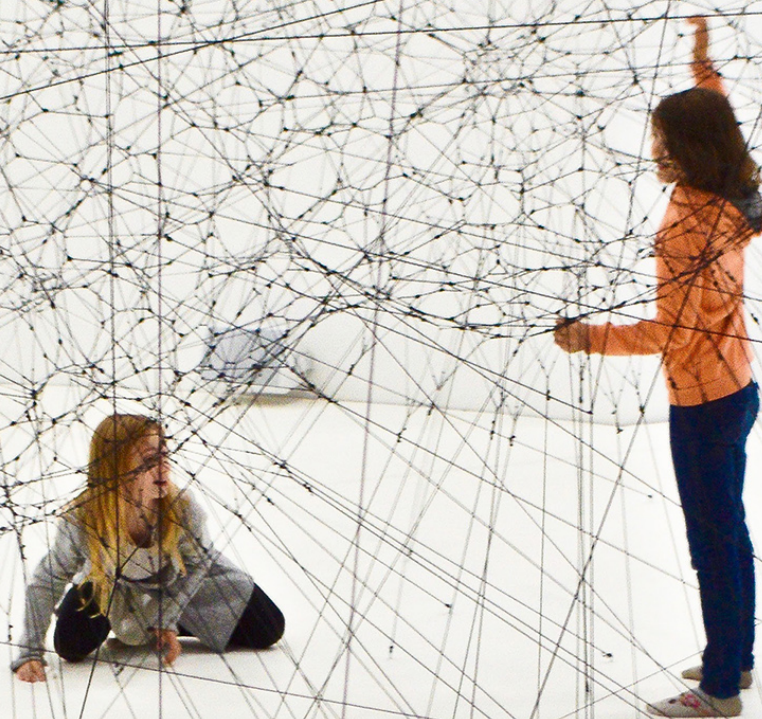


# Evaluation of Nordplus 2021

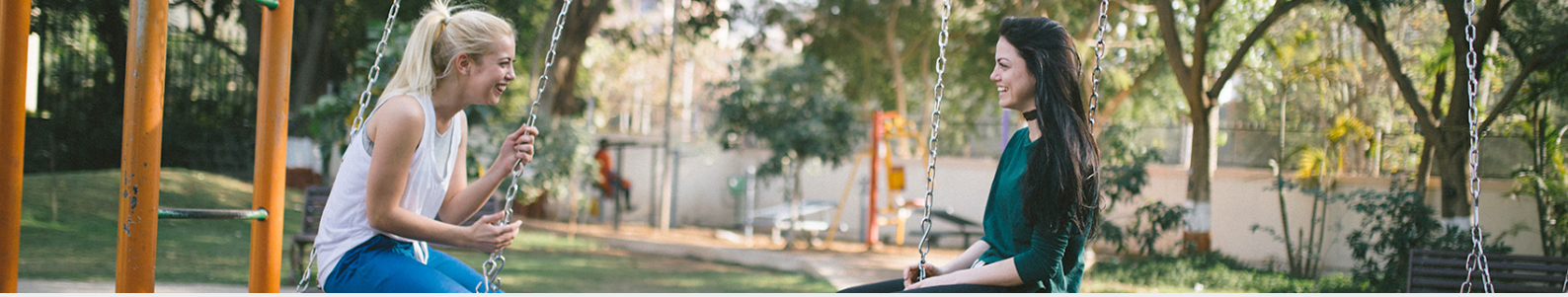




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# Summery of findings

The Nordic Council of Ministers' secretariat has asked Ramboll Management Consulting to evaluate the Nordplus Programme. The specific focus of the evaluation is to investigate how the Nordplus Programme:

- Succeeds in communicating to target groups and other stakeholders
- Spurs focus using Nordplus Highlights
- Meets the different target groups' needs
- Strengthens network creation; exchange, cooperation, and innovation within education; digital competencies; and knowledge of the Nordic languages
- May be influenced going forward in light of changes to other, related programmes (esp. Erasmus+ and the Nordic Master Programme)
- May be focused going forward, particularly in case of budget reductions.

Overall, the evaluation presents a very positive picture of how Nordplus is functioning for those who apply to and participate in the programme and is succeeding in promoting its overall goals, with a few areas identified for improvement. Additionally, it identifies perspectives and potential strategies to be considered when planning for the programme's future. The evaluation's main findings are presented below.

## Finding, Applying to and Participating in Nordplus

- **Communication** about Nordplus opportunities is experienced to have improved recently but there is room for further improvement, especially in communications about Nordplus supported projects and their results.
- The **Nordplus Highlights** are believed to serve as an inspiration for those unsure of how to focus their project, but are not used by all. The continuing openness to projects of any theme is seen as a strength by some stakeholders. Survey data indicate that schools and youth educations (esp. vocational and general) were more likely to include the digital competence highlight (in the 2019-20 cycles) in their proposed projects than higher educational institutions; within higher education, greater shares of those from natural sciences and engineering and technology did so than from other fields.
- The Nordplus **application process** is experienced as relatively simple, user-friendly and non-bureaucratic, largely due to a relatively simple application process. This is particularly good for small organisations with limited administrative resources, allowing them an entry to internationalisation.
- While a large majority of accepted applicants found the basis for the decision on their application to be clear, there is room for improvement in how grounds for decisions are relayed for rejected applications.
- Nordplus applicants' satisfaction with the **required co-financing** is lower than for most of the other aspects of the programme.
- The **levels of financing for travel and teacher salaries** may be hindering the intended function of the programme, likely limiting opportunities for Nordic/Baltic exchange and for teacher participation in project activities, respectively.
- Processes of **grant administration** and reporting are experienced to be simple and easy. A high level of flexibility from the programme administration contributes to this and is highly valued by project coordinators.
- Project coordinators report very high levels of **overall satisfaction** with Nordplus.

## The Value of Nordplus

- Across the Nordplus subprogrammes, large majorities of participants in most projects **interact** both physically and virtually, and project coordinators and other stakeholders see important value in Nordplus's promotion of **mobility and cohesion** in the Nordic-Baltic region. They emphasise that it is important to maintain Nordplus's role in providing support for educational cooperation within the region, as it strengthens **shared identity** through human connection and shared practice.

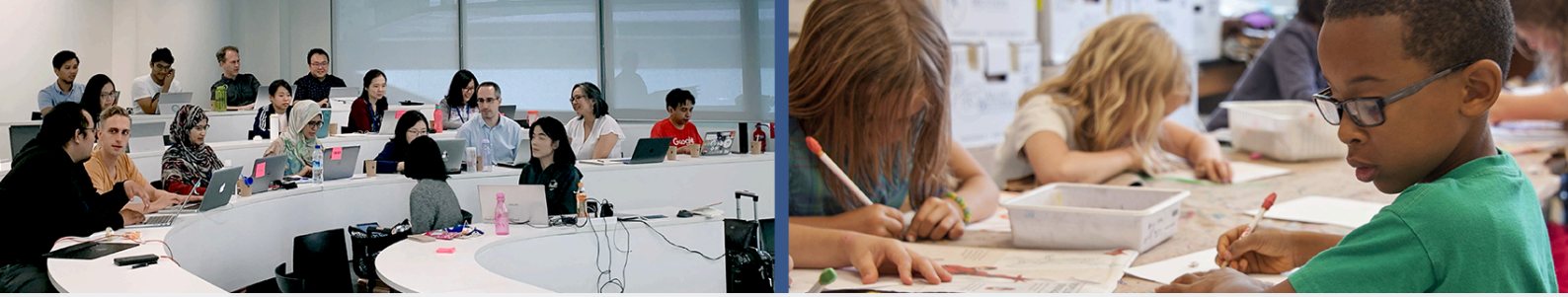
- According to project coordinators and other stakeholders, the programme supports **network development**, creating meaningful Nordic Partnerships and cooperation that go beyond individual projects. Many see great value in Nordplus's accessibility, which makes it possible for smaller organisations to participate in such Nordic/Baltic cooperation. Project coordinators and other stakeholders from Nordic and Baltic countries believe that common culture and approaches to education enable easier and faster development of educational cooperation.
- Nordplus enhances **knowledge-sharing and development of innovative materials and practices within education** across subprogrammes.
- Nordplus-funded projects contribute to further **understanding and interest in the Nordic cultures and languages**, which can further enhance a common Nordic culture and understanding.

## Priorities for the Future of Nordplus

- While there are significant overlaps between Nordplus and **Erasmus+**, some stakeholders emphasise a number of funding opportunities that are unique to Nordplus, and some argue that Nordplus should focus on such aspects. A large majority of those who have applied to both Nordplus and Erasmus+ find the Nordplus application process easier, while the perceived comparative likelihood of receiving funding varies with subprogramme.
- Those with knowledge of the **Nordic Master Programme** offer differing suggestions on whether and how to carry its elements forward through Nordplus after the master programme ends. Some think it better to support development of joint modules rather than entire joint degree programmes, while others propose supporting degree programmes, particularly in the development phase. An examination of the opportunities for support for joint degree programmes offered by Nordplus, the Nordic Master Programme and Erasmus Mundus suggests the same, that the opportunities for support offered through the surviving programmes are likely to maintain similar opportunities in the future.
- The interviewed project coordinators and stakeholders highlight key **needs and interests of the target groups going forward** that are relevant for Nordplus. They see the need for class exchanges, short-term mobility and opportunities for Nordic and Nordic-Baltic exchange to be important continuing priorities. In addition, they see an increasing need for support for virtual and hybrid collaboration.
- Asked directly about **what Nordplus should prioritise going forward**, all those interviewed emphasise the importance of the programme's simplicity, flexibility and therefore its accessibility. Multiple coordinators and stakeholders

recommend increased funding for certain activities such as travel and teacher salaries, and some suggest a unit-costs model across programmes. Opinions about how to prioritise funding between subprogrammes vary, but typically recommend prioritizing those sectors with fewer opportunities to fund projects through Erasmus+. Finally, multiple project coordinators and stakeholders emphasise the continuing importance of a "neighbourhood" programme where Nordic and Baltic students and educators can interact and collaborate.

- The report concludes with a recommendation of **three potential strategies that may be used to determine the future of Nordplus**, particularly in light of impending budget reductions. The first of these is to *continue the status quo*, continuing the current distribution of funding between subprogrammes and the current structure in terms of types of activities supported. The second strategy would consist of a *functional specialisation in response to Erasmus+*, which would involve tailoring funding opportunities within each subprogramme to those not offered through Erasmus+. This strategy may imply a re-allocation of resources between subprogrammes. Finally, the third strategy consists of a *strengthened thematic focus* of the programme, where Nordplus may be re-thought to unify funding opportunities around certain themes in line with the shared vision set out under the Nordic Council of Ministers and within the region.



## Chapter 1

# Introduction

This introduction to the evaluation first presents the purpose of the evaluation, followed by a brief description of the methods and data used in the evaluation, and the section is concluded by a reading guide explaining the structure of the entire report.

## 1.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

The overall purpose of the evaluation is to create a well-documented and action-oriented foundation for the preparation of the coming Nordplus programme period.

In the coming programme period, the budget framework for Nordplus may be reduced<sup>1</sup> and at the same time other educational programmes whose goals overlap those of Nordplus are changing. The Nordic Council of Ministers and the programme committee must navigate within these changing structural conditions and contextual factors when planning the coming programme period. Hence, the evaluation is also intended to present recommendations on how to prioritise programme resources in the future given the changing circumstances.

On that background, the Nordic Council of Ministers' secretariat has asked Ramboll Management Consulting (hereafter Ramboll) to evaluate the Programme. The specific focus of the evaluation is to investigate how the Nordplus Programme:

- Succeeds in communicating to target groups and other stakeholders
- Spurs focus using Nordplus Highlights
- Meets the different target groups' needs
- Strengthens network creation; exchange, cooperation, and innovation within education; digital competencies; and knowledge of the Nordic languages
- May be influenced going forward in light of changes to other, related programmes (esp. Erasmus+ and the Nordic Master Programme)
- May be focused going forward, particularly in case of budget reductions.

---

1. The Nordic Council of Ministers for Education and Research's overall budget is being reduced from 224,723,000 DKK in 2020 to approximately 185,800,000 DKK in 2024, a 17.3 % reduction. This may affect the Nordplus budget in the coming programme period.

## 1.2 Methods and Data

To thoroughly investigate the questions above, the evaluation is based on a mixed-methods design, with collection and analysis of data from both a broad survey of programme users and in-depth interviews with different types of stakeholders. This ensures both a wider representation of experiences of and perspectives on the programme, while at the same time presenting an in-depth understanding of how the Programme functions and is experienced. In this section we include a brief description of the methods and data used in the evaluation (See Appendix A for further details).

### Survey among Nordplus Applicants

The evaluation is based on a survey among all applicants of the Programme from 2018-2020. In the survey the applicants responded to questions about their experiences with the Programme, the application process, the needs of the project participants, and the benefits of the projects conducted with Nordplus support.

The survey was sent to a total of 1087 project coordinators<sup>2</sup> who applied to the programme in the 2018-2020 application cycles. 569 people responded, producing a response rate of 52 %. The response rate among the applicants to different subprogrammes was relatively similar, with the response rate among people applying for the Horizontal subprogramme being the lowest (48 %) and the response rate for those who applied to the Nordic Languages subprogramme being the highest (56 %). See the full list of response rates in the table below.

**Table 1.1 Survey response rate among Nordplus applicants 2018-20**

|                             | Nordplus | Higher Education | Adult | Horizontal | Nordic Languages | Total       |
|-----------------------------|----------|------------------|-------|------------|------------------|-------------|
| <b>Applicants contacted</b> | 374      | 343              | 210   | 103        | 61               | <b>1087</b> |
| <b>Completed responses</b>  | 202      | 181              | 103   | 49         | 34               | <b>569</b>  |
| <b>Response rate</b>        | 54%      | 53%              | 49%   | 48%        | 56%              | <b>52%</b>  |

### Interviews with project coordinators, external stakeholders, administrators, and programme committee members

Data from interviews is used both to investigate the results of Nordplus for the target group as well as to investigate the programme framework and strategic perspectives. All interviews were conducted virtually and were held in English, with exception of a few interviews which were conducted in Scandinavian.

20 project coordinators were selected for participation in interviews from among those who responded to the survey, and whose projects had received funding from

---

2. With 'project coordinators', this report refers to individuals who are responsible for an application and potential project on behalf of the lead organisation in a project.



Nordplus. The selection aimed to balance those from different countries and with projects under the five subprogrammes, according to the extent of funding in recent years (see numbers by country and subprogramme in Appendix A).

The interviews with the project coordinators were conducted on the basis of semi-structured interview guides revolving around their initial awareness of Nordplus, their choice to apply and the application process, their experience of the administration and reporting in the Programme, and their experience of the results and value of their project and the Programme, respectively. Furthermore, the project coordinators were asked to give their perspectives on future priorities for the Programme.

To investigate the Programme framework and strategic perspectives on the future of Nordplus, 17 interviews were conducted with external stakeholders, who typically represented interest groups within different educational sectors in the programme countries. In total, 19 interviews were conducted with Nordplus administrators and programme committee members. The table below gives an overview of the number of interviews conducted as part of the qualitative data collection.

**Table 1.2 Number of interviews conducted with different types of interviewees**

|                             | Internal stakeholders       |                |                    | External stakeholders | Project coordinators |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
|                             | Programme committee members | Administrators | Information points |                       |                      |
| <b>Number of interviews</b> | 8                           | 8              | 3                  | 17                    | 20                   |

All current programme offices and information points<sup>3</sup> were interviewed in the evaluation, as well as one or more programme committee members<sup>4</sup> from each of the eight participating countries. The interviews with the programme committee members, programme offices and information points focused on the value and impact of Nordplus for the informants' country/region, Nordplus Highlights, communication efforts and perspectives on future priorities including the perspectives on how and whether changes in Erasmus+ should affect the planning of the coming programme period in Nordplus. Administrators and information points were also interviewed about their experience of the application process and administration of the Programme and their experience of the interaction between country Nordplus administrators/information points and the programme committee.

External stakeholders were interviewed about similar topics, but with an emphasis on their perspectives on the needs and key interests of the organisations that they

- 
3. Unless the report's presentation of results specifically mentions ideas expressed by information point representatives, collective mentions of "administrators" should be understood to include both administrators and information point representatives.
  4. See the following for a description of the Nordplus Programme Committee, administration and information points: <https://www.nordplusonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/web-introduction-to-nordplus-and-the-work-of-the-programme-committee-2.pdf>.

represent and the perspectives on future priorities. The total of interviewed external stakeholders come from all the Nordic and Baltic countries and some of the organisations are specifically Nordic organisations (see the full list of interviewed external stakeholders in Appendix A).

#### Box 1.1 On quantity in the qualitative analysis

The purpose of analysis of interview data is to contribute to the evaluation with unique insights of users' experiences, the value of the Programme and perspectives on future strategies from key professionals, rather than to conclude the *extent* of any perspective.

However, when the perspectives and attitudes expressed by interviewees are reported in the evaluation, this is done in the light of how often/by how many the specific perspectives have been mentioned. Overall, the analysis is primarily based on the perspectives that recurs in more than a few interviews. In the analysis words such as "several" of the interviewees, "the majority", "almost all" and "all" is used to signal the number of persons mentioning a specific perspective or theme.

In specific cases, perspectives only mentioned in one or a few interviews are included in the evaluation. This is especially when specific target group characteristics or less frequently represented locations that are nevertheless valued participants in the programme (such as the Faroe Islands) can explain why an otherwise important perspective is not mentioned in other interviews.

## 1.3 The Structure of the Report (Reading Guide)

This evaluation provides a structured investigation of whether the Programme meets the needs of the target group in all aspects of the process as well as the value of the Programme and perspectives on the future priorities for Nordplus. The report is divided into six chapters that reflect these overall themes.

