

Nordplus 2023–2027

PROGRAMME DOCUMENT

1. Introduction

This *Programme Document for Nordplus*:

- is valid for the period of 1 January 2023 until 31 December 2027 and contains general goals and regulations for Nordplus,
- replaces the 2018–2022 programme and builds on the overarching objectives in the Nordplus programme periods of 2008–2012, 2012–2016 (2017) and 2018–2022,
- has been adopted by MR-U on 10.8.2022 in agreement with the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and after consultation with the Nordic Council,
- addresses the goals adopted for Nordplus and the five sub-programmes, which consist of the inter-sectoral *Nordplus Horizontal* and the four sectoral programmes *Nordplus Junior*, *Nordplus Higher Education*, *Nordplus Adult* and *Nordplus Nordic Languages*,
- describes the target groups and who is eligible to take part in Nordplus, the programme activities, guidelines for the Nordplus Programme Committee, regulations for the Nordplus administration and the general regulations for monitoring and evaluating the programme,
- describes the management structure and allocation of responsibilities for Nordplus between the Council of Ministers for Education and Research (MR-U)/the Committee of Senior Officials for Education and Research (EK-U), the Programme Committee for Nordplus, the Nordplus administration, including the main co-ordinator and other administrative staff, and the Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat,
- describes the basis and frameworks for the annual call for applications for programme funding.

2. Nordplus general objectives

Nordplus is the Nordic Council of Ministers' programme for education, continuous learning and Nordic-Baltic co-operation in the field of education. The programme contributes to the goals in the Nordic Vision 2030 and its three strategic priorities; the green Nordic Region, the competitive Nordic Region and the socially sustainable Nordic Region. Vital and versatile collaboration and mobility throughout the Nordic Region and Baltic states are central for a knowledge-based, inclusive and integrated region.

A review of the Nordplus programme document will be conducted before the existing action plan expires in 2024 in order to ensure the document's compatibility with the Nordic Council of Ministers' upcoming action plan for Vision 2030.

Nordplus is an easily accessible programme for different kinds of stakeholders in the field of education. The programme provides opportunities for regional collaboration in education, contributes to synergies and creates added value in relation to other initiatives with similar goals, such as Erasmus+.

Nordplus 2023–2027 consists of a set of general objectives and five sub-programmes: the inter-sectoral Nordplus Horizontal and the four sectoral programmes Nordplus Junior, Nordplus Higher Education, Nordplus Adult and Nordplus Nordic Languages.

The general objectives for Nordplus 2023–2027 are to:

- strengthen and develop Nordic and Baltic co-operation on education, including early childhood and care, and help to create a Nordic–Baltic educational area,

- support, build on, reap the benefits of and promote innovative products and processes in education through the systematic exchange of experiences and good practice,
- contribute to the development of quality and innovation in the educational systems for lifelong learning in the participating Nordplus countries through co-operation in education and training, as well as co-operation with the labour market on development projects, exchange programmes and networking,
- enhance mobility for educational purposes and expand digital collaboration in education in the region,
- enhance opportunities for all, regardless of background and resources, to participate in regional educational collaboration and to gain new knowledge and skills based on collaboration between organisations,
- promote Nordic languages and culture and mutual Nordic-Baltic linguistic and cultural understanding,
- improve inter-Nordic language comprehension (primarily between Danish, Swedish and Norwegian), especially among children and young people,
- stimulate interest in and knowledge and understanding of the languages of the Nordic countries essential to society (Danish, Finnish, Faroese, Greenlandic, Icelandic, Norwegian, Sami and Swedish) and Nordic sign language, and
- revitalise national minority languages in the Nordic Region for cultural and inclusive purposes.

The Programme Committee for Nordplus (see item 5) can set separate targets for each sub-programme. These must be consistent with the general objectives for the programme as a whole, and must not be too wide-ranging or detailed.

The specific programme objectives will, as a rule, cover the whole of the programme period, but the Programme Committee for Nordplus is empowered to adapt them if necessary to comply with new political or strategic priorities. The specific programme objectives must be stated in the call for funding applications on the Nordplus website and in the Nordplus Handbook (see 5).

3. Target groups and participation in the programme

- The eight countries participating in Nordplus 2023–2027 are Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden. Greenland, the Faroe Islands (Denmark) and Åland (Finland) are eligible to take part in all Nordplus activities related to mobility-, project- and networking activities involving Denmark, Finland and the other Nordplus countries.
- The programme targets all individuals, institutions, organisations and groups in the Nordplus countries that have education and lifelong learning as their primary objectives or that work with education and lifelong learning.
- Only participants from the above-mentioned eight Nordic and Baltic countries, including Greenland and the Faroe Islands (Denmark) and Åland (Finland), are eligible for funding from the programme. However, programme activities may also include participants from other countries if they provide their own funding for their part of the activity and comply with the rest of the programme regulations.
- Only activities which take place in the eight Nordplus countries, including Greenland and the Faroe Islands (Denmark) and Åland (Finland), are eligible for funding from the programme.

