetings are decided by the Programme Committee in dialogue with the administration.

The ordinary members of the Programme Committee are responsible for summoning their substitute members, when they are unable to attend meetings.

Chair, co-chair and location of meetings

The Programme Committee elects a chair and a co-chair for one year at a time.

The committee has decided that the position of chair rotates between the Nordic countries in accordance with the rotation of the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers and that the position of co-chair rotates between the Baltic countries.

The location of the meetings follows this rotation meaning that the spring meeting takes place in the country of the chair, but can by agreement also be held in one of the autonomous regions, and the autumn meeting takes place in the country of the co-chair.

The secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers follows the work of the committee as observer at the committee meetings.

The order of rotation in the current programme period is:

YEAR	CHAIR COUNTRY	CO-CHAIR COUNTRY
2018	Sweden	Estonia
2019	Iceland	Latvia
2020	Denmark	Lithuania
2021	Finland	Estonia
2022	Norway	Latvia

Nordplus and the programmes

Nordplus is the Nordic Council of Ministers' programme in the area of education and training. It offers financial support for transnational mobility, networking and projects within the Nordic and Baltic countries. With an annual grant budget of approximately 9.5 mio euro, Nordplus is the single largest initiative of the Nordic Council of Ministers within the area of education and training.

Nordplus consists of five individual sub-programmes which span the entire field of education, from kindergarten and primary schools to universities and adult learning, general education as well as vocational education and further education and training.

The programmes are:

PROGRAMME	SECTOR/AREA	GRANT BUDGET 2018	
Nordplus Junior	Primary and secondary education	2.6 mio euro	27%
Nordplus Higher Education	Higher education	4.2 mio euro	44%
Nordplus Adult	Adult learning	1.1 mio euro	12%
Nordplus Nordic Languages	Nordic languages	0.65 mio euro	7%
Nordplus Horizontal	Cross sector initiatives	0.95 mio euro	10%
Total		9.5 mio euro	100%

While Nordplus Junior, Nordplus Higher Education and Nordplus Adult each address their specific educational sector, Nordplus Nordic Languages and Nordplus Horizontal are defined by a particular subject and are aimed at all sectors.

Aims

The Nordplus programmes promote and support transnational cooperation between education institutions and other relevant actors in the Nordic and Baltic countries. Through this cooperation and the exchange of knowledge and experience, Nordplus seeks to strengthen the development, quality and innovation of education and teaching in the participating countries and to promote Nordic-Baltic linguistic and cultural understanding.

You can find the aims of Nordplus in the Programme Document and in the Nordplus handbook.

Activities

All five sub-programmes provide financial support within three main categories of activities:

- **transnational mobility** – exchange of pupils/students/learners, teachers and other pedagogical staff, 1 week – 12 months duration
- **transnational networks** – establish and develop networks, 1 – 3 years
- **transnational projects** – development work of various kinds, 1 – 3 years.

These main categories are reflected into the programmes as specific programme actions. The programme actions differ from programme to programme as they reflect the specific sector and target groups. In Nordplus Junior, for instance, you will find an action for class exchange, and individual student mobility in Nordplus Higher Education, while no mobility actions exist in Nordplus Horizontal.

The specific actions of each Nordplus programme are presented in the Nordplus handbook.

Criteria and selection principles

Grants from Nordplus are awarded on the basis of applications submitted by transnational partnerships or networks of education institutions and other relevant types of organisations.

Selection criteria: The selection criteria are based on the quality of the application including how the proposed initiative supports the aims of Nordplus. The only exception from this qualitative approach is mobility applications in Nordplus Higher Education where grants are distributed among all eligible applications on the basis of past performance.

Grants are offered to applications of the best quality within the available

programme budget. Applications of poor quality are rejected even when there are available funds, as poor quality raises doubt about the planned activities and expected results.

Eligibility: Only applications meeting the programme's eligibility criteria are considered for funding. The eligibility criteria are a set of basic requirements which the application must fulfill.

The application must be submitted before the deadline and it must be submitted through Espresso, the Nordplus application system. Further eligibility criteria are:

- The application must be submitted by a transnational partnership/network of education institutions or organisations registered in the application:
 - for mobility applications at least two organisations from at least two countries must form the partnership/network
 - for project and network applications at least three institutions from at least three programme countries must form the partnership/network
- The application and the partnership/network must be confirmed by each registered institution/organisation by a signed letter of intent (LOI)
- The application must comply with the aims, target groups and actions of the programme.

Grant principles

Grants from Nordplus are contributions to the proposed initiative and as such not supposed to cover the full costs of the initiative.

Nordplus operates with two principles of allocation, one principle for mobility applications and another for projects and networks:

- **mobility grants**, calculated on the basis of fixed rates for travel and subsistence per participant of the exchange
- **project and network grants**, based on a specified budget for the project with a required co-financing minimum with the exception of Nordplus Adult which has recently introduced unit costs.

Different levels of co-financing have been decided for the various programmes taking into consideration differences in target groups and their varying financial capabilities. The co-financing requirement for Nordplus Junior, Nordplus Adult and Nordplus Nordic Languages is minimum 25%, while it is 50% for the remaining programmes.

Deadlines and call for proposals

Nordplus operates with one universal deadline for all programmes and a supplementary deadline for preparatory visits in Nordplus Junior, Nordplus Adult and Nordplus Nordic Languages:

- **1 February** – the annual, universal deadline for all Nordplus programmes and all actions of the programmes
- **1 October** – the annual supplementary deadline for preparatory visits.

Grants for preparatory visits aim to bring representatives from different institutions and organisations together to prepare a full proposal to the next deadline of the programme. Preparatory visits can also be applied for at the universal deadline in February, but the supplementary deadline 1 October allows for the preparation of proposals twice each year.