**Chapter 2** presents information about **the structure of Nordplus, and key data on the five subprogrammes**. The purpose of this chapter is to give readers an overview of the Programme, and to present information on the development in numbers of applications and the types of organisations receiving funds within each subprogramme.

**Chapter 3** presents findings on **how programme users and other stakeholders experience the process of finding, applying to and receiving funds from** the Nordplus Programme. The chapter addresses 1) communication about Nordplus, 2) the role of the Nordplus Highlights, 3) application processes, 4) administration of and reporting on projects in Nordplus and 5) overall user satisfaction with Nordplus.

**Chapter 4** presents findings **on the value of Nordplus**. It outlines how Nordplus strengthens mobility across the involved countries and regions. This chapter also describes how the Programme is experienced to have influenced the spread of education practices and innovation, the understanding and use of languages, and development and enhancement of digital competencies.

**Chapter 5** presents **perspectives on future priorities for Nordplus**. It highlights input from internal and external stakeholders on the function of the Programme in light of Erasmus+ and the Nordic Master Programme, on the future interests and needs of the Programme's target groups and additional the perspectives on future priorities. The chapter concludes by presenting three potential strategies for the future development of Nordplus, focusing on continuation of the status quo, functional specialisation in response to Erasmus+, and strengthened thematic focus of the Programme, respectively.

The report includes the following appendices: **Appendix A** presents further details on the data and methods of the evaluation, **Appendix B** presents data on mobility between Nordplus countries.

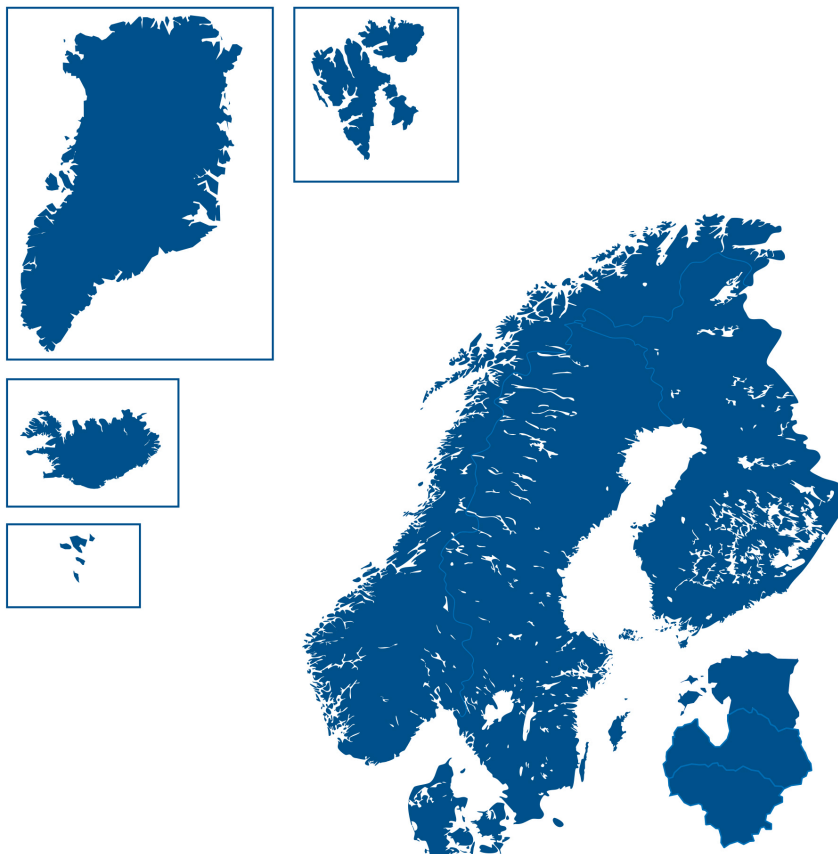




## Chapter 2

# The Nordplus programme in brief

The following presents an overview of the Nordplus Programme, first through a description of the Programme and its organisation, followed by five one-page presentations of key data about each of the five subprogrammes.<sup>5</sup>



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5. The programme description in the box builds on the Nordplus Handbook and other materials: <https://www.nordplusonline.org/about/nordplus/> <https://www.nordplusonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/nordplus-handbog-2021-uk.pdf>.

### Box 2.1. What is the Nordplus Programme and how is it organised?

Nordplus is a programme that offers financial support to partners in the area of lifelong learning. More specifically, it is a mobility and network programme aimed at supporting organisations and institutions in all educational sectors involved in learning and education in the Nordic and Baltic countries, including the autonomous regions of Åland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland.

Nordplus is funded by the Nordic and Baltic countries and is the largest educational programme within the Nordic Council of Ministers. Each year, Nordplus awards approximately 9,6 million euro in funding for mobility, projects, and networks in relation to the five subprogrammes:

- Nordplus Junior
- Nordplus Higher Education
- Nordplus Adult
- Nordplus Horizontal
- Nordplus Nordic Languages

The responsibility for developing the Nordplus Programme and the underlying subprogrammes as well the responsibility for distributing the funds in each subprogramme lies with the programme committee. The programme committee consists of 16 members – two from each country – who are appointed by the relevant ministries in each country.

There are programme offices in each of the eight Nordic and Baltic countries. Each of the Nordic programme offices acts as main administrator of one of the subprogrammes and co-administrator of the other four programmes, while the Baltic office is co-administrators of all the programmes. Information points in each of the participating autonomous regions join the programme offices in managing information and guidance on the Programme to potential applicants in each country. The Nordic Council of Ministers appoints one of the main administrators as the main coordinator of the programme. The main coordinator is responsible for the day-to-day management of Nordplus. The position rotates among the main administrators on regular intervals. The current main coordinator is Rannís in Iceland.

Furthermore, the Secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers observes the work of the Nordplus Programme and is responsible for reporting on the Programme to the Nordic Council of Ministers.

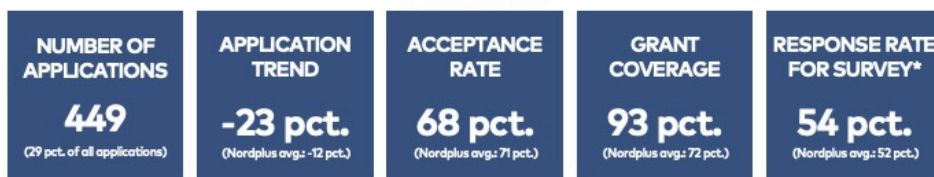
The following pages present key data about the five Nordplus subprogrammes, drawing on background data from the Espresso administration system and data from the survey conducted for this evaluation.

- They highlight a number of statistics for each subprogramme over the 2018-20 application cycles, including:
  - Number of applications
  - Trend in number of applications from 2018 to 2020
  - Share of applications funded
  - Grant coverage (awarded funds as a share of those applied for)
  - The response rate for the application survey
  - Number of applications and acceptance rate by country and autonomous region
  - Types of organisations with the project coordination role
  - Target groups of the project
  - Number, type and method of finding project partners.



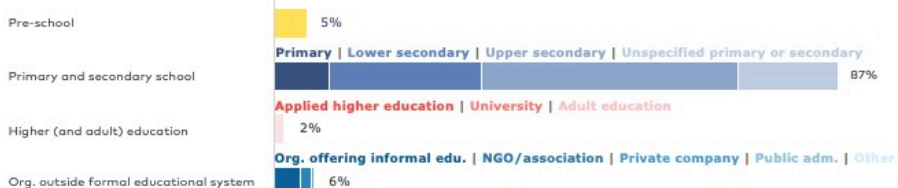
# NORDPLUS JUNIOR

FROM 2018-2020



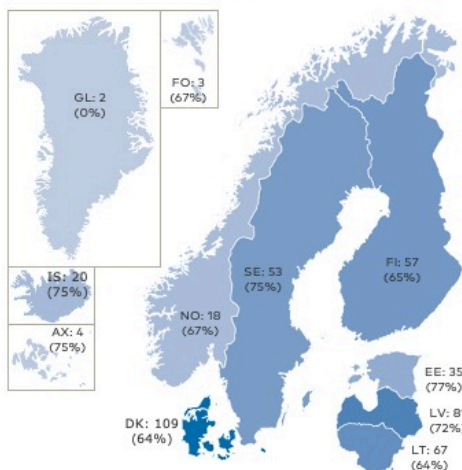
## WHO ARE THE MAIN PARTNERS?

Which type of organisation do they come from?\*

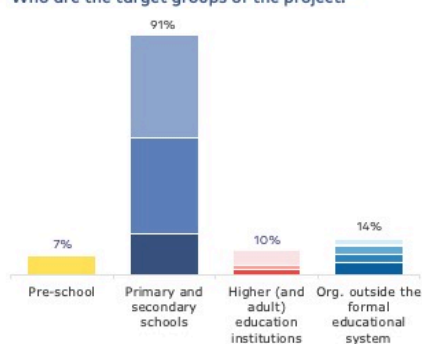


Where do they come from?

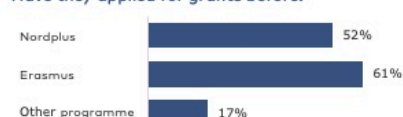
Total no. of projects (acceptance rate)



Who are the target groups of the project?\*



Have they applied for grants before?\*

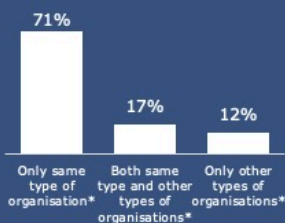


## WHO DO THEY PARTNER WITH?

Average number of partners

**1.8**

(Nordplus avg.: 5.7)



Most common way to find a partner\*

- 1 International network of own institution (35 pct.)
- 2 Nordplus Partner Search (31 pct.)
- 3 Seminars or conferences (20 pct.)
- 4 Visits (18 pct.)

Note: Results based on survey among unique main partners are denoted with a '\*'. Other results are based on Nordplus's administration system

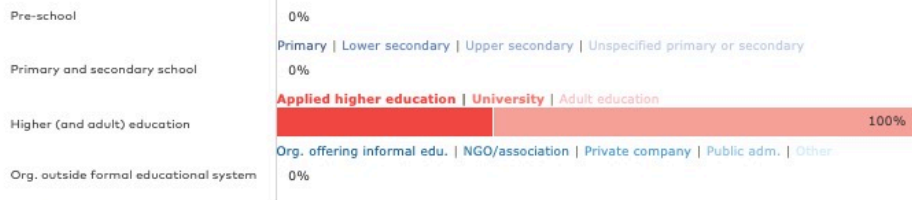
# NORDPLUS HIGHER EDUCATION

FROM 2018-2020



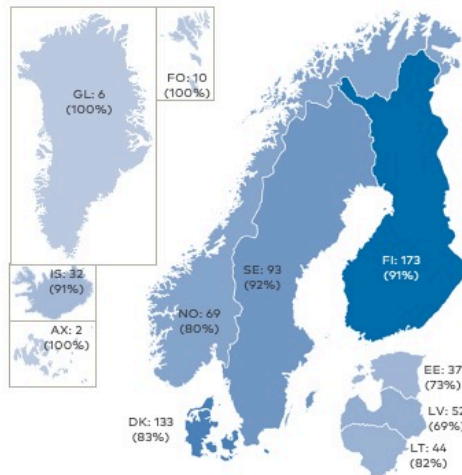
## WHO ARE THE MAIN PARTNERS?

Which type of organisation do they come from?\*

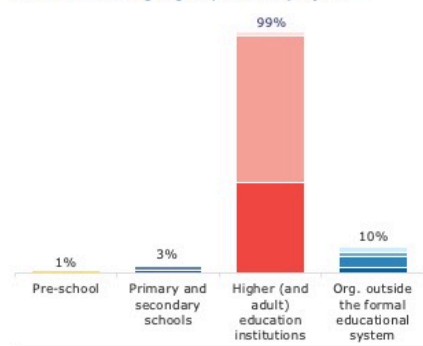


Where do they come from?

Total no. of projects (acceptance rate)



Who are the target groups of the project?\*



Have they applied for grants before?\*

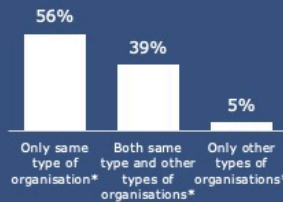


## WHO DO THEY PARTNER WITH?

Average number of partners

**9.9**

(Nordplus avg.: 5.7)



Most common way to find a partner\*

- 1 International network of own institution (63 pct.)
- 2 Seminars or conferences (27 pct.)
- 3 Visits (23 pct.)
- 4 Previous collaboration / personal network (20 pct.)

Note: Results based on survey among unique main partners are denoted with a '\*'. Other results are based on Nordplus's administration system

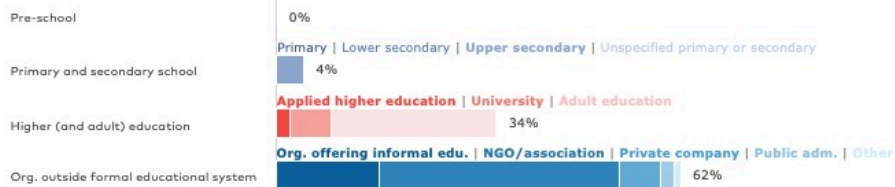
# NORDPLUS ADULT

FROM 2018-2020



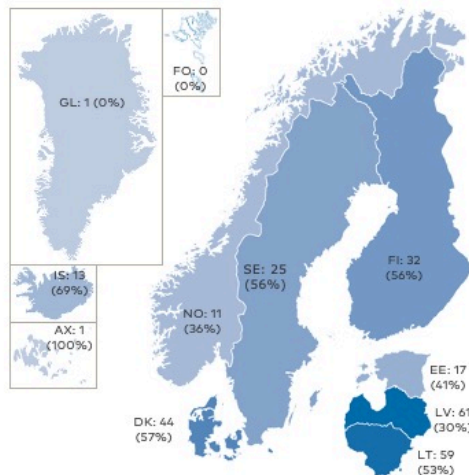
## WHO ARE THE MAIN PARTNERS?

Which type of organisation do they come from?\*

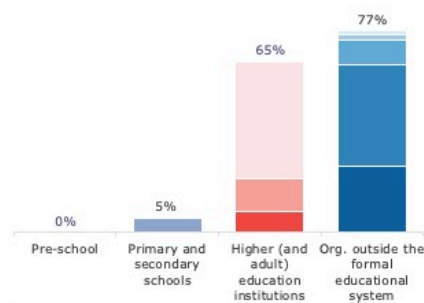


Where do they come from?

Total no. of projects (acceptance rate)



Who are the target groups of the project?\*



Have they applied for grants before?\*

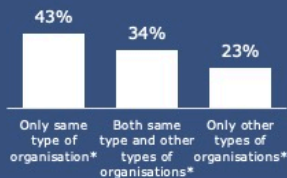


## WHO DO THEY PARTNER WITH?

Average number of partners

**2.9**

(Nordplus avg.: 5.7)



Most common way to find a partner\*

- 1 International network of own institution (54 pct.)
- 2 Seminars or conferences (24 pct.)
- 3 Nordplus Partner Search (23 pct.)
- 4 Visits (19 pct.)

Note: Results based on survey among unique main partners are denoted with a '\*'. Other results are based on Nordplus's administration system



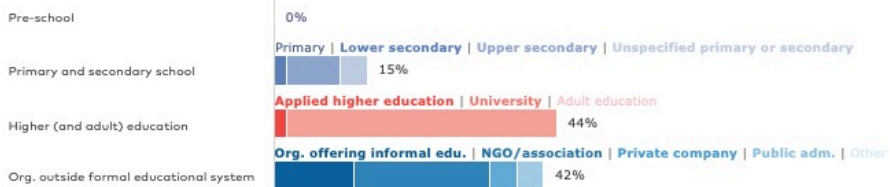
# NORDPLUS HORIZONTAL

FROM 2018-2020



## WHO ARE THE MAIN PARTNERS?

Which type of organisation do they come from?\*

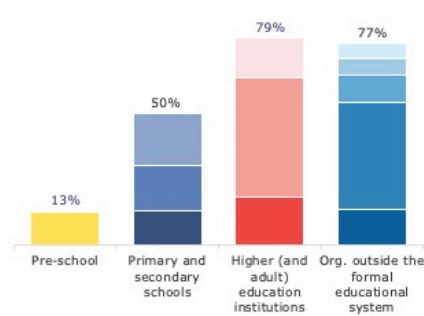


Where do they come from?

Total no. of projects (acceptance rate)



Who are the target groups of the project?\*



Have they applied for grants before?\*

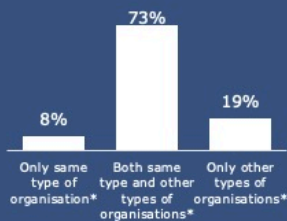


## WHO DO THEY PARTNER WITH?

Average number of partners

**5.6**

(Nordplus avg.: 5.7)



Most common way to find a partner\*

- 1 International network of own institution (60 pct.)
- 2 Seminars or conferences (31 pct.)
- 3 Visits (17 pct.)
- 4 Previous collaboration / personal network (15 pct.)