4. Programme activities

- Throughout the Nordplus programme, activities will be prioritised that support and promote co-operation on education between the Nordplus countries, and therefore aim to generate, develop and disseminate results that are of interest to the Nordplus countries.
- Throughout the Nordplus programme, high-quality activities will be prioritised: i.e., quality will be the overarching selection and evaluation criterion in the programme.
- Nordplus funds the following main categories of activity:
 - Mobility activities
 - Project activities
 - Network activities.

- In accordance with this Programme Document, as adopted by the Council of Ministers for Education and Research (MR-U), the Programme Committee for Nordplus can define more detailed rules concerning applications to, and participation in, each Nordplus sub-programme as long as these are in line with the general regulations contained in the Programme Document for Nordplus and the activities of the Nordic Council of Ministers.
- Nordplus can emphasise certain themes through “Highlights” in accordance with the priorities of the Nordic Council of Ministers.
- The Programme Committee is urged, to the fullest extent possible, to make sure that the programme activities in the sub-programmes are standardised where appropriate, but also adapted to the needs of each sub-programme from a user perspective.
- In line with the goals regarding green transition in all work carried out by the Nordic Council of Ministers, the sustainability perspectives are to be consolidated in the Nordplus programme as a whole. However, this is to be done in a manner that does not change the basic nature of the programme, the aim of which is to promote mobility in the region.

5. Management structure and allocation of responsibilities

Nordplus is owned by the Nordic Council of Ministers, through the Council of Ministers for Education and Research (MR-U). The overall objectives and organisation of the programme are stipulated in this *Programme Document for Nordplus*. Implementation of the document is delegated to the Committee of Senior Officials for Education and Research (EK-U).

Separate, but identical, agreements on participation in the programme have been entered into with each of the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). Once a year, the main Nordplus co-ordinator will submit a brief activity report on Nordplus to senior officials of the Nordic and Baltic countries, providing information on Nordplus activities and results. Meetings of senior officials from the Nordic and Baltic countries will be held when needed.

The Programme Committee for Nordplus has special responsibility for the choice of projects and awards of programme funding, has a responsibility to contribute to the realisation of the programme’s general objectives, and has an important role in the strategic development of the programme.

The Programme Committee for Nordplus operates according to the following main principles:

The Committee has been constituted for the period 01.01.2023 – 31.12.2027. During this period, the Council of Ministers for Education and Research (MR-U)/the Committee of Senior Officials for Education and Research (EK-U), in consultation with the Baltic countries, can decide to evaluate and, if appropriate, amend the structure of the committee.

- The Programme Committee for Nordplus is responsible for the Nordplus programme and decides on the choice of projects and funding awards under the programme.
- The Programme Committee for Nordplus has a responsibility to contribute to the realisation of the programme’s general objectives and to help profile the programme and disseminate knowledge of its positive results. Every year, the best Nordplus projects must be selected for profiling, with a view to supporting the transfer of best practices from the programme and thereby helping to develop the educational systems in the Nordplus countries. The Nordplus Programme Committee represents all of the sub-programmes.
- Working with the Nordic and Baltic education ministries, the Nordplus administration in general and the main co-ordinator in particular, the Programme Committee must monitor and keep itself informed about Nordplus activities.
- Each Nordplus country will appoint two members to the committee: one freely elected, the other possessing specific competences in the area represented by the sub-programmes.¹. An alternate member of the Committee is also appointed. Greenland, the Faroe Islands and

¹ Each country appoints a member who must possess competences in the area covered by a particular sub-programme. The Baltic states agree between them in which area/programme their three members must possess the requisite competences. The five Nordic countries reach a similar agreement.

Åland each appoint two observers and an alternate to the Committee. A list of members, observers and alternate members must be posted on the Nordplus website.

- Representatives of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat will follow the work of the Programme Committee as observers. The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat is responsible for submitting an annual report on Nordplus activities, based on reports from the main co-ordinator, to the Council of Ministers for Education and Research (MR-U)/Senior Officials for Education and Research (EK-U) and the education and research ministers of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.
- The Nordplus Main Co-ordinator has overall responsibility for servicing the Nordplus Programme Committee and co-ordinates contributions from the other main administrators responsible for the sub-programmes.
- The Nordplus administration takes minutes of committee meetings and makes sure that documents and other forms of information from the committee are accessible to all members and observers. Alternate members receive copies of documents and information about the committee from the Nordplus administration.
- The Programme Committee can delegate decisions to the Nordplus administration.
- If a committee member or an observer is unable to attend a committee meeting or is in some other way unable to carry out tasks related to the committee, the individual concerned is responsible for calling in the alternate member and informing the Nordplus administration.
- As a rule, Nordplus co-operation is in the Scandinavian languages. However, some of the co-operation and work of the Programme Committee and some parts of the formal meetings are conducted in English. Materials for use by all are also available in English.
- The Programme Committee elects a chair and a deputy chair for one year at a time. The Programme Committee decides whether it wants to follow the rotation system of the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers, or whether it prefers another method of selecting the chair.
- The Programme Committee meets twice a year.
- If it is necessary and appropriate, further rules can be defined and adopted for procedures for the work of the Programme Committee. This is decided by the committee itself, and the Nordplus administration and Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat are advised accordingly.