Additional application rounds can be decided if it is deemed necessary.

Countries

Nordplus has 11 programme countries with a total of 33.6 mio. inhabitants. It includes the five Nordic countries, the three autonomous regions and the three Baltic countries.

In Nordplus the autonomous regions of Aaland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland are considered individual countries. This means that institutions/organisations from the regions count as institutions/organisations from any other participating country in fulfilling the eligibility criteria of at least 2 (mobility) or 3 (network/projects) countries represented in a partnership.

Only institutions/organisations from the programme countries can participate in and receive grants from Nordplus.

From 2018 it has been agreed that schools from South Schleswig can participate in Nordplus within a particular set of rules and with extra funding provided by Denmark.

Programme period and evaluation

Nordplus is decided for a period of five years. The current programme period runs from 2018 – 2022.

Halfway through each programme period an evaluation of the programmes takes place, which provides a basis for decision on a new programme period pointing to possible changes or developments of the programmes.

Final decision on a new programme period is taken by the Nordic Council of Ministers for Education and Research (MR-U) based on a recommendation from the Committee of Senior Officials (EK-U).

The Nordplus administration

The Nordplus administration is responsible for the promotion and operational management and implementation of the Nordplus programmes in the participating countries.

This involves a variety of tasks:

- dissemination of information on the Nordplus programmes and provision of guidance to potential applicants
- assessment of applications and laying the ground for decision of grants by the Programme Committee
- signing of contracts, payment of grants and evaluation of project reports
- collecting and disseminating data, statistics and good examples and experiences from the projects demonstrating the benefits and effects of the Nordplus programmes.

A Nordplus office in each country

There is one Nordplus office in each programme country responsible for promotion, information and guidance regarding all Nordplus programmes in the individual country. However, the specific roles and responsibilities differ according to country which is described below.

Different roles and responsibilities

The five Nordplus offices in the Nordic countries act as main administrator of one of the five Nordplus programmes and at the same time act as co-administrator of the four remaining programmes.

The Nordplus offices in the Baltic countries act as co-administrators of all Nordplus programmes.

The Nordplus information points in Aaland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland are responsible for information and guidance in their region and do not have an administrative role in the programmes.

The main administrator has a particular responsibility for the implementation of one of the Nordplus programmes in close dialogue with the co-administrators in the other participating countries.

The main administrator is responsible for the information and guidelines of the particular programme and leads the assessment process providing

the required instructions to be used by the co-administrators. Furthermore, the main administrator is responsible for the overall programme budget, contracting with beneficiaries, the paying out of grants and for the evaluation of project reports.

As co-administrator the national office is responsible for the promotion of all Nordplus programmes and for the provision of guidance to potential applicants in the country and takes active part in the assessment of applications within the programmes.

The transnational programme groups consist of the main administrator and the co-administrators from the other programme countries appointed specifically to this programme - with the main administrator acting as chair of the group.

Applications are assessed by two administrators from the transnational programme group: the main administrator who assesses all applications and one co-administrator of the group. The administration can use external experts for assessment of applications, if wished for or needed.

The main coordinator

One of the Nordic offices also acts as the main coordinator of the administration. Currently, this position is held by SFU - the Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education – in Denmark.

The main coordinator coordinates the work of the Programme administration and acts as the link between the administration, the Programme Committee and the Nordic Council of Ministers' secretariat.

The responsibility of the main coordinator is the day-to-day management of Nordplus, striving to fulfill the objectives of Nordplus. This involves among other things:

- running the daily operation and administration of Nordplus in close cooperation with the main administrators, including setting up regular meetings for joint planning of administrative activities, initiatives, call for proposals etc.
- as secretary of the Programme Committee serving the committee in fulfilling its mandate, involving the setting up of committee meetings, preparing the agenda and supportive documents, taking the minutes of the meeting etc.
- coordinating the main administrators' contributions to the Programme Committee and the implementation of decisions and initiatives of the Programme Committee in the Nordplus programme and administration
- contributing to the strategic development of Nordplus, including further development and profiling of the programmes and their results, e.g. through simplification and standardisation of rules and types of activities covered

- managing efforts to collect and disseminate results from Nordplus, involving e.g. Nordplus conferences, seminars and other activities
- managing, updating and developing the Nordplus handbook, the Nordplus website and the Nordplus application and reporting system, Espresso, in cooperation with the main administrators (day-to-day operation of Espresso is sub-contracted to the Norwegian Nordplus office, SIU).

The role, responsibilities and organisation of the Nordplus Programme administration is laid down in the Nordplus Programme Document decided by the Nordic Council of Ministers for Education and Research (MR-U).

The Nordplus administration offices and information points:

COUNTRY	NORDPLUS AGENCY	ADMINISTRATOR ROLE	MAIN ADMINISTRATOR PROGRAMME
Denmark	SFU – Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education	Main administrator and main coordinator	Nordplus Adult
Finland	EDUFI – Finnish National Agency for Education	Main administrator	Nordplus Higher Education
Iceland	Rannis - Icelandic Center for Research	Main administrator	Nordplus Nordic Languages
Norway	SIU - Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education	Main administrator	Nordplus Horizontal
Sweden	UHR - Swedish Council for Higher Education	Main administrator	Nordplus Junior
Estonia	Archimedes Foundation	Co-administrator	-
Latvia	State Education Development Agency	Co-administrator	-
Lithuania	Education Exchanges Support Foundation	Co-administrator	-
Åland	The Government of Åland, Department for Education and Culture	Information point	-
The Faroe Islands	International Office	Information point	-
Greenland	NAPA - The Nordic Institution in Greenland	Information point	-



Nordplus is the Nordic Council
of Ministers' largest education
programme for lifelong learning