Note: Results based on survey among unique main partners are denoted with a "\*". Other results are based on Nordplus's administration system

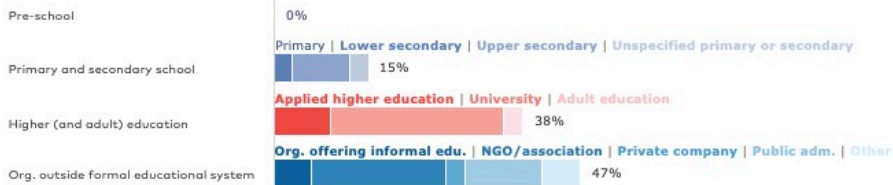
# NORDPLUS NORDIC LANGUAGES

FROM 2018-2020



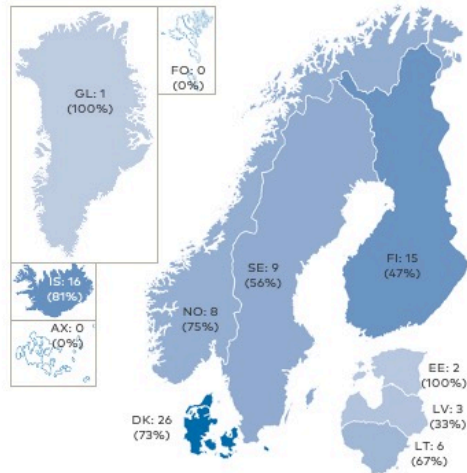
## WHO ARE THE MAIN PARTNERS?

Which type of organisation do they come from?\*

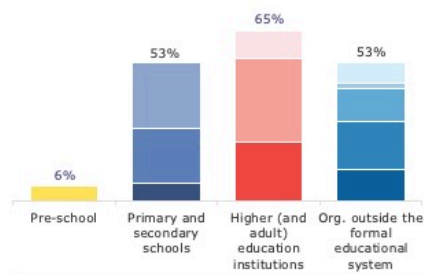


Where do they come from?

Total no. of projects (acceptance rate)



Who are the target groups of the project?\*



Have they applied for grants before?\*



## WHO DO THEY PARTNER WITH?

Average number of partners

**3.0**

(Nordplus avg.: 5.7)



Most common way to find a partner\*

- 1 International network of own institution (59 pct.)
- 2 Seminars or conferences (29 pct.)
- 3 Previous collaboration / personal network (24 pct.)
- 4 Visits (15 pct.)

Note: Results based on survey among unique main partners are denoted with a "\*". Other results are based on Nordplus's administration system



## Chapter 3

# Finding, applying to and participating in Nordplus

This chapter examines how the Nordplus Programme is experienced by those who apply for funding and coordinate projects. It presents findings in the order they are experienced by applicants and project coordinators – from learning about Nordplus, to applying, to administering and reporting on a project.

### Central findings from this chapter:

- **Communication** about Nordplus opportunities is experienced to have improved recently but there is room for further improvement, especially in communications about Nordplus supported projects and their results.
- The **Nordplus Highlights** are believed to serve as an inspiration for those unsure of how to focus their project, but are not used by all. The continuing openness to projects of any theme is seen as a strength by some stakeholders. Survey data indicate that schools and youth educations (esp. vocational and general) were more likely to include the digital competence highlight (in the 2019-20 cycles) in their proposed projects than higher educational institutions; within higher education, greater shares of those from natural sciences and engineering and technology did so than from other fields.
- The Nordplus **application process** is experienced as relatively simple, user-friendly and non-bureaucratic, largely due to a relatively simple application process. This is particularly good for small organisations with limited administrative resources, allowing them an entry to internationalisation.
- While a large majority of accepted applicants found the basis for the decision on their application to be clear, there is room for improvement in how grounds for decisions are relayed for rejected applications.
- Nordplus applicants' satisfaction with the **required self-financing** is lower

than for most of the other aspects of the programme.

- The **levels of financing for travel and teacher salaries** may be hindering the intended function of the programme, likely limiting opportunities for Nordic/Baltic exchange and for teacher participation in project activities, respectively.
- Processes of **grant administration and reporting** are experienced to be simple and easy. A high level of flexibility from the programme administration contributes to this and is highly valued by project coordinators.

## Information about Nordplus to potential applicants is available via:

- The Nordplus website (in English and Scandinavian)
- The participating countries' educational agencies' websites (in the national languages)
- Workshops and webinars by the national agencies
- Newsletters from the agencies to educational networks and institutions. Social media posts by national agencies and from the Nordplus administration.

### 3.1 Finding Nordplus (Communications and Information about the Programme)

Potential applicants in the Nordplus Programme's target groups must learn about Nordplus' funding opportunities before even applying. Most applicants who apply to Nordplus report that they first learned about Nordplus through their national education agencies, the Nordplus website, or colleagues and professional contacts, including potential partner organisations. As described in the box to the right, the national educational agencies principal channels of communication about Nordplus to potential applicants, in addition to the programme website itself. In addition, the Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL) and Nordplus routinely cooperate to spread information about relevant application calls and events, and coordinate for effective communication of results from Nordplus Adult projects.

When asked about existing **communications about the Nordplus Programme and its grant possibilities**, a majority of those interviewed do not point out needed points of improvement. However, some external stakeholders believe that it could be improved, citing key organisations in their networks in the education sectors who are



not familiar with Nordplus at all. At the same time, a few external stakeholders and administrators recommend using social media for communication of the programme to a higher extent, especially for communication regarding the junior programme given the importance of social media for this target group. In addition, a few of the interviewed external stakeholders recommend distributing more information to relevant organisations shortly before deadlines.

In general, the interviewed administrators and programme committee members perceive communications about Nordplus opportunities to have improved over the last couple of years. They mention improvements to the Nordplus website and cite extensive communications by many of the national education agencies through websites, newsletters, and seminars/webinars. At the same time, some administrators point out that more marketing could be helpful. Particular aspects highlighted for improvement are additional videos and living testimonials of those running projects under Nordplus, but those who mention this also acknowledge that they understand such changes to be underway already. Others suggest using opportunities afforded by Nordic Council of Ministers events, such as conferences, to market the Programme more extensively. And finally, a few of those interviewed believe that social media could be used more extensively to spread the word about the Programme's funding opportunities.

In addition, a few of those interviewed mentioned that particular attention should be paid to how much information is available in languages for the Programme's smallest language populations, such as Greenlandic. They pointed out that some teachers, in particular many of those who are older, are not as fluent in English as others, so the lack of information pages in their language can limit the Programme's accessibility.

However, a few administrators and programme committee members interviewed express the view that additional marketing is not needed, since there are currently more applications than can be funded.

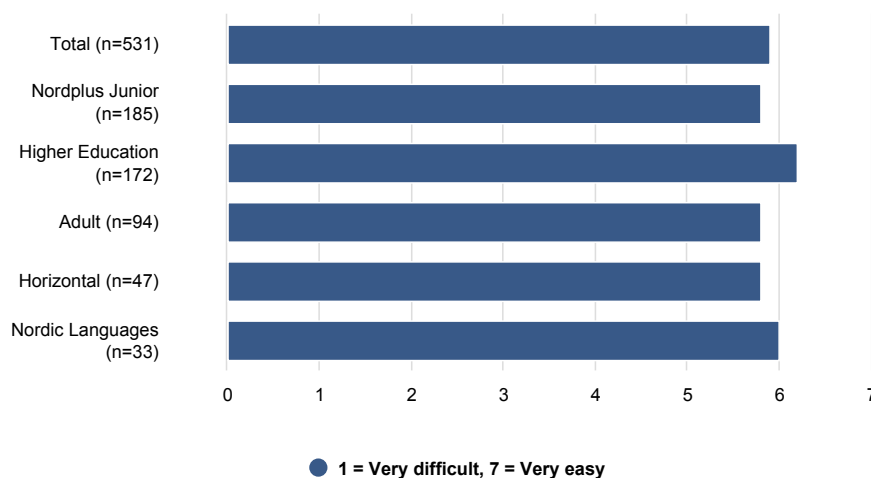
In addition, many of those interviewed see a need for strengthening **communications about Nordplus-supported projects and their results**. A majority of administrators think that news about projects and results should be communicated better, both to strengthen the position of the Programme, and to provide inspiration for potential applicants about what is possible with grants from Nordplus. They, and a number of the interviewed external stakeholders, cite a need for additional facilitation of sharing of experiences between project coordinators and partners, for example to increase posts on social media.

Asked about whether the information available to potential applicants is accessible and comprehensible, applicants across the five subprogrammes who responded to the survey rated Nordplus high, on average, in terms of ease of **understanding the programme objectives, rules for funding, eligibility and relevance of subprogrammes**, with an average of 5.9 on a 1-7 scale across an index of four items (see Figure 3.1 below). Applicants to Nordplus higher education gave slightly more positive responses than applicants to the other programmes, with an average of 6.2 on the same scale. This difference may be accounted for by Nordplus higher education

having fewer first-time applicants than the other programmes.

In interviews, several project coordinators highlight that they found the Nordplus Programme handbook and website to be useful sources of information.

**Figure 3.1. Ease of understanding programme objectives, funding rules, eligibility, and subpro-gramme relevance**



**Item wording:** To what extent did you find it easy or difficult to understand the following:

- "The objectives of the Nordplus Programme (e.g. strengthen co-operation and innovation as well as promote Nordic- and Baltic culture and languages)."
- "The rules for how funding from Nordplus may be used (e.g. regulations about funding)."
- "Whether my project/institution was eligible to apply for funding from Nordplus."
- "Which of the five Nordplus Programmes that were relevant for my project/institution"

## 3.2 Nordplus Highlights

The Nordplus Programme places special emphasis on themes that are in focus for the Nordic Council of Ministers and relevant to the region in a given time period through "Highlights", each of which "specifies an up-to-date theme which becomes the focus for a two-year period and relates to all Nordplus subprogrammes".<sup>6</sup> While the Highlights serve to focus attention on these themes, it is not a requirement that proposed projects place emphasis on or include them in their areas of focus.

For this evaluation, Nordplus applicants, administrators, programme committee members and external stakeholders were also asked about the meaning and role of the Nordplus Highlights for their projects and the Programme.

56 % of the surveyed project coordinators report that their project included the theme of the Nordplus Highlight, indicating that it is a focus for a majority of those who apply.

This is in line with the views expressed by a majority of the interviewed administrators and programme committee members, who believe that Highlights serve as inspiration for those who are still determining their project's focus, even though it has no effect on application review. The interviewed administrators,

6. The Nordplus Handbook: <https://www.nordplusonline.org/how-to-apply/handbook/introduction-to-nordplus/objectives/>.

programme committee members and some external stakeholders (those who expressed views on the Highlights) see it as positive that the Highlights are structured as they are, with an invitation to emphasise the chosen theme but no requirement to do so. Several of them point out that the Highlights can serve to focus political attention on the value of the Programme and to align activities supported by the Programme with the Nordic Council of Ministers' focus areas within a given time span. Relating to the previous section, some of those interviewed also suggest that communications could be better targeted around the highlighted themes, for example by showing results from projects that relate to them in combined communications products.

## Highlights prioritised in the current programme period:

**2017-2018: Integration**

**2019-2020: Digital Competence**

**2021-2022: A Greener Future**

In general, the interviewed project coordinators only reflected briefly about the Highlights, though what is expressed is also in line with the results from the survey presented above. Several either do not remember or know whether the Nordplus Highlight was relevant to their application. Just as many mentioned that the Highlight was relevant though they only reflected briefly on why this was the case. A few project coordinators did elaborate on how the Highlight was relevant to their application, primarily because the Highlight reflected what they already wanted to focus on in their projects, rather than because the highlight guided them in their project focus.

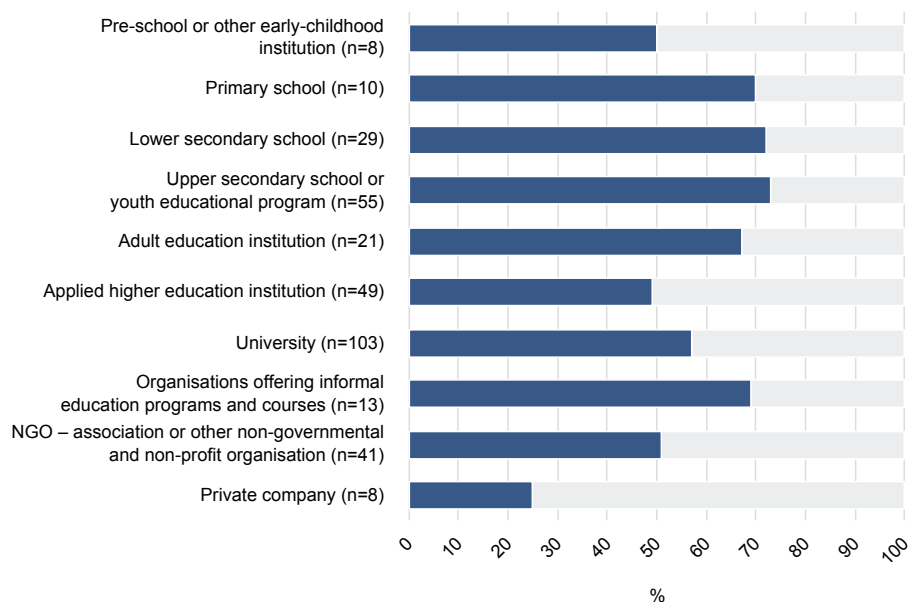
Aside from the goal of inspiring focus on certain themes, the Highlights were also implemented to attract applications from a diverse group of subject areas. As the evaluation is only based on data from applicants during the current period, a direct comparison with previous periods cannot be conducted. However, project coordinators' responses to the survey question on the relevance of the digital competence highlight suggest that the inclusion of this highlight in project proposals did differ between types of coordinating institutions overall, between types of youth educations and between fields within higher education (see Figure 3.2).

The responses indicate that inclusion of the digital competence highlight in projects was more widespread among coordinating schools and youth institutions than among coordinating higher education institutions, and that those least likely to include it were private companies. Among coordinating higher education institutions, inclusion of the highlight was more prevalent among those working in the natural sciences (of whom 83% included it), and in engineering and technology (67 %) than it was among those in the humanities, medical sciences and social sciences. Finally, among coordinating youth educations, a large majority of vocational schools (78 %)

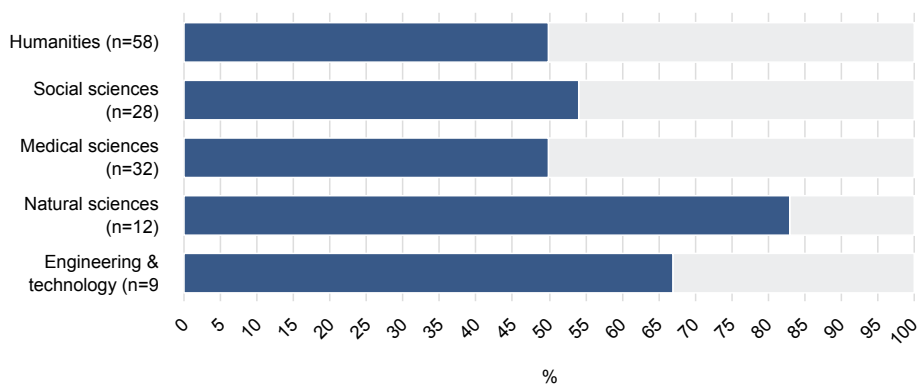
and general upper secondary schools (76%) included the highlight in their projects, than was the case among technical and business upper secondary schools.

**Figure 3.2. Inclusion of digital competence Highlight in project, by institution type (overall), subject area (higher education) and youth education type (% who indicated on survey).**

**By type of coordinating institution (all types included)**

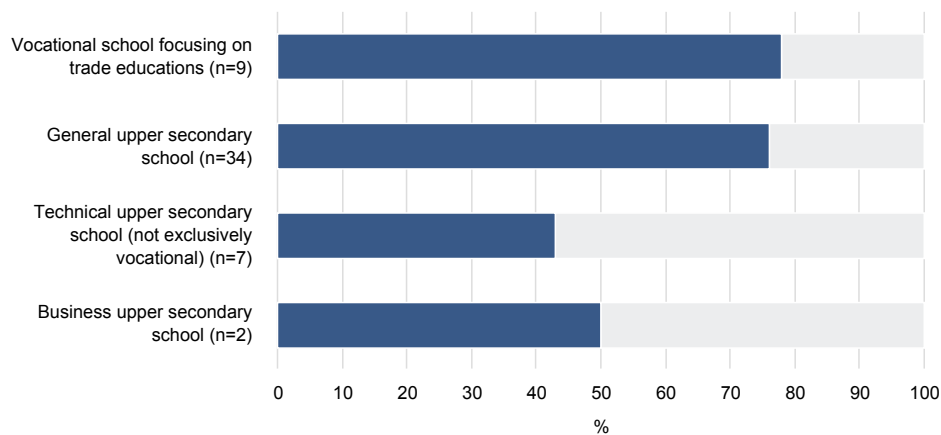


**By subject area (higher education institutions only, across subprogrammes)**





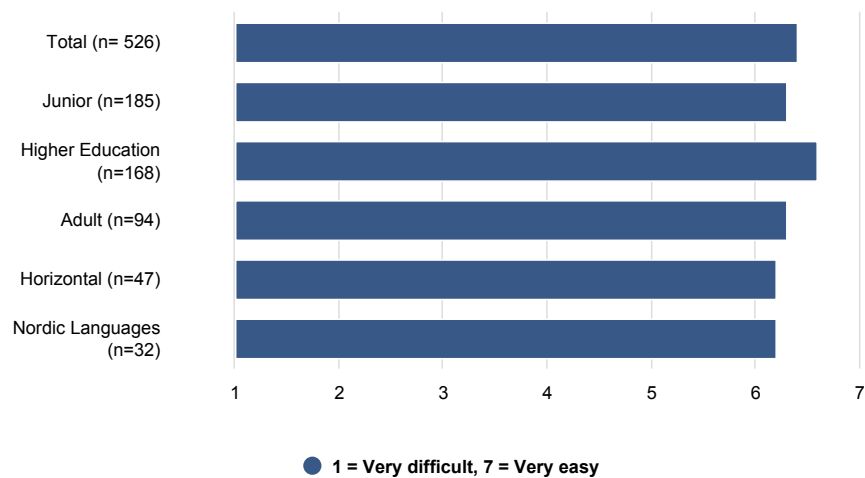
**By youth education type (youth educational institutions only, across subprogrammes)**



### 3.3 Applying to Nordplus

Applicants across the five programmes rate Nordplus quite high in survey responses, on average, in terms of **ease of understanding assessment criteria, what a good application should include, how to prepare and submit a budget and how to prepare and submit an application**, with an average response of 5.4 on 1-7 scale, indexed across four items measuring these dimensions (see Figure 3.3. below). Applicants to Nordplus higher education gave slightly more positive responses, with an average of 5.6. This may be accounted for from the higher share of higher education applicants with previous experience in preparing such applications, compared to those who have applied to the other subprogrammes.