6. Programme administration – Nordplus administration

The administration for Nordplus 2023–2027 must ensure responsible management, implementation and co-ordination of all Nordplus activities.

The proportion of Nordplus-funds allocated to administrative work is designed to facilitate the effective and sustainable implementation of the delegated administrative duties.

The Nordplus administration is based on a consortium appointed by the Nordic Council of Ministers, consisting of five national programme offices in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, each of which appoints a main administrator (HA) for a specific Nordplus sub-programme. The Nordplus administration includes the three national programme offices, which are appointed by the education and research ministers of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as the national information offices (NIK) for Nordplus. The information points (InfoP) appointed for Nordplus in Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland are affiliated to the national programme offices in Denmark and Finland, respectively, and as such are part of the Nordplus administration. The Nordic Council of Ministers appoints one of the five Nordic main administrators as main co-ordinator (HK) of the Nordplus administration for a period of three years, generally with the option of an extension for another two years. The post of main coordinator is put out to tender among the main administrators every five years.

The roles and responsibilities of the main co-ordinator for Nordplus (HK), the main administrators for Nordplus (HA), the national Nordplus information offices (NIK) and the Nordplus information points (InfoP), are specified in appendix 1.

The Nordplus Handbook is a tool for applicants and participants. The Handbook is available on the Nordplus website and provides practical information to users about applying to the programme and running projects. The Nordplus administration writes the Handbook, which is owned by the Programme Committee.

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat is responsible for following up on the Nordplus administration's work. It uses contracts and annual reporting meetings to do this, the latter primarily with the Nordplus main co-ordinator on behalf of the consortium.

7. General principles for implementation of the programme

The following general principles are valid for the implementation of Nordplus 2023–2027.

About Nordplus in general

- The annual call for applications Nordplus funding is published simultaneously by the Nordplus administration in each of the Nordplus countries.
- The joint and annual deadline for applications to Nordplus is 1 February.
- In addition, the Nordplus administration can, in the course of the programme year, issue further calls for applications with appropriate deadlines.
- Annual co-ordinating information campaigns are held for Nordplus in each of the Nordplus countries.
- Applications and reports are submitted and processed identically in the joint Nordplus application and reporting system.
- The Nordplus administration can use external experts to evaluate applications. If it is considered desirable, the Nordplus Programme Committee can draw up guidelines for the selection and use of external experts by the programmes.
- The Nordplus administration's evaluation of applications and reports, and the subsequent decisions by the Nordplus Programme Committee, must be comply with the agreed and transparent quality criteria stipulated in the Nordplus Handbook.
- For certain defined programme activities, the authority to make decisions can, if necessary, be delegated to the Nordplus administration, allowing for less complicated applications to be received and processed in a flexible manner. The Nordplus Programme Committee must draw up guidelines for any such delegation.
- The criteria and procedures used for receiving, processing, evaluating, selecting and following up of applications must be described and publicly accessible on the Nordplus website and in the Nordplus Handbook.
- Information about successful applications must be published on the Nordplus website.
- Results, statistics, experiences and best practice from Nordplus must be profiled and made publicly available and easily accessible. Every year, the best Nordplus projects must be selected for profiling, with a view to supporting the transfer of best practices from the programme and thereby helping to develop the educational systems in the Nordplus countries. The Programme Committee is responsible for this, based on input from the main co-ordinator (in collaboration with the other administrators).

The following general principles are valid for the implementation of programme activities (i.e. mobility, projects and network activities) in Nordplus 2023–2027:

Regarding mobility activities

- Funding is only granted for actual mobility activities in the three sectoral programmes Nordplus Junior, Nordplus Adult and Nordplus Higher Education. Nordplus Horizontal and Nordplus Nordic Languages only fund project and network activities.
- Preparatory visits are a mobility activity that can be funded by all five sub-programmes. The Nordplus Programme Committee decides whether there is a need for a call for applications for funding for preparatory visits.