**Figure 3.3. Ease of understanding and preparing an application (index of 4 items)**



**Item wording:** "To what extent was it easy or difficult to do the following:

- "Find information about the criteria Nordplus uses to assess applications?"
- "Find information about which elements a good application should include?"
- "Prepare the required project budget?"
- "Prepare and submit the application?"

The majority of the interviewed project coordinators, administrators, programme committee members and external stakeholders express the same idea about this aspect of the Nordplus Programme: that it is user-friendly because it is simple and accessible, in terms of the application process. The most common phrases used by interviewees about this process are 'user-friendly' and 'non-bureaucratic'. A number of those interviewed highlight that the Nordplus application requires relatively limited information, and that the number of times it is necessary to repeat content is also limited. Those from Scandinavian countries see it as very positive that applicants can write applications in their own languages (it is permitted to submit applications in English, Danish, Norwegian, or Swedish). Further, some project coordinators and external stakeholders mention that applicants tend to receive quick responses to their questions from Nordplus administrators. A number of the interviewed external stakeholders, administrators and programme committee members highlight that this relatively easy application process is particularly good for small organisations such as schools, most of whom do not have staff members with a dedicated project administration role. The Programme's high success rates, they say, also allow actors who would not otherwise engage in international cooperation to participate. In this way, Nordplus increases international engagement for those actors, and can serve as a "stepping stone" to more international cooperation.

A few suggestions were raised by those interviewed on how the application process might be further improved, including the use of an e-sign function, and a link to other financial grant systems than the Norwegian (as the Nordplus application and administration system Espresso is maintained by the Norwegian administrators and is compatible with the Norwegian educational grant system).

In addition, several administrators mentioned the need for continued improvement

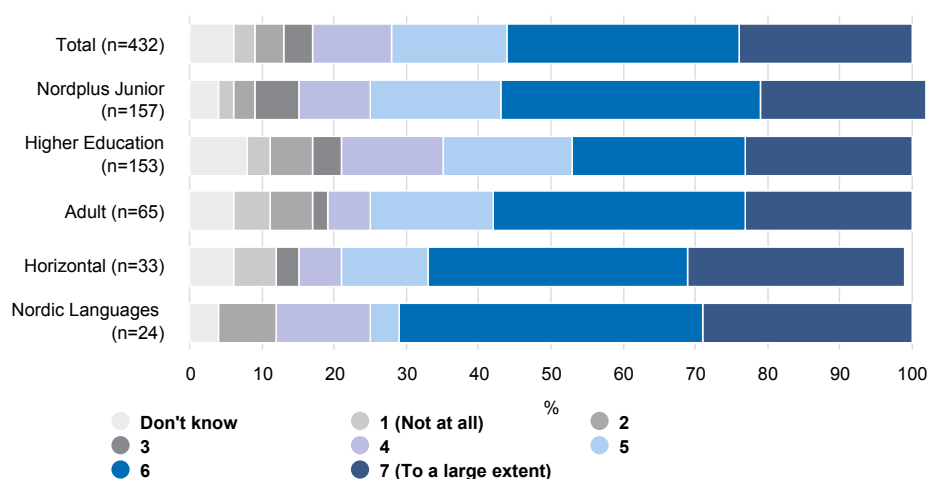
to the partner database, which potential applicants can use to find potential project partners. They noted that the system had been under improvement already but noted that the need for improvements existed recently.

Further, recent years have brought a decline in applications for the Nordplus Junior Programme (as shown in Chapter 2). The evaluation data cannot fully explain this trend, in part because they do not include perspectives from those who have *not* applied since 2018. However, the include some insights that may indicate perceived challenges in gaining support for desired activities through Nordplus. For example, asked about possibilities for future improvements of the Nordplus Programme and information relevant for future applicants, some applicants write that the amount of funding available for both travel expenses and for activities during class exchanges and other mobilities is too low, especially for Baltic students and educators wishing to visit the Scandinavian countries (see Figure 3.4)

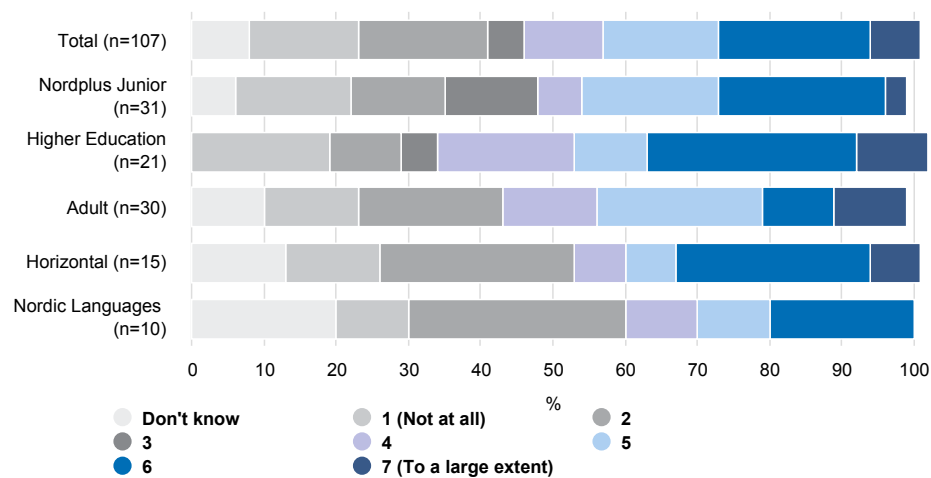
Asked about their perceptions of **whether the basis for the decision on their application was clear**, 66 % of survey respondents indicated that the basis for their application decision was quite clear to them (5+ on a 1-7 scale). However, these responses are substantially more positive among accepted applicants, 77 % of whom indicated that the reason was clear, than among rejected applicants, among whom only 45 % perceived it as clear (see Figure 3.4 below). This indicates that while satisfaction in relation to this aspect of the application experience is high on average, there is room for improvement in how reasons for application decisions are communicated, particularly in relation to rejected applications.

**Figure 3.4. Perceived clarity of basis for application decision (displayed separately for project coordinators whose applications were accepted and rejected, respectively)**

#### Accepted applicants



## Rejected applicants

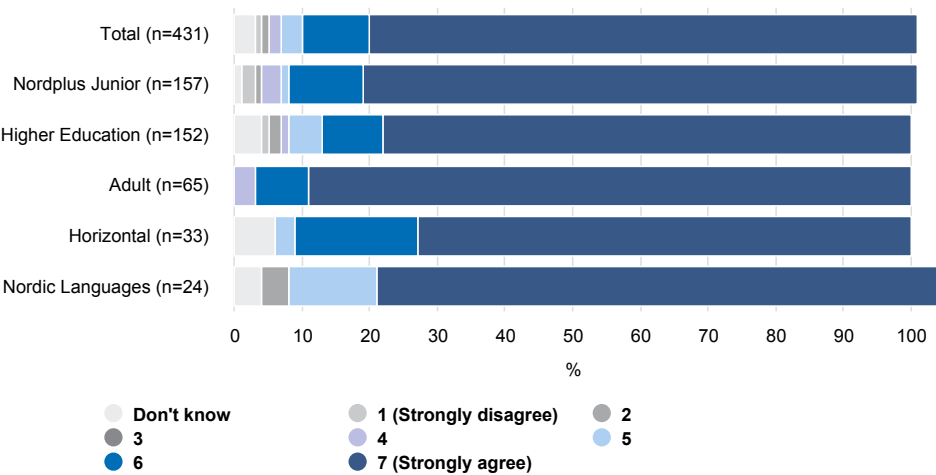


**Question wording:** "To what extent was the reasoning behind Nordplus' acceptance/rejection of your application communicated clearly to you?"

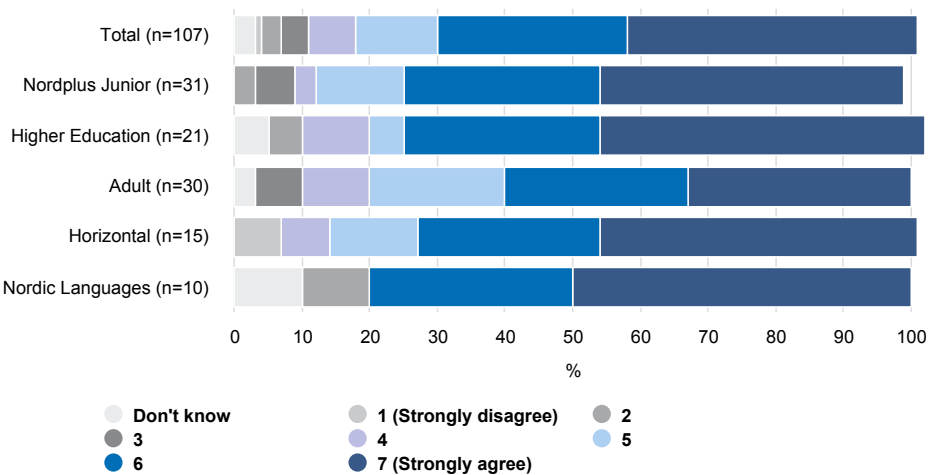
Finally, applicants were asked the extent to which they are **interested in reapplying for a grant from Nordplus in the future**. The picture here is overwhelmingly positive, though again with a difference between those whose applications were accepted vs. rejected. 94 % of accepted applicants have an interest in reapplying for a grant from Nordplus in the future (5+ on a scale of agreement of 1-7), while 87 % of rejected applicants have such an interest. While the difference in the proportions of those groups who are interested in general is not large, the responses of accepted and rejected applicants differ in terms of the degree of their interest – with a large difference in those who "strongly agree" (see Figure 3.5 below).

**Figure 3.5. Interest in reapplying for a grant from Nordplus in the future (displayed separately for project coordinators whose applications were accepted and rejected, respectively).**

**Accepted applicants**



**Rejected applicants**



**Question wording:** "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your future relationship with the Nordplus Programme? I have an interest in reapplying for a grant from the Nordplus Programme in the future."

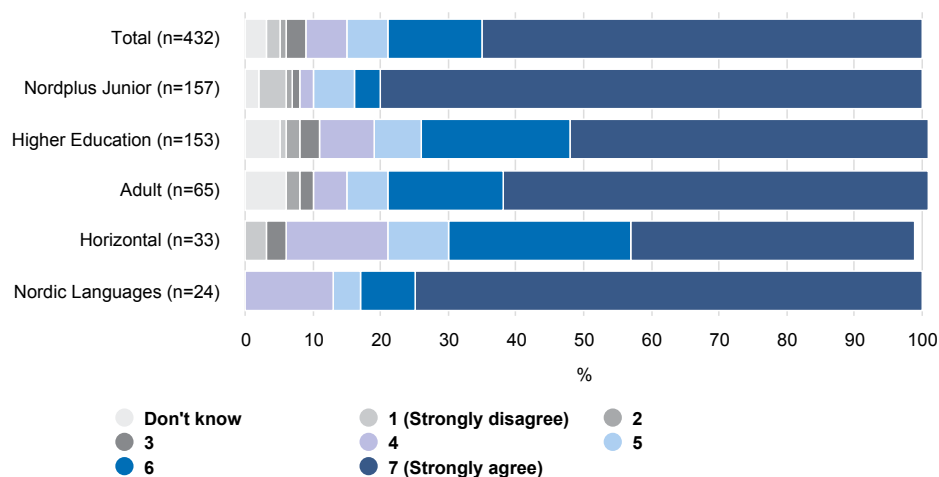


### 3.4 Perceptions of Available Funding Support, Administration, and Reporting

The report proceeds now to investigate how the Nordplus Programme functions for those who receive grant funding, in terms of the extent to which the available financing meets the projects' needs, as well as the process of administration and reporting.

Asked about the **importance of Nordplus funding for their projects**, 85 % of the surveyed project coordinators (those whose projects received Nordplus grants) agree that "without the grant from Nordplus, the project would have been dropped" (agreement of 5+ on a 1-7 scale; see Figure 3.6 below). It may be noted that more of those who have coordinated projects under Junior and Nordic Languages responded "strongly agree" than is the case under the other subprogrammes. The differences in responses between project coordinators who coordinated projects under the different subprogrammes may be due to the other possible alternatives for funding for some of the project types.

**Figure 3.6. Perceptions that Nordplus funding made the project possible**

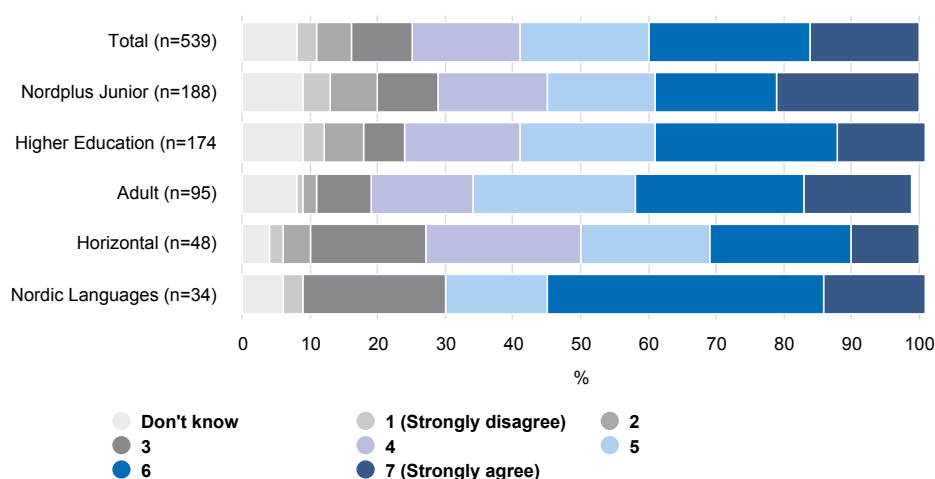


**Question wording:** "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the possibilities and limitations of the Nordplus Programme? Without the grant from Nordplus, the project would have been dropped."

Further, 59 % of the surveyed Nordplus applicants agree that "the **required level of self-financing** was fair" (5+ on a 1-7 scale; see Figure 3.7 below). More coordinators with projects funded through the Nordic Languages Programme (71 %) agreed than among coordinators in the other subprogrammes, which may be due to a lower-self-financing requirement for joint project and network activities within Nordplus Nordic Languages, Adult and Junior than for Horizontal and Higher Education (25% vs. 50%; though it may be noted that mobility activities Adult, Junior and Higher Education are funded based on unit costs, while Horizontal and Nordic Languages only have project and network activities). This was followed by 65 % of those under Adult Programme, possibly due to a greater allowance for including salary in

supported costs under that programme. Agreement was lowest among those under the Horizontal Programme, of whom only 50 % agreed. In general, the observed degree of satisfaction with the required self-financing may be said to be lower than for most of the other aspects of the Programme investigated in this report. From the perspective of the Programme's users, this is a potential area of improvement.

**Figure 3.7. Perceptions of the required level of self-financing**



**Question wording:** "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the possibilities and limitations of the Nordplus Programme? The required level of self-financing was fair."

**The level and use of financing** were also raised as a potential area for improvement in interviews. Several external stakeholders perceive it as a problem that Nordplus does not cover teachers' salaries, which can make it significantly more difficult for schools to participate in exchanges or network development, in particular for projects under Nordplus Junior. This is particularly true in cases where an institution or school must hire substitute teachers for the duration of a project activity, which is the case for many projects. In addition, several external stakeholders and some interviewed project coordinators mention that the financing for travel is too low. Examples were given of Baltic schools who limit class exchanges to travel to other Baltic countries, due to insufficient funds for travel to a Nordic country (see section 4.1 for an analysis of student mobility between countries in Nordplus Junior, which indicates that more students travel within the Baltic and Nordic regions, respectively, than between them. See also section 5.1, which compares potential funding available from Nordplus vs. Erasmus+ for such class trips). These examples illustrate the current limitations for how Nordplus funds may be used, and the level of that financing may be hindering the intended function of the Programme.

Turning to how **administration and reporting** function for project coordinators and partners, all interviewed project coordinators say that the process of administering grants and reporting project progress and results is simple and easy. A few interviewed project coordinators and several administrators point out that it is positive that the Programme is very **flexible** in its administration, for example when changes need to be made during a project. They see this as a particular strength of

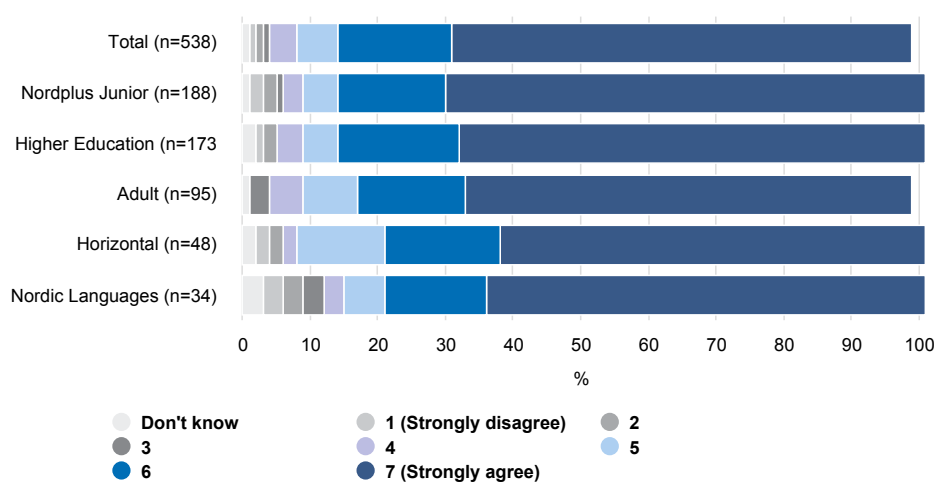
the Programme because projects are often unpredictable. A few of the interviewed coordinators gave specific examples where they have experienced responsiveness and flexibility from their subprogramme's administrators. This has been particularly relevant during the Covid-19 crisis, where many project activities had to be delayed or altered to adapt to a situation that limited travel and physical interaction.

### 3.5 Overall Satisfaction with Nordplus

Asked about their overall experience with Nordplus, 91 % of survey respondents (including both accepted and rejected applicants) report that their experience with Nordplus has been positive overall (5+ on a 1-7 scale; see Figure 3.8. below). The average level of satisfaction with the Programme is even higher among those whose projects received funding, among whom 95 % report a positive experience overall. Yet even among rejected applicants, 75 % report a positive experience overall.

These responses reflect a very high degree of satisfaction with the Nordplus Programme among all its users. Given that some of the users at the same time experience that the level of self-finance is too high in some areas (as described in section 3.4), this is particularly impressive.

**Figure 3.8. Overall satisfaction with Nordplus**



**Question wording:** "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your future relationship with the Nordplus Programme? Overall, my experience with the Nordplus Programme has been positive."



## Chapter 4

# The value of Nordplus

This chapter presents perspectives from survey and interview data on the value that the Nordplus Programme brings to its users working and learning within education. It focuses on the Programme's value in terms of its overall goals, namely supporting and increasing mobility, network development and cooperation, educational practice and innovation, digital competence, and understanding and use of the Nordic languages.

Overall, the majority of the projects coordinators and external stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation experience that Nordplus promotes and maintains meaningful Nordic Partnerships, mobility, knowledge development and knowledge sharing in the Nordic and Baltic countries. These experiences as well as other perspectives on the values of Nordplus will be examined in this chapter.

### Central findings from this chapter:

- Across the Nordplus subprogrammes, large majorities of participants in most projects **interact** both physically and virtually, and project coordinators and other stakeholders see important value in Nordplus's promotion of **mobility and cohesion** in the Nordic-Baltic region. They emphasise that it is important to maintain Nordplus's role in providing support for educational cooperation within the region, as it strengthens **shared identity** through human connection and shared practice.
- According to project coordinators and other stakeholders, the programme supports **network development**, creating meaningful Nordic Partnerships and cooperation that go beyond individual projects. Many see great value in Nordplus's accessibility, which makes it possible for smaller organisations to participate in such Nordic/Baltic cooperation. Project coordinators and other stakeholders from Nordic and Baltic countries believe that common culture and approaches to education enable easier and faster development of educational cooperation.

- Nordplus enhances **knowledge-sharing and development of innovative materials and practices within education** across subprogrammes.
  - Nordplus-funded projects contribute to further **understanding and interest in the Nordic cultures and languages**, which can further enhance a common Nordic culture and understanding.
- 

## 4.1 Mobility

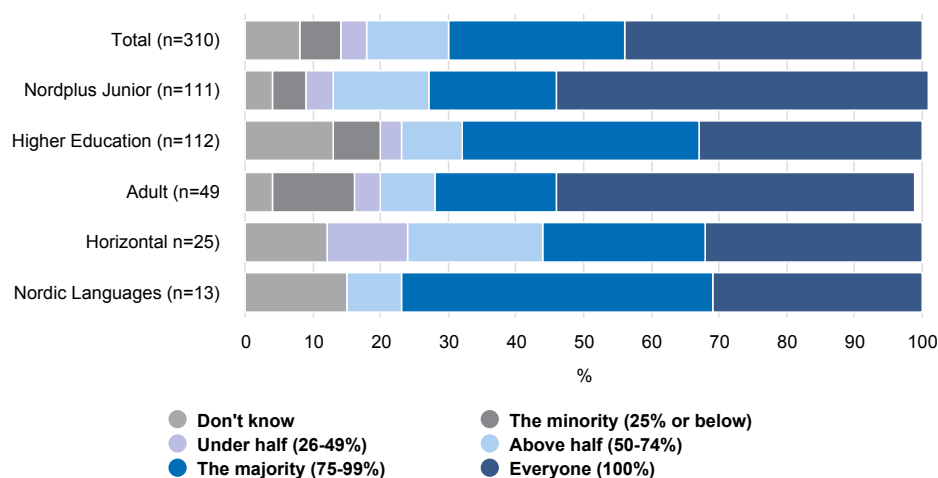
A key goal of the Nordplus Programme is the promotion of mobility of educators and students between participating countries and region. In the evaluation survey, the project coordinators' responses reflect that the different countries interact physically and virtually to a great extent. In interviews, both project coordinators, external stakeholders, administrators, and programme committee members repeatedly emphasised the Programme's value in terms of mobility. These survey data and insights from the qualitative interviews revolving around mobility are examined below.

The project coordinators expressed the view that the recipients of the Nordplus funds to a great extent interact physically and virtually. Of the project coordinators who responded to the survey, 82 % reported that over half of project participants **interacted physically** with people from other Nordic or Baltic countries as part of the project (see Figure 4.1).

Reported rates of physical interaction were highest for projects under Junior and Nordic Languages, followed by Adult. However, the differences between the projects under the different subprogrammes are relatively minor when it comes to the percentages of projects where above half or more of the people involved in the projects interact physically (from 76 % for projects under Horizontal to 88 % for projects under Junior).



**Figure 4.1. Project participant mobility with physical interaction**



**Question wording:** "How many of the project participants interacted physically with people from other Nordic or Baltic countries as part of the project?"

At the same time, there is a clear difference between projects funded through the 2020 application cycle with those funded through the 2018 and 2019 application cycles, indicating that **physical interaction in Nordplus projects was significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic**. Across subprogrammes, 92 % of project coordinators for projects from the 2018 and 2019 cycles report that some participants in their project interacted physically with people from other countries within the project, and 80 % say more than half of the participants did so. This can be compared with those coordinating projects from the 2020 cycle, of whom only 53 % report that some participants interacted physically, and 42 % that over half of participants did so.

As Nordplus is largely centered on mutual exchange and cooperation between students and educators across the Nordic-Baltic region, it might be expected that programme countries send students and teachers on exchange and project-related visits to partner countries to the same extent that they receive them. However, rates of sending vs. receiving mobility differ substantially. The table below displays the receiving/sending ratio for each country for student and teacher mobility in the Higher Education, Adult and Junior subprogrammes, respectively (a value of 1 indicates an equal number of receiving/sending mobility visits, a value *over 1* that the country receives more participants on visits than it sends, and a value *under 1* that it sends more participants on visits than it receives).

Comparing between programmes, receiving/sending ratios are 1 or close to 1 for all countries within the Junior programme, while more ratios deviate from 1 within Nordplus Adult and Higher Education. Within Higher Education, Greenland and Åland receive many more students than they send, and the Faroe Islands, Sweden and Norway receive somewhat more students than they send – while Denmark and particularly Finland receive fewer than they send. The Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland and Åland receive more teachers than they send within higher education, while Denmark, Lithuania and Finland receive somewhat fewer than they send. In

the Adult programme, the Faroe Islands receive more student visits than they send, while Iceland, Estonia and Latvia receive fewer than they send. Finally, Finland and Denmark receive more teacher visits than they send within Adult programme, while Iceland, Estonia and Latvia receive somewhat fewer than they send.

**Table 4.1. Receiving/sending mobility ratios by country**

|               | Students         |       |        | Teachers         |       |        |
|---------------|------------------|-------|--------|------------------|-------|--------|
|               | Higher education | Adult | Junior | Higher education | Adult | Junior |
| Denmark       | 0.8              | 2.0   | 0.9    | 0.7              | 1.3   | 0.9    |
| Norway        | 1.2              | 1.1   | 1.0    | 1.1              | 1.0   | 1.1    |
| Sweden        | 1.3              | 0.9   | 1.0    | 1.2              | 0.8   | 0.9    |
| Finland       | 0.4              | 1.3   | 1.0    | 0.8              | 1.6   | 1.1    |
| Iceland       | 2.3              | 0.2   | 1.0    | 1.6              | 0.7   | 1.1    |
| Estonia       | 0.9              | 0.5   | 1.0    | 1.2              | 0.7   | 1.0    |
| Latvia        | 1.0              | 0.8   | 1.0    | 1.0              | 0.7   | 0.9    |
| Lithuania     | 1.1              | 1.0   | 1.1    | 0.7              | 1.1   | 1.0    |
| Greenland     | 7.6              |       | 1.3    | 1.4              |       | 1.1    |
| Faroe Islands | 1.4              | 3.0   | 1.0    | 4.0              |       | 1.3    |
| Åland         | 4.8              |       | 1.1    | 1.3              |       | 1.0    |

In terms of potential differences in mobility between certain countries across the region, the countries that students and teachers from each country travel to vary widely across subprogrammes (see Appendix B for a presentation of data for mobility within Nordplus Junior, Higher Education and Adult). Regarding student mobility within Nordplus Junior (which has been raised by some of those interviewed as potentially being affected by funding limits for student mobility, particularly between the Baltic and Nordic countries), many students travel within the Nordic and Baltic regions, respectively, rather than between them (see the table below). For example, 52 % of Latvian students who traveled with support from Nordplus junior from 2018-20 traveled to another of the Baltic countries, as did 46 % of those from Estonia and 45 % of those from Lithuania. This indicates that many of the projects involving Baltic schools and youth educations are promoting inter-Baltic, rather than Baltic-Nordic, exchange. Similarly, 91 % of Norwegian students, 75% of Swedish students, and 70 % of Danish students who traveled within Nordplus Junior traveled to another Nordic country or region (as opposed to a Baltic country). A somewhat larger share of students traveling from Finland (41 %) traveled to a Baltic country.

**Table 4.2. Nordplus Junior student mobility: Shares of students who traveled from each Nordplus country, by the country they traveled to (2018-20)**

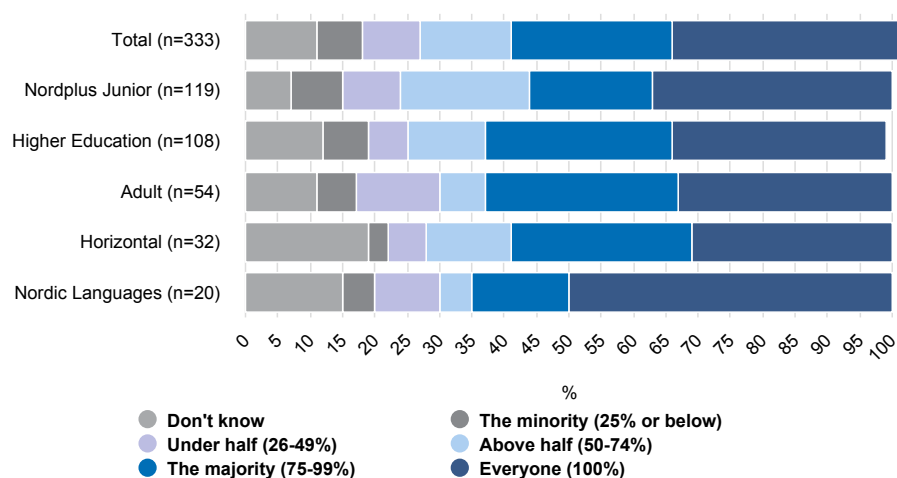
| Receiving     |         |        |        |         |         |         |        |           |           |               |       |
|---------------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|-----------|-----------|---------------|-------|
| Sending       | Denmark | Norway | Sweden | Finland | Iceland | Estonia | Latvia | Lithuania | Greenland | Faroe Islands | Åland |
| Denmark       |         | 10%    | 9%     | 9%      | 24%     | 5%      | 12%    | 13%       | 8%        | 9%            | 1%    |
| Norway        | 35%     |        | 27%    | 10%     | 8%      | 1%      | 5%     | 4%        | 0%        | 4%            | 7%    |
| Sweden        | 20%     | 14%    |        | 23%     | 14%     | 7%      | 10%    | 8%        | 0%        | 2%            | 2%    |
| Finland       | 17%     | 5%     | 18%    |         | 14%     | 15%     | 11%    | 15%       | 1%        | 3%            | 3%    |
| Iceland       | 46%     | 7%     | 10%    | 14%     |         | 6%      | 4%     | 7%        | 1%        | 3%            | 0%    |
| Estonia       | 11%     | 4%     | 5%     | 20%     | 8%      |         | 27%    | 19%       | 2%        | 3%            | 0%    |
| Latvia        | 20%     | 2%     | 6%     | 12%     | 4%      | 17%     |        | 35%       | 1%        | 3%            | 0%    |
| Lithuania     | 23%     | 2%     | 5%     | 15%     | 6%      | 11%     | 34%    |           | 1%        | 3%            | 0%    |
| Greenland     | 10%     | 0%     | 0%     | 5%      | 0%      | 16%     | 4%     | 4%        |           | 11%           | 0%    |
| Faroe Islands | 43%     | 6%     | 3%     | 8%      | 7%      | 7%      | 12%    | 12%       | 2%        |               | 0%    |
| Åland         | 19%     | 34%    | 16%    | 31%     | 0%      | 0%      | 0%     | 0%        | 0%        | 0%            |       |

Note: "Students" consist of the categories 'Pupils' og 'Pupil exchange' from Nordplus' mobility statistics.

When it comes to **virtual interaction**, 74 % of project coordinators who responded to the survey reported that a majority of project participants interacted virtually with people from other Nordic or Baltic countries as part of the project (see Figure 4.2 below).

Reported rates of virtual interaction were highest for projects under Nordic Languages, where 50 % of the surveyed project coordinators reported that all project participants interacted virtually with people from other project countries. Rates of virtual interaction for the rest of the subprogrammes are fairly similar.

**Figure 4.2. Project participant mobility with virtual interaction.**



**Question wording:** "How many of the project participants interacted virtually with people from other Nordic or Baltic countries as part of the project?"

There is **no clear effect of Covid-19** in terms of rates of virtual interaction. 77 % of coordinators of projects from the 2018 and 2019 application cycles report that some participants interacted virtually with people from other countries within their projects, and 61 % say that over half of participants did so. Among those with projects from the 2020 cycle, the same share (77 %) said that some participants interacted virtually, but a smaller share (53 %) reported that over half of participants did so.

The perspectives expressed in the interviews mirror the survey data in that **mobility is accentuated as an important value of Nordplus**. Programme committee members and administrators describe Nordplus as strengthening mobility and cohesion in the Nordic and Baltic region and the majority of the project coordinators and external stakeholders likewise experience Nordplus as a promoter of mobility within the Nordic and Baltic region.

Besides enhancing the mobility within the projects and networks, the majority of project coordinators and external stakeholders also mentioned that Nordplus serves as **a stepping stone for further internationalisation**. More specifically, one external stakeholder described Nordplus as providing an easy and natural way for students in **higher education** to start their international experience, given that Nordplus makes it possible to study abroad for less than a whole semester (for instance via short term mobility and express courses). This is more attractive for some students and may introduce them to new experiences that make them even more interested in further international stays afterwards.

Besides these relatively common perspectives, the interviews also generated a lot of interesting views on the values of Nordplus when it comes to mobility that, however, was rather specific for the individual Programme, target group or territory, which may be why they were not mentioned in other interviews. These perspectives are mentioned below.

An external stakeholder, for instance, mentioned the possibilities for class exchanges

under the **Junior Programme** as the most important value of Nordplus. These class exchanges are very much appreciated both for the academic and/or vocational content and the exchange experience itself. This can be particularly important for smaller organisations, for whom mobility through Nordplus can serve as an entrance or training ground for further international projects.

Another project coordinator that received funding through **Nordplus Adult** expressed the opinion that the most important value of the Programme lies in possibilities for people with disabilities to take part in the exchange, providing learning experiences for an often marginalised group.<sup>7</sup> In line with this, an administrator mentioned that opportunities for all adult students is an important value of the Programme that is unique to Nordplus (as compared to Erasmus+).

An external stakeholder expressed the view that their representatives cannot use Nordplus for mobility in the way they would wish. Because Nordplus funds are granted to institutions or organisations, not individuals, the students wanting to go to a folk high school in another country cannot apply for funds from Nordplus, since they are often not already enrolled in a folk high school that can apply on their behalf. They recommend allowing for individual applications for support to attend a folk high school in another country or region.<sup>8</sup>

## 4.2 Network Development and Cooperation

Both project coordinators, external stakeholders, committee members and administrators emphasise the value of Nordplus relating to network development and coordination. Nordplus is experienced to have strengthened network and cooperation within the projects, and at the same time Nordplus is experienced to create cooperation that goes beyond the individual projects and thereby helping to support the Nordic and Baltic cooperation in general. These perspectives will be examined in the following section.