- Applications for funding for mobility activities cannot be submitted by individuals. They must be submitted by an institution or organisation and be based on an agreement between a minimum of one submitting institution/organisation and one host institution/organisation from the various Nordplus countries.
- The permitted duration of the different Nordplus mobility activities under the three sectoral programmes (e.g. pupil-exchange programmes, teacher-exchange programmes, class-exchange programmes, etc.) is normally between one week and 12 months.

Mobility funding consists of a contribution based on fixed rates for travel and accommodation. These rates vary depending on which countries the journey passes through. Extensive changes to these rates, which have budget implications and/or entail major economic consequences for the programme, are the responsibility of the Council of Ministers for Education and Research (MR-U)/Senior Officials for Education and Research (EK-U), in consultation with the education and research ministries in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The detailed administrative and financial rules for the different mobility activities are specified in the Nordplus Handbook.

Regarding project and network activities

- Applications for funding for both networking and project activities must be submitted by a co-ordinating institution or organisation and must be based on an agreement between a minimum of three institutions or organisations from three different Nordplus countries except for Nordplus Nordic Languages which permits bilateral co-operation.
- An application for the funding of network activities will normally be submitted by a co-ordinator on behalf of a network, i.e. a group of institutions or organisations that works with a certain area or subject in the field of education or lifelong learning.
- An application for funding for project activities may be submitted by a co-ordinator on behalf of a network or a partnership between institutions or organisations formed for the purpose of co-operation on specific activities or projects with defined outcomes.
- Applications for Nordplus funding for network- and project activities can cover a period up to two years at a time.
- Funding for network and project activities can consist of a contribution based on fixed rates. If funding from a sub-programme is on the basis of fixed rates, this is evaluated by the Programme Committee and announced when the call for funding applications is launched.
- The detailed rules for the various project and network activities are specified in greater detail in the Nordplus Handbook.

Regarding Nordplus funding

- Nordplus funding is defined as a contribution to real expenses incurred in connection with the participants' mobility activities, project activities and network activities in the eight Nordplus countries. In other words, Nordplus funding applicants must co-finance the real expenses incurred by the project. Costs that can be included in the grant and more detailed terms for using grants are defined in the Nordplus Handbook.
- Simplified grants in form of unit costs and fixed rates are to be used to the greatest possible extent
- Proposals for extensive changes to Nordplus funding, which have budget implications and/or entail major economic consequences for the programme, are the responsibility of the Council of Ministers for Education and Research (MR-U)/Senior Officials for Education and Research (EK-U), in consultation with the education and research ministries in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The Programme Committee defines the specific principles for implementation for each of the Nordplus sub-programmes in accordance with the general principles outlined above.

These detailed principles and rules for implementation of Nordplus are included in the Nordplus Handbook. The Nordplus main co-ordinator, in collaboration with other main administrators, is responsible for updating the Handbook.

8. Programme results – profiling and dissemination

The Nordplus Programme Committee, in collaboration with the Nordplus administration in general and the Nordplus main co-ordinator in particular, must monitor activities in the programme in relation to its objectives, and ensure and verify that the results, statistics, experiences and best practices from the programme are systematically and widely profiled and disseminated.

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat is responsible for submitting an annual report on Nordplus activities, based on reports from the main co-ordinator, to the Council of Ministers for Education and Research (MR-U)/Senior Officials for Education and Research (EK-U) and the education and research ministers of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

9. Programme budget

The contribution to Nordplus from each of the Nordic and Baltic countries is calculated on the basis of each country's share of total Nordic/Baltic gross national income (GNI) for the last two available years – using exchange rates for the same year(s). This is the same principle used to calculate the Nordic countries' contributions to the total budget for the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The budget for Nordplus 2023–2027 will be allocated according to the following main guidelines:

- Nordplus Horizontal will receive 8.8% of the total annual Nordplus budget;
- The sectoral programme Nordplus Junior will receive 26% of the total annual Nordplus budget;
- The sectoral programme Nordplus Higher Education will receive 35.7% of the total annual Nordplus budget;
- The sectoral programme Nordplus Adult will receive 10.5% of the total annual Nordplus budget;
- The sectoral programme Nordplus Nordic Language will receive 6% of the total annual Nordplus budget;
- Administration will be allocated 13% of the total annual Nordplus budget.

The Nordplus Programme Committee determines the actual annual amounts for each Nordplus sub-programme. Adjustments can be made within a 10% band for each sub-programme.

The Nordplus Programme Committee is empowered to redistribute unused funds between sub-programmes provided sound strategic reasons for so doing are established during the programme period. The Committee of Senior Officials for Education and Research (EK-U) must be informed of any such a decision and the reasons for it.

10. Evaluation of the programme

The Nordic Council of Ministers must present a plan for independent evaluation of the Nordplus programme. The evaluation plan must be presented to and approved by the Council of Ministers for Education and Research (MR-U)/Senior Officials for Education and Research (EK-U), following input from the Nordplus Programme Committee.