The project coordinators seem to experience great results in relation to **network development and cooperation**. Project coordinators who responded to the survey reported on average very positive perspectives on Nordplus' value in terms of strengthening participants' networks in other Nordic or Baltic countries increasing opportunities to cooperate with people from different Nordic or Baltic countries and giving potential to working with the same partners again. On average, they also reported very positive perspectives on Nordplus' value when it comes to increasing focus on possibilities of cooperating with counterparts in other Nordic or Baltic countries and in relation to whether it benefited the strengthening and development of Nordic and Baltic cooperation on education.

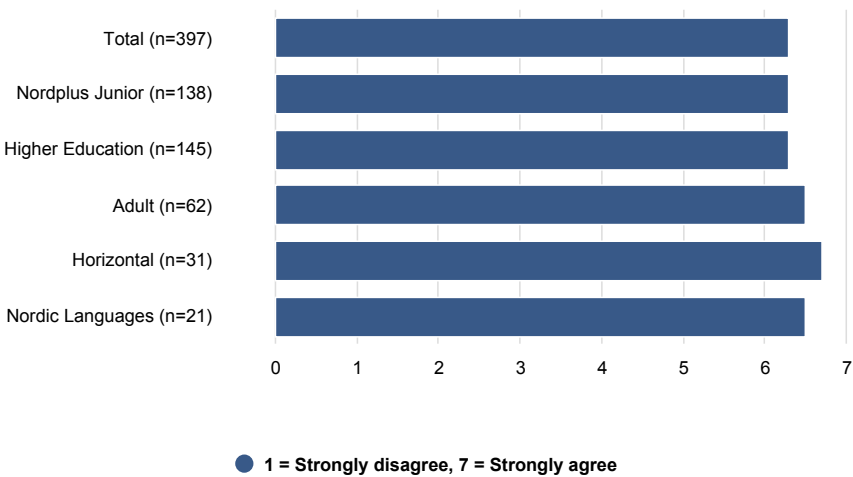
- 
7. It may be noted that the Erasmus+ programme also offers additional support for persons with disabilities participating in all types of programme-supported projects.
  8. The potential cost of such support would vary significantly. First, the cost of attending folk high school includes costs of instruction in some countries (this is the case in Denmark, where weekly rates vary between 1500-2500 DKK (200-336 EUR)), and in other countries only include room and board (this is the case in Sweden, where the weekly rate is approx. 1000 SEK (98 EUR) (sources: <https://www.hojskolerne.dk/hojskolekurser/lange-kurser-8-40-uger/priser>; <https://www.folkhogskola.nu/other-languages/>). In addition, students may apply for financial aid from national institutions to help with costs, and it is unclear whether this applies for students in each given Nordplus country wishing to attend folk high school in another Nordplus country.



All these aspects are included in an index measuring perceived results relating to network development. The scores are presented overall and for the different subprogrammes in the figure below. Combined, the responses from those whose projects received funding score 6.3 on average on a 1-7 scale on an index from four items assessing experience of results in different aspects of network development (see Figure 4.3 below).

The scores are slightly higher among the project coordinators with projects under the Horizontal subprogramme, followed by projects under the Adult and Nordic Languages subprogrammes. However, the scores are very high for all the subprogrammes.

**Figure 4.3. Perceived results in relation to network development.**



The graph shows an index of responses indicating agreement (on a 1-7 scale) with the following: The project has strengthened the project participants' network in other Nordic or Baltic countries.

- The project has increased opportunities for the project participants to cooperate with people from different Nordic or Baltic countries.
- I could imagine working with the same partner institution(s) again, both within or [sic] outside the Nordplus Programme.
- The project has led to an increased focus within our organisation on possibilities of cooperation with counterparts in other Nordic and/or Baltic countries.
- The project has benefitted the strengthening and development of Nordic and Baltic cooperation on education.

Similar perspectives were raised from the interviews, where the different groups of interviewees emphasised both the increased possibilities for cooperation within the projects and the increased possibilities for cooperation beyond individual projects as key values of the Nordplus Programme.

The majority of the interviewed external stakeholders describe the development of cooperation and ties between individuals and cooperation in different Nordic and Baltic countries as one of the most important values of Nordplus. One external stakeholder within the Junior subprogramme described how both teachers and students (at the individual level), schools (at the organisational level), and school systems (at the system level) might benefit from this kind of cooperation between

the Nordic and Baltic countries. The networks bring benefits such as the sharing and development of educational materials and practices, which is the theme of the next section in this chapter.

As mentioned, Nordplus is also experienced to have created cooperation that goes beyond specific projects. One project coordinator more specifically described how the network and contacts established as part of the Nordplus Programme are expected to last after the project ends, because the ties are professional as well as personal. In general, the majority of the external stakeholders expressed views that Nordplus establishes and maintains meaningful Nordic Partnerships and strengthens the connections between the Nordic countries.

Nordplus is also viewed by programme committee members, administrators, and a number of external stakeholders as a valuable Programme because it makes it possible for smaller organisations to participate in Nordic/international cooperation+. It is especially the accessibility and the lack of bureaucracy (mentioned by external stakeholders and project coordinators as well) that allows smaller organisations to apply and run projects.

Some of those interviewed mentioned the cultural similarity in the region as contributing to easier cooperation, compared to cooperation within some Erasmus+ projects – for instance, where partners from outside the region participate. From this perspective, the common culture is seen as a way of building strong cooperation more quickly and easily.

More generally, the programme committee and administrators see Nordplus as a **necessary component in ensuring that Nordic and Baltic cohesion and cooperation are maintained and strengthened**. Nordplus is viewed as contributing to maintaining cooperation between Nordic countries, and between the Nordic and Baltic countries, both through specific projects and by strengthening focus on the value of such cooperation.

## 4.3 Educational Practice and Innovation

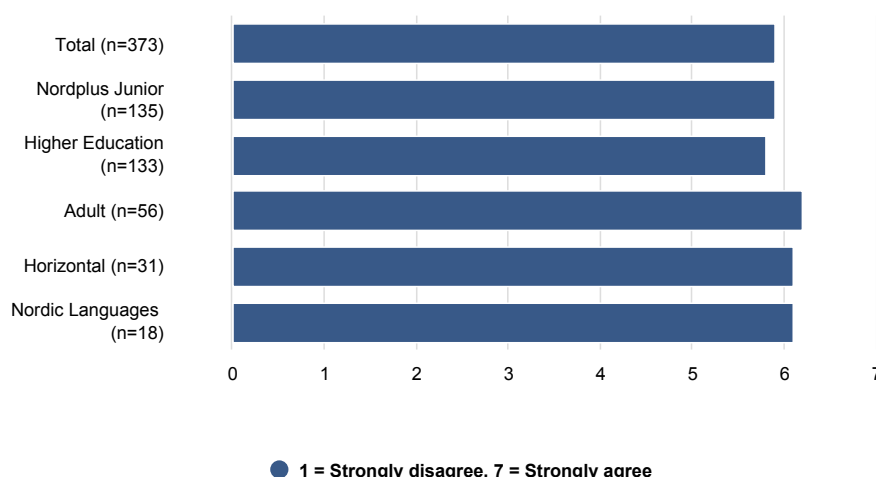
The mobility, network and projects funded through the Nordplus Programme is experienced to make a difference when it comes to educational practice and innovation. The survey data and interviews indicate that, among other aspects, the sharing of knowledge and the development of new materials and practices have been enhanced by Nordplus. This is elaborated further in the following section.

Project coordinators who responded to the survey reported positive results of the development of the educational practice in the project, in terms of:

- The attainment of new perspectives on education
- Exchanging experiences and knowledge about education
- The projects having led to concrete changes in educational approaches or practices
- Strengthened quality of education
- Innovative thinking within their organisations.

These perspectives are compounded in an index and the average scores for the project coordinators under each of the subprogrammes are presented in the figure below. The figure indicates that across all the subprogrammes project coordinators to a high extent experience great results of the projects in terms of educational benefits.

**Figure 4.4. Perceived results in relation to educational practice and innovation**



The graph shows an index of responses indicating agreement (on a 1-7 scale) with the following:

- The project has given the project participants new perspectives on education.
- During the project, the project participants have exchanged experiences and knowledge about education.
- The project has led to concrete changes in educational approaches or practices within our organisation.
- The project has strengthened the quality of education within our organisation.
- The project has contributed to innovative thinking within our organisation.

The figure also shows that on average the project coordinators under the Adult subprogramme to the highest extent experience positive results in relation to educational practice and innovation (closely followed by the project coordinators under the Horizontal and Nordic Languages subprogramme).

This data is supported by the interviews in which several of the project coordinators and external stakeholders emphasised how Nordplus has enhanced the sharing of educational materials and methods (digital methods in education among others) and pedagogy. This is reflected in the four quotes below.

The interviewed programme committee members, the administrators, and information points also highlight the educational value of the Nordplus Programme. One programme committee member mentioned how the knowledge gained in some projects is used in policy reforms and changes within the educational field, and another mentioned how educators are able to learn from educators in countries with other learning traditions.

## 4.4 Digital Competence

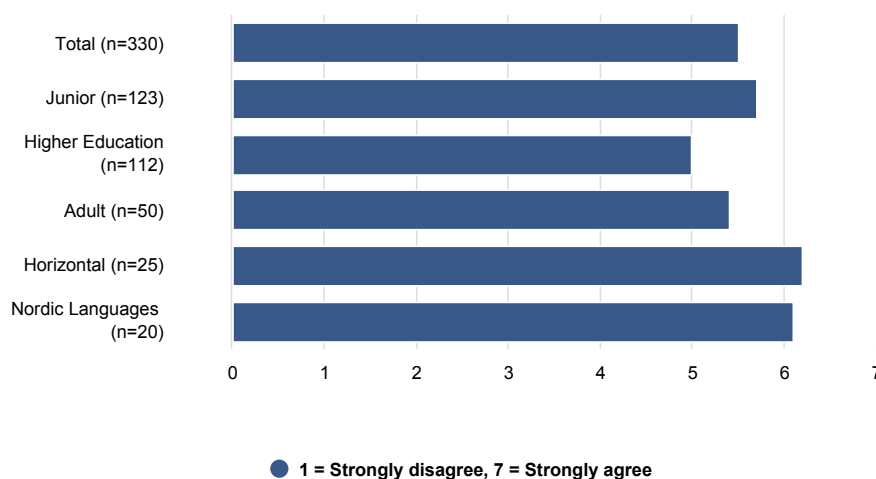
In this section the experienced results are described of the Nordplus Programme when it comes to the development in digital competence within the education field.

Project coordinators who responded to the survey reported on average **rather positive perspectives** on Nordplus' value in terms of strengthening participants' digital competencies and strengthening computational thinking among project participants.

The perspectives are compounded in an index reflecting the experienced results of Nordplus in terms of digital competencies with an average response of 5.5 on a scale of 1-7, indexing two items assessing these aspects (see Figure 4-5 below).

The average scores of the project coordinators under the different subprogrammes on the index are shown in the figure below. Scores are somewhat higher among those project coordinators with projects under Horizontal and Nordic Languages, followed by Junior.

**Figure 4.5. Perceived results in relation to digital competencies**



The graph shows an index of responses indicating agreement (on a 1-7 scale) with the following:

- The project has strengthened the digital competencies among the project participants.
- The project has strengthened the computational thinking among the project participants.

Interviews with external stakeholders and programme coordinators only refer, to a limited degree, to the digital competencies gained through the projects. One project coordinator, however, speaks about exactly that, and elaborates on how knowledge sharing about the use of digital tools in education has led to concrete improvement in the involved organisations. The coordinator describes how their organisation learned from solutions in use in partner countries, and has changed their classrooms and the hardware in use to become a school that uses e-learning extensively.

## 4.5 Understanding and Use of Nordic Languages

Some of the general objectives for Nordplus 2018-2022 are to "promote Nordic language 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; and to 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"<sup>9</sup>.

Therefore, it is important to investigate whether the Nordplus Programme generates value within the understanding and use of Nordic languages. This evaluation indicates that it does. The perspectives of project coordinators as well as external stakeholder are that the exchange within the projects contributes to further understanding and interest in the Nordic cultures and languages. By some, this is experienced to enhance a common Nordic culture and understanding.

More specifically, asked about whether the participants have been communicating in native languages within the project duration, and whether the project has given the participants an increased understanding of and/or interest in the languages and cultures of the partner countries, the project coordinators reply on average positively (with an average index score of 5.4 on a 1-7 scale; see Figure 4.6 below).

This score is much higher among those with projects under Nordplus Nordic Languages than the other subprogrammes. Given that the specific aim of Nordplus Nordic Languages is to "stimulate interest in, and knowledge and understanding of the languages of the Nordic countries essential to society [sic] which are Danish, Finnish, Faroese, Greenlandic, Icelandic, Norwegian, Sami and Nordic sign language"<sup>10</sup>, these results might be expected.

At the same time the scores among project coordinators with projects under the Junior subprogramme are somewhat higher, than the scores among the rest and especially than the scores among project coordinators within the Higher Education subprogramme. This might reflect that for instance class exchanges to a higher degree has a separate focus on the exchange of languages and culture, while this type of focus for some students in higher education going on exchange could be secondary to the academic focus, in addition to more cooperation within higher education being conducted in English. Additionally, there are not large differences between responses from project coordinators from different countries (with the

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9. The Nordplus Handbook 2021, English Version, Page 10, <https://www.nordplusonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/nordplus-handbog-2021-uk.pdf>

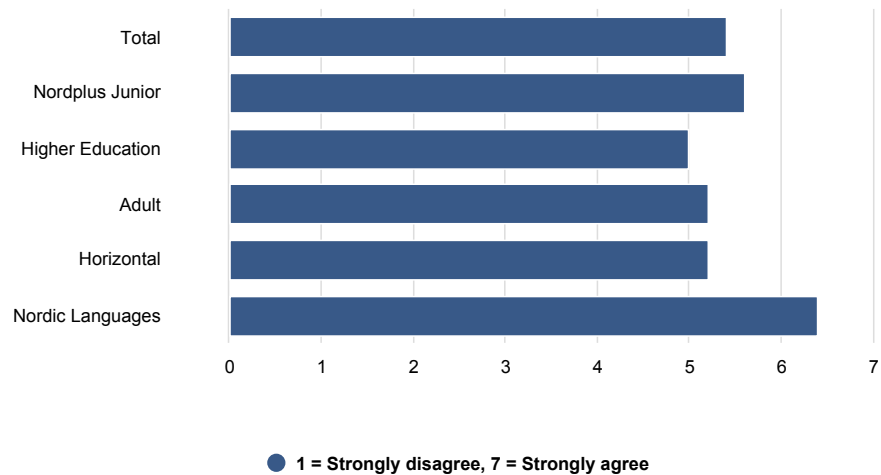
10. The Nordplus Handbook 2021, English Version, Page 62 <https://www.nordplusonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/nordplus-handbog-2021-uk.pdf>



exception of the Faeroe Islands' very positive responses and Åland's relatively negative responses, however these may not be indicative of a general phenomenon, as there are only two respondents from the Faeroe Islands and one from the Åland Islands).

**Figure 4.6. Perceived project results in terms of understanding and use of languages, by subprogramme and country**

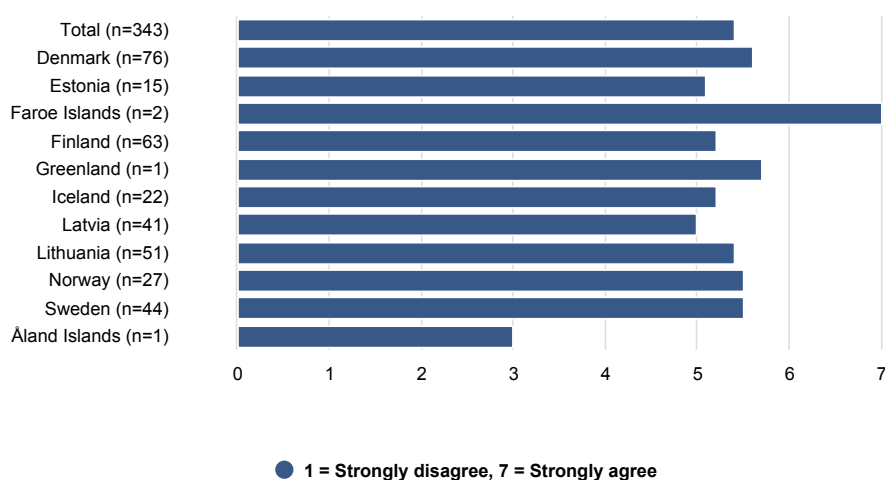
**By subprogramme**



The graph shows an index of responses indicating agreement (on a 1-7 scale) with the following:

- During the project, the project participants have communicated with each other in their respective native languages.
- The project has given the project participants an increased understanding of and/or interest in the languages of the partner countries.
- The project has given the project participants an increased understanding of and/or interest in the culture in the partner countries.

## By country



These findings are supported by the interviews with project coordinators and external stakeholders. Several people mentioned that Nordplus **enhances a common Nordic culture and supports a common understanding of languages** across the Nordic region. Furthermore, an external stakeholder mentioned that the Programme contributes to the realisation of the purpose formed in the *The Declaration on a Nordic Language Policy*.

A project coordinator, however, mentioned that the results of the exchange in the individual projects, when it comes to increased understanding of language and culture, to a high degree is dependent on the participants' own attitudes towards speaking the Nordic languages. This suggests that it is important to keep a pronounced focus on the active use of the Nordic languages in the projects and exchanges.

At the same time, another external stakeholder within the Junior subprogramme expressed the opinion that the cultural purpose of a class exchange does not have to be specified or a unique theme during the exchange. Instead, the exchange should revolve around the themes that are already part of the pupils' curricula, after which cultural aspects of the exchange are experienced to automatically follow. Based on these perspectives, it may be relevant to consider whether and how to secure a distinct focus on language in future Nordplus Programme periods, for example by including it in a future Highlight or by offering support for certain types of activities that involve experience of other Nordplus countries' languages.



## Chapter 5

# Priorities for the future of Nordplus

This chapter highlights perspectives that can form future planning of the Nordplus Programme. It first presents perspectives on the use of Nordplus in light of the opportunities afforded by other programmes, particularly Erasmus+, and consideration of how Nordplus could adapt. It then presents ideas from Nordplus participants and other stakeholders on how the needs and interests of Nordplus' target groups are changing, followed by their reflections on the programme's future. In light of these considerations, the chapter concludes with recommendations for possible strategies for adjustments and prioritisation going forward.

### Central findings from this chapter:

While there are significant overlaps between Nordplus and **Erasmus+**, some stakeholders emphasise a number of funding opportunities that are unique to Nordplus, and some argue that Nordplus should focus on such aspects. A large majority of those who have applied to both Nordplus and Erasmus+ find the Nordplus application process easier, while the perceived comparative likelihood of receiving funding varies with subprogramme.

Those with knowledge of the **Nordic Master Programme** offer differing suggestions on whether and how to carry its elements forward through Nordplus after the master programme ends. Some think it better to support development of joint modules rather than entire joint degree programmes, while others propose supporting degree programmes, particularly in the development phase. An examination of the opportunities for support for joint degree programmes offered by Nordplus, the Nordic Master Programme and Erasmus Mundus suggests the same, that the opportunities for support offered through the surviving programmes are likely to maintain similar opportunities in the future.

The interviewed project coordinators and stakeholders highlight key **needs and interests of the target groups going forward** that are relevant for Nordplus. They see the need for class exchanges, short-term mobility and opportunities for Nordic and Nordic-Baltic exchange to be important continuing priorities. In addition, they see an increasing need for support for virtual and hybrid collaboration.

Asked directly about **what Nordplus should prioritise going forward**, all those interviewed emphasise the importance of the programme's simplicity, flexibility and therefore its accessibility. Multiple coordinators and stakeholders recommend increased funding for certain activities such as travel and teacher salaries, and some suggest a unit-costs model across programmes. Opinions about how to prioritise funding between subprogrammes vary, but typically recommend prioritizing those sectors with fewer opportunities to fund projects through Erasmus+. Finally, multiple project coordinators and stakeholders emphasise the continuing importance of a "neighbourhood" programme where Nordic and Baltic students and educators can interact and collaborate.

The report concludes with a recommendation of **three potential strategies that may be used to determine the future of Nordplus**, particularly in light of impending budget reductions. The first of these is to *continue the status quo*, continuing the current distribution of funding between subprogrammes and the current structure in terms of types of activities supported. The second strategy would consist of a *functional specialisation in response to Erasmus+*, which would involve tailoring funding opportunities within each subprogramme to those not offered through Erasmus+. This strategy may imply a re-allocation of resources between subprogrammes. Finally, the third strategy consists of a *strengthened thematic focus* of the programme, where Nordplus may be re-thought to unify funding opportunities around certain themes in line with the shared vision set out under the Nordic Council of Ministers and within the region.

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## 5.1 Comparisons with/Perspectives on Erasmus+ and the Nordic Master Programme

The future of Nordplus may involve considering the opportunities that are, or not, provided by other programmes that to some extent share a common mission with Nordplus, in terms of supporting and increasing mobility, network development and innovation within education. Erasmus+ has implemented changes from 2021 that increase funding to educational exchange and network projects and include a number of new measures to enable smaller organisations and traditionally marginalised groups to participate, while the Nordic Master Programme will end when the current cohorts have concluded their studies. This evaluation examines perspectives from those involved in the Nordplus Programme on its opportunities, considering these other programmes.

### Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the European Union's programme to support education, training, youth, and sport in Europe. In its current programme period (2021-27), Erasmus+ has a total estimated budget of €26.2 billion<sup>11</sup>, nearly twice the previous six-year period. The programme's other significant changes for the new period include expanding opportunities to smaller organisations and to learners in higher or general education and vocational training and supporting virtual learning and opportunities for participants with limited language skills or disabilities. The programme has also newly added support for group mobility for school pupils, as well as for short-term mobility for both students and teachers/staff at various levels of education. Since these changes affect the extent and types of grant opportunities available to education projects, they may be relevant to Nordplus' future. In addition, considerations of how Nordplus compares to Erasmus+ are relevant for considering the role Nordplus should play.<sup>12</sup>

## What is Erasmus+ ?

Mobility of learners and staff is the flagship activity of Erasmus+. About 10 million individuals, including students, learners, professors, teachers and trainers in all sectors, are expected to participate in mobility activities abroad during the course of the programme.

Mobility and cooperation activities account for 70% of the Erasmus+ budget and include activities across all disciplines and age-groups, such as, higher education, vocational education and training, school education (including early childhood education and care), adult education, youth and sport.

Beyond activities for individuals, Erasmus+ also supports organisations that seek to explore development and networking opportunities with universities and other educational and training providers, think-tanks, research organisations, and private businesses. The remaining 30 % of the budget is invested in these networking and cooperation projects and in policy development activities.

### Erasmus+ and Nordplus

Both Erasmus+ and Nordplus offer support and mobility services with the overall threefold purpose of:

1. Raising awareness of the potential for lifelong learning,
2. Improving educational skills and competencies and
3. Promoting innovation and development within education and learning

However, the two programmes offer their support services with different reach and focus. The Erasmus+ Programme is funded by the European Union and supports student, teacher and staff mobility between the European

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11. See: "Erasmus+: over €28 billion to support mobility and learning for all, across the European Union and beyond", [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_21\\_1326](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_1326), 25.03.21

12. We note that the perspectives expressed here are based on experiences with Erasmus+ as it has existed, particularly from project coordinators/applicants. Administrators and programme committee members may have additional perspectives on the new period of Erasmus+, since many of them have professional knowledge of the changes to the Erasmus+ programme.

countries, whereas the Nordplus programme supports student and teacher mobility between the Nordic countries (Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark) and the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). The larger of the Erasmus+ programme enables international cooperation and an awareness of cultural differences and similarities within the EU, whereas the Nordplus programme distinctly focuses on promoting, strengthening and developing Nordic educational cooperation and understanding of the Nordic languages.

**Table 5.1. Major types of activities supported by Nordplus and Erasmus+**

|                            | Nordplus   | Erasmus+   |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| Early childhood and school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preparatory visits</li> <li>- Student exchange</li> <li>- Teacher exchange</li> <li>- Projects &amp; network activities</li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mobility for students</li> <li>- Cooperation projects</li> <li>- Supplementary education</li> </ul>                                       |
| Vocational education       |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperation projects</li> <li>- Internships for students</li> <li>- Supplementary education</li> </ul>                                    |
| Adult education            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preparatory visits</li> <li>- Course participant exchange</li> <li>- Teacher exchange</li> <li>- Projects and network activities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperation projects</li> <li>- Mobility for course participants</li> <li>- Supplementary education</li> </ul>                            |
| Higher education           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mobility for students</li> <li>- Mobility for teachers</li> <li>- Projects &amp; network activities</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mobility in programme and partner countries</li> <li>- Cooperation partnerships</li> </ul>  |
| Cross-sectoral             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cross-sectoral projects and network activities in Nordic and Baltic countries</li> </ul>  | <i>(Possible through cooperation partnerships.)</i>  |
| Nordic Languages           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preparatory visits</li> <li>- Projects and network activities</li> </ul>  |  |
| Youth organisation         |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youth exchange</li> <li>- Mobility for youth workers</li> <li>- Cooperation projects</li> <li>- Youth participation activities</li> </ul> |
| Sport                      |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperation partnerships</li> <li>- Small-scale partnerships</li> <li>- Non-profit activities</li> </ul>                                  |

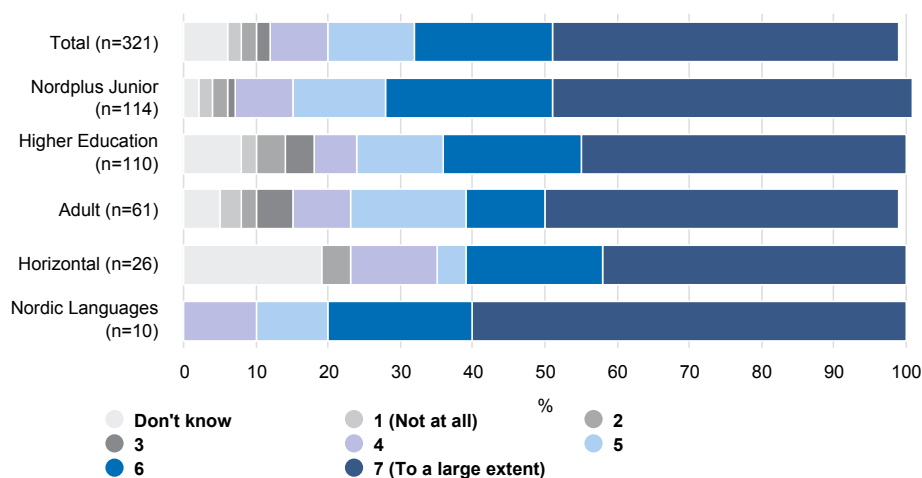
As the above description and table show, Erasmus+ offers support for many of the same time types of activities within the education sectors that Nordplus includes (though the two programmes use different terminology for some types), but they differ in geographic scope. Notably, all Nordplus countries/regions may fully participate in Erasmus+, with the exception of the Faroe Islands, which may only



participate as a partner country. Particularly distinct to Nordplus in terms of supported areas is the Nordic Languages programme. Other key differences include an emphasis on network development. Other major differences that have previously existed between the programmes have been minimised considerably in the new Erasmus+ programme period (see below).

Nordplus applicants responding to the survey and who had previously also applied to Erasmus+ were asked **the extent to which the application process for Nordplus was easier than the process for Erasmus+**. Of the 321 respondents who had applied to both Nordplus and Erasmus+, 79 % responded that application process for Nordplus was easier than the process for Erasmus+ (responding 5+ on a 1-7 scale; see Figure 5.1 below). This differed somewhat between subprogrammes, with those who applied for support under Nordic Languages and Nordplus Junior ranking Nordplus as being easier, in comparison with Erasmus+, than those who applied to the other programmes.

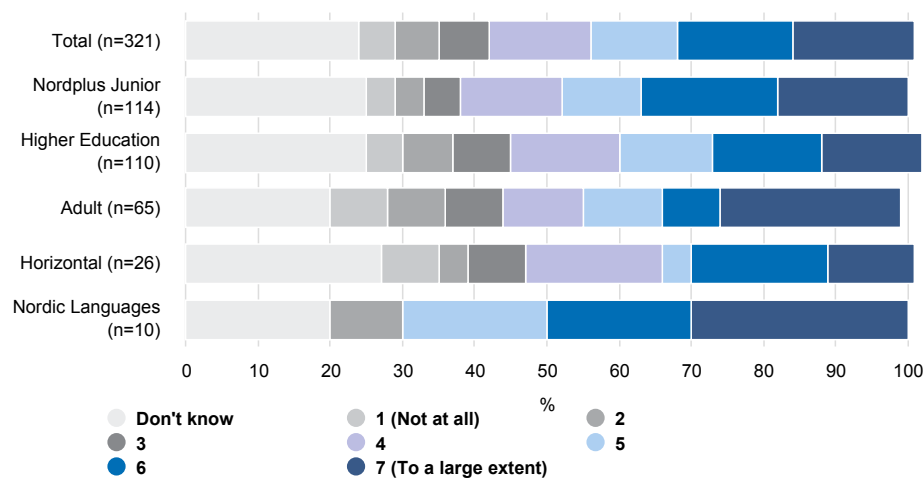
**Figure 5.1. Perceived ease of applying to Nordplus in comparison with Erasmus+**



**Question wording:** "Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how Nordplus compares to similar programmes? The application process for Nordplus was easier than the process for Erasmus+?"

The same group was also asked about the **perceived likelihood of receiving needed funding from Nordplus, as compared to Erasmus+**. Taken together, 47 % of respondents who answered this question perceived it to be more likely to receive needed funding when applying to Nordplus, as compared to Erasmus+ (5+ on a 1-7 scale; see Figure 5.2). However, responses differed substantially between applicants to the Nordic Languages subprogramme, among whom 70 % perceived getting needed funding as more likely with Nordplus, than the other subprogrammes. At the other end of the spectrum, among applicants who applied to Nordplus Horizontal, only 35 % of respondents thought there was a greater likelihood of receiving needed funding from Nordplus than from Erasmus+. Also, worth mentioning is the relatively large share of applicants within all subprogrammes who do not know whether they perceive it to be more likely to receive the needed funding when applying to Nordplus compared to Erasmus+.

**Figure 5.2. Likelihood of receiving needed funding from Nordplus, as compared to Erasmus+**



**Question wording:** "Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how Nordplus compares to similar programmes? The likelihood of receiving needed funding is greater when applying for Nordplus as compared to Erasmus+."

In the interviews, perspectives on Nordplus in comparison with Erasmus+ focused on **aspects where Nordplus is unique from Erasmus+**, and for that reason should be kept under consideration going forward. In line with the survey responses on comparative ease of applying displayed above, several committee members, administrators and a majority of the interviewed external stakeholders mentioned that mobility in Nordplus is **more familiar, closer, easier and more flexible**, widening participation in international mobility by being more inclusive of people from lower resources with lower entrance barriers – especially relevant for smaller schools and NGOs. In addition, a few project coordinators and several programme committee members highlighted that Nordplus' focus on short-term mobility is unique from Erasmus+ (though this is no longer the case).

In particular, **class exchanges** were highlighted as a key activity supported by Nordplus, one that Erasmus+ has not supported in the past. A number of project coordinators with projects under Nordplus Junior as well as external stakeholders representing the upper secondary sector emphasised the importance of such exchanges, which offer contact with students and schools in other countries, for opening students' world to new experiences, especially for students who may not have had opportunities to travel internationally with their families.

In addition, **short-term mobility** was mentioned by multiple stakeholders as an important channel for supporting exchange, network development and cross-country innovation, particularly in the Junior, Adult and Higher Education fields, something that has not previously been supported through Erasmus+.

However, the new programme period of Erasmus+ has introduced support for both group mobility for school and adult education pupils and short-term mobility at different levels of education. While group mobility under Nordplus is conceptualized in terms of class exchange (with mutual visits), it need not be so under Erasmus+, but group mobility for pupils is assumed to include travel to and learning at or with another host school, unless reasons are given for an alternative. As such, Erasmus+ funding increasingly covers key educational mobility and activities that are offered by Nordplus.

Further, a number of the interviewed administrators mentioned that **Horizontal** is unique to Nordplus and promotes cooperation between education and the labour market. In addition, an external stakeholder highlighted that Nordplus makes exchange projects possible **outside explicit vocational fields**, which is very positive and brings students together across fields. This perspective was particularly raised in relation to vocational schools. Other external stakeholders emphasised Nordplus' focus on supporting **network development** as being somewhat unique.

It may also be considered how Nordplus funding compares with that offered by Erasmus+. The table below displays key unit costs for the Nordplus Junior programme (as concerns about financing for such opportunities are raised above), as compared with available funding from the Erasmus+ programme for mobility for pupils and staff in school education, with a focus on class exchange/ group mobility situations. As it can be difficult to compare unit costs directly, given different funding mechanisms, the table also includes calculated funding estimates for an example situation, a class trip from Vilnius, Lithuania to Copenhagen Denmark. In this example (a 4-day trip for 20 students and 2 teachers), the maximum funding offered by the programmes differs considerably: while such a class group may apply for up to €7,160 in support from Nordplus, they could apply for up to and approximated €12,930 from Erasmus+.

**Table 5.2. Comparison of key unit costs between Nordplus Junior and Erasmus+ relating to class exchange/ group mobility**

|  | Nordplus Junior  | Erasmus+  |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Travel</b>  | <p>Student class exchange:*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To / from Greenland: €1000-1300</li> <li>- To/ from Faroe Islands &amp; Iceland: €450-660</li> <li>- Between Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, Åland: €200-330</li> <li>- Domestic &gt;500 km return trip: €150</li> </ul> <p>Individual student mobility, staff or preparatory visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To / from Greenland: €1300</li> <li>- To/ from Faroe Islands &amp; Iceland: €660</li> <li>- Between Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, Åland: €330</li> <li>- Domestic &gt;500 km return trip: €150</li> </ul> | <p>For all participants (based on distance)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 0-99 km: €23</li> <li>- 100-499 km: €180 / €210 green</li> <li>- 500-1999 km: €275 / €320 green</li> <li>- 2000-2999 km: €360 / €410 green</li> <li>- 3000-3999 km: €530 / €610 green</li> <li>- 4000-7999 km: €820</li> <li>- 8000 km or more: €1500</li> </ul> |
| <b>Accommodation/subsistence</b>   | <p>Class exchange/ group mobility:<br/><i>No separate funding from travel allowance</i></p> <p>Teachers:<br/>€70 day/ €355 week/ €1065 month</p>   | <p>School pupils:**</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Country group 1: €40-80/ day</li> <li>- Country group 3: €30-60/ day</li> </ul> <p>Staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Country group 1: €90-180/ day</li> <li>- Country group 3: €70-140/ day (From the 15th day of activity, rate is 70% of the base rate)</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Example:</b><br>4-day class exchange / trip from Vilnius, Lithuania to Copenhagen, Denmark (813 km) for 20 students, 2 teachers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Travel: €300 x 22 persons = €6600</li> <li>- Teacher accommodation: €70 x 4 days x 2 teachers = €560</li> </ul> <p>Max. funding: <b>€7160</b></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Travel: €275 x 22 persons: €6050</li> <li>- Student subsistence: €60 x 20 students x 4 days = €4800</li> <li>- Teacher subsistence: €135 x 2 teachers x 4 days = €1080</li> <li>- Organisational support: €1000 (max for group, otherwise €100/ person)</li> </ul> <p>Max. funding: <b>€12,930</b></p>           |

\* For precise unit costs for each bilateral country pair, see Nordplus Handbook.

\*\*Erasmus+ country groups refer to the receiving country. Relating to Nordplus countries, Country group 1 includes: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Faroe Islands; Country group 3 includes: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania. Note that each national agency determines base rates within the allowed ranges. The example included here uses the average value of each allowed range

While Erasmus+ now offers many of the same support opportunities as Nordplus, its **geographical scope** remains unique. Students and educators at all levels from the Faeroe Islands have the possibility to apply for support from Nordplus but may not do so from Erasmus+ on the same terms as programme countries.

Finally, a number of external stakeholders and programme committee members mentioned that Nordplus' goal of **supporting the Nordic languages** in particular, is not shared by Erasmus+.

All interviewed committee members and several administrators emphasised a view that Nordplus **should not compete with Erasmus+**, but complement it. They recommended that the Programme should focus on aspects that are unique to Nordplus, thus focusing on key strengths to prioritise in the future budget.

### **The Nordic Master Programme**

The Nordic Master Programme (NMP) will end with the implementation of those programmes that received funding through the 2020 funding call. Following that, the programme will no longer exist, but the goal of promoting cooperation through joint degree programmes in the region continues for the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Only a small minority of project coordinators who responded to the survey reported having experience applying to the Nordic Master Programme (5 % of all respondents, and 11 % of those with projects through Nordplus Higher Education).

Only a few project coordinators offered suggestions (through open survey responses) for aspects of the Nordic Master Programme that could be valuable if offered through Nordplus. One suggested that it would be useful to be able to apply for developing and conducting joint course modules, rather than an entire master programme. Another suggested that it would be helpful if support were made available to meet and revise joint programmes after they have been running for two years or so. And still another emphasized that cross-border networks between universities running similar programmes would be useful.

Though most of those interviewed had limited or no experience with the Nordic Master Programme, a few of the interviewed stakeholders expressed views about whether and how Nordplus might continue aspects of it. One external stakeholder with some experience with the programme, having taught briefly in connection with it, suggested that they believed that Nordplus's resources would be better used to fund concrete projects, rather than a joint degree programme. The same person said that it may be better for students to specialise, and then gain Nordic experience afterward.

An administrator reflected that they saw much value in supporting joint degree programmes, since they are very complicated to develop. They propose the idea of offering support for the development phase of joint educations under Nordplus, after which the degree programme could be supported with an Erasmus grant. An interviewed programme committee member expresses the same view, that such joint programmes are important for internationalisation, but that it is most valuable to focus on funding the development of such programmes.

One Nordplus administrator, from a Baltic country, suggested that if any aspects of the Nordic Master are carried forward, it would be helpful to allow Baltic institutions to participate.

Nordplus Higher Education, as it exists in the current programme period, already offers support for some of the activities supported by NMP. The others may be funded through the Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters, though the programme is broader geographically than NMP. The table below displays key similarities and differences between the three programmes' support for development of joint degree programmes and curricula.

**Table 5.3. Comparison of support related to joint degree programmes under Nordplus, Nordic Master and Erasmus Mundus.**

|                             | Nordplus Higher Education  | Nordplus Master Programme  | Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters / Design Measures   |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Partners required</b>    | 2+ HEIs from different Nordic or Baltic countries  | 2+ HEIs from different Nordic countries, incl. Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland (partnership may be extended to Baltic HEIs through Nordplus HE funding)   | 3+ HEIs from different Erasmus programme countries (at least 2) and up to 1 non-programme country  |
| <b>Degree type</b>          | Development of bachelor or master joint curriculum or programme  | 2 year master degree programme (120 ECTS)  | 1-2 year (60-120 ECTS)   |
| <b>Supported activities</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of joint degree programmes</li> <li>- Development of joint curriculum</li> <li>- Participant mobility</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of joint degree programmes</li> <li>- Programme implementation</li> <li>- Student mobility</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of joint degree programmes</li> <li>- Programme implementation</li> <li>- Student scholarship</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Duration</b>             | Up to 3 years (but annual applications must be submitted)  | Up to 5 years (including development and max 3 student intakes; if no development support is needed, up to 4 student intakes)  | 6 years (Joint Masters)<br><br>15 months (Design Measures)   |
| <b>Available funding</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Funding of intensive courses, joint study programmes and development of joint curriculum calculated separately</li> <li>- Student and teacher travel and accommodation rates apply for mobility</li> <li>Students: €20 day / €70 week / €200 month</li> <li>Teachers: €70 day / €355 week / €1065 month</li> <li>- Additional funding for participants with disabilities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Up to 1,585,000 DKK (appr. €200,000)/ programme</li> <li>- (max 396,250 DKK (approx. €50,000) for development, the rest for implementation). Max 396,250 DKK (€50,000) /academic year.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development (Design Measures): €55,000</li> <li>- Institutional costs of implementation: €750 /month x programme duration in months x enrolled students over grant period.</li> <li>- Student scholarships: €1400/ month x enrolled students</li> <li>- Additional funding for students with disabilities, students from targeted areas of the world</li> </ul> |

As the table indicates, Nordplus currently offers support for the development (but not implementation) of joint degree programmes. It also offers support for the development of joint curricula. Support for the implementation of joint curricula in higher education is only offered in the form of intensive courses, and with the potential to fund an extension of a joint degree partnership to a Baltic higher education institution. Therefore, when the Nordic Master Programme ends, there will no longer be support for the implementation of specifically *Nordic* joint masters degree programmes. However, it is possible to apply for support for Nordic or



Nordic-Baltic joint degree programmes through Erasmus Mundus. This availability, coupled with the potential of receiving funding for joint degree programme *development* from Nordplus, should ensure continued possibilities for support for Nordic and Nordic-Baltic joint degree partnerships.

## 5.2 Input on the Target Groups' Changing Needs and Interests

Planning for the future of Nordplus requires consideration of the needs and interests that its target groups of educators, learners and educational institutions have and will have currently and in the future. Each group of interviewees was therefore asked to give their perspectives on this. Within the interviews with project coordinators, external stakeholders, administrators, and programme committee members several key points were raised, most of them by multiple respondents from the different interviewee groups. The following paragraphs outline these, first focusing on existing needs and interests that are highlighted to continue to be important, and proceeding to considerations of needs and interests that are expected to change or increase in the future.

### **Continuing Needs and Interests**

A number of project coordinators, external stakeholders and administrators emphasised the **continuing importance** of supporting **class exchanges**. They see great value in opportunities for young students in different countries to experience travelling to another country and interacting with other students and settings, and limited opportunities to get support for such exchanges from other sources. This is particularly relevant for primary, lower- and upper-secondary schools, as well as vocational schools.

In addition, a number of project coordinators and external stakeholders are focused on the importance of support for **short-term mobility**. This is emphasised as an important opportunity, particularly for teachers and other pedagogical staff, to travel and learn from partners and other contexts without having to make significant arrangements that could impact family life, living arrangements and other duties at work. As such, it can make exchange, network development and innovation in education more accessible to educators and students regardless of life situation. This is particularly relevant for potential project participants in the Junior, Adult and Higher Education subprogrammes.

Further, interviewees from all groups emphasised the continuing importance of support for exchange and partnerships within the **Nordic or Nordic-Baltic community** (depending on the emphasis of the speaker), with its common cultural elements and commonalities in various aspects of education.

Finally, stakeholders, administrators and programme committee members highlighted a continued need for funding support for "launch" or "seed" projects and networks which can then be used to develop broader programmes and partnerships, perhaps with support from other funding sources.

### ***Needs to be increasingly supported in the Future***

Interviewees also raised several **needs they believe should be increasingly supported**.

A great number of those interviewed, particularly project coordinators and external stakeholders, emphasised that the need for **virtual and hybrid collaboration** across borders in education is only increasing in the current time. Spurred on by improving virtual meeting technology accessible to a broad group of users as well as by the Covid-19 pandemic, virtual networking and collaboration have become useful and relevant for most types of actors within education and are less time-consuming and cheaper than physical mobility. At the same time, some of those interviewed highlighted the value of hybrid collaboration, where a network, exchange or collaboration can be begun virtually, continued in person, and followed up virtually. One aspect highlighted as necessary in the case of increased virtual or hybrid collaboration is the possibility for funding support for staff salaries to develop and facilitate such collaboration.

Two additional needs were raised that affect fewer potential users of the Programme, but that are nevertheless important for those groups. First, external stakeholders raised the need for *individuals* to be able to apply for Nordplus funding support to attend folk high schools in other countries, arguing that this would spur increased Nordic exchange. In addition, a stakeholder within the higher education sector highlighted that it would be helpful to allow institutional affiliates, as well as employees or registered students, to participate in Nordplus-funded mobility. Such an addition would, for example, enable visiting at-risk scholars (typically fleeing from political persecution) to build a network and possible employment opportunities in other Nordic countries.

## 5.3 Perspectives on Future Priorities for Nordplus

Those who were interviewed for this evaluation were asked about their ideas and recommendations for what Nordplus could focus on in the future. Key ideas from these discussions are summarised and presented here.

First and foremost, most of those interviewed from all the roles represented emphasised the importance of maintaining the Nordplus Programme's **simplicity** for users and its **flexibility** in administration in practice, and thereby its accessibility to a broad range of users within education.

Additional recommendations relate to the **level and model of financing for certain project activities**. Several interviewees from all groups recommended increasing funding for salaries, substitute teachers, development and organisational support, and virtual collaboration. A few interviewees suggested improved funding for language projects. Some interviewed committee members and administrators recommended bringing the unit-costs model currently used in Adult and Junior into all the subprogrammes, as it is more transparent and, they believe, would be easier to work with.

Among interviewed programme committee members, several expressed an interest in a different **distribution of budgets** among the subprogrammes. These recommendations vary, but typically suggest moving more funds towards Junior,

Adult, Horizontal or Nordic Languages, and away from Higher Education – this in part due to the possibility for most (though not all) higher education institutions to seek project funding or exchange activities through Erasmus+. In addition, a few of those interviewed recommended making the funds distribution among subprogrammes more flexible.

Finally, a number of the interviewed external stakeholders highlighted the importance of **opportunities "close to home" in the Nordic-Baltic region** where Nordplus is more relevant than other international programmes. This is echoed by a number of the interviewed programme committee members and administrators, who emphasised the importance of Nordplus' role in supporting Nordic and Nordic-Baltic exchange as a regional "neighbourhood" programme. As such, they say, Nordplus has a role to play in terms of supporting exchange within a common cultural area, as well as supporting innovation and learning between countries whose education systems share many common structural and methodological traits.

## 5.4 Potential Strategies for the Future Development of Nordplus

In light of the considerations presented above, several main strategies may be considered for Nordplus. We outline potential elements and implications of these below. As it is expected that the Nordplus budget maybe reduced in the coming programme period, each of these strategies may be pursued while incorporating reductions into the programme budget. We also note that, while these strategies are presented on the basis of input from programme participants, stakeholders, administrators and programme committee members, the content of a future strategy for the Nordplus Programme will depend on the political priorities of decision makers, or in other words their vision for the scope and role of Nordplus in light of available resources.

In addition, we note that smaller changes to the Nordplus Programme that have been recommended by actors involved in Nordplus and mentioned in this report, may be implemented in any of these strategies. Examples of such adjustments are potential increases to support for travel costs, implementation or improvement of funding for teachers' salaries, virtual activities or project development and administration, or implementation of new administrative models for funding, such as a unit-costs model.

In the following, we consider three overall strategies:

- **Continuation of status quo**
- **Functional specialisation in relation to Erasmus+**
- **Strengthened thematic focus**

### Possible budget reductions:

The Nordic Council of Ministers for Education and Research's overall budget is being reduced from 224,723,000 DKK in 2020 to approximately 185,800,000 DKK in 2024, a 17.3 % reduction. This may affect the Nordplus budget in the coming programme period, though the extent of changes to Nordplus are not yet known.

**1**  
**Continuation of  
status quo**

**2**  
**Functional  
specialisation in  
response to  
Erasmus+**

**3**  
**Strengthen  
thematic focus**



#### **Continuation of the status quo**

The Nordplus Programme may be continued in large part as it is today by maintaining the current scope of subprogrammes, activities funded within each subprogramme, and approximate distribution of funding across subprogrammes. If budget reductions are determined, such reductions would under this strategy be implemented proportionally to current funding. This would mean that the budget distribution in the current programme period to each subprogramme would remain the same, proportional to the total budget, in the next programme period, but in the case of reduction would be reduced in size. For example, Nordplus Horizontal would continue to receive approximately 8.8 % of the total programme budget, as it does today. This strategy could still allow smaller adjustments named as relevant to improve the existing Programme, such as those named above.



**Potential implications:**

- This strategy would bring minimal disruption to the Programme and its users. This would be particularly positive for users without resources to investigate programme changes and for those users who cannot use other programmes such as Erasmus+, such as those in the Faroe Islands.
- This strategy would require few, if any, adjustments to the administration of the programme.
- This strategy would require few, if any, adjustments to guidelines, publications and resources used to inform about and recruit potential applicants to Nordplus – both those maintained by the Nordplus administration and by the national educational agencies and other groups who conduct informational events or maintain webpages about Nordplus.



- **However**, it would likely not address some of the overlaps between Nordplus and other programmes, such as Erasmus+, meaning that Nordplus would "compete" with a much larger programme supporting some of the same activities.
- A continuation of current programme budget distribution and functions would likely mean that the new period's budget would not correspond to changes in application rates observed in this programme period, for example the fall in applications to Nordplus Junior.



### **Functional specialisation in response to Erasmus+**

The Nordplus Programme may be adapted to ensure that the activities supported within each subprogramme meet needs in each educational sector by complementing, rather than overlapping substantially with, resources that are available from Erasmus+ (and other relevant programmes). As such, it requires that each subprogramme be tailored to include those aspects that are unique to Nordplus, perhaps even adding activities not supported today but judged to be relevant, and eliminate or substantially reduce support for activities that can be funded through Erasmus+. Based on input from Nordplus stakeholders, the emphasis in such changes would likely consist of moving resources to continue (and perhaps enhance) support to activities such as:

- Intensive courses
- Support for theme-based exchanges and projects within Nordplus Junior and Adult not centred on particular fields of study (non-vocational in vocational school settings)
- Development and implementation of joint curricula
- Development of joint degree programmes
- Opportunities for cross-sector partnerships under Horizontal
- Network development "seed" projects under all subprogrammes
- Support for projects to promote the Nordic languages and cultures under all subprogrammes, and particularly under Nordic Languages
- Support for small institutions, schools and organisations that may have difficulty accessing support through Erasmus+.



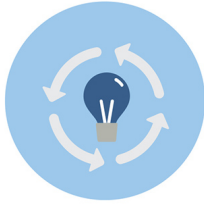
### **Potential implications:**

- This strategy would meet key needs that are not offered funding elsewhere. It would ensure that important activities continue to be funded and may even enable increased and better-targeted funding for these activities.
- This strategy would minimize redundant funding of activities that can be funded, often on a larger scale, through Erasmus+, using the funding countries' resources more efficiently.





- **However**, it would bring decreases in funding to some sectors and subprogrammes in particular, meaning that there would be fewer resources for specifically Nordic or Nordic-Baltic cooperation in those fields.
- This strategy could also be characterised as being more "reactive" to what is offered through other programmes, particularly Erasmus+, rather than by a focused agenda or programme. As such, it would the Nordplus programme's priorities less determined by priorities set within the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic-Baltic community, and more responsive to priorities and grant policies set at the EU level.
- This strategy has the potential to create a Nordplus programme without a clear vision for Nordic and Nordic-Baltic cooperation, since its support opportunities would differ between sectors depending on those (not) offered by Erasmus+. This may be problematic in terms of articulating how it realizes the Nordic vision for educational mobility and cooperation, and in terms of communicating succinctly to potential applicants.



### **Strengthened thematic focus**

The Nordplus Programme may be redesigned to focus more strongly on particular themes, around which supported educational cooperation, innovation and mobility would focus. This strategy would streamline the programme's portfolio of supported projects around themes that promote education initiatives that are aligned with the Nordic Council's strategic vision for the region and its place in Europe and the world.

The thematic content must be formulated according to the vision of political decision-makers at the Nordic level. Such themes could include long-term priorities such as those set out in the Vision for 2030, for example:

- Climate neutrality
- The circular economy
- Equality and inclusive democracy
- Shared Nordic culture.
- Such long-term priorities may further be supplemented with shorter-term priorities during certain programme periods, as was done with the Nordplus Highlights.

If this strategy is implemented, it is recommended that Nordplus maintain opportunities for support in multiple education sectors to allow those in the early child, school and youth education sectors, adult education, higher education and other organisations to participate in Nordplus-supported activities. It is further recommended that, if this strategy is implemented, the initial programme period include some allocation for each theme, but retain flexibility to allow the awarded grants within each thematic area to correspond to the volume of qualifying applications.

The change from the current period would consist of a strengthened requirement, or at least recommendation, that supported projects focus on the themes prioritised in the programme vision. As the themes above and others included in the Nordic Council's strategic work touch many spheres of learning and society, most institutions and organisations will be able to identify desirable projects that center on the chosen themes.



### **Potential Implications:**

- This strategy would ensure a Nordplus Programme that is aligned to a

particular, focused vision. As such, it would likely be more immediately aligned with areas in focus for the Nordic Council of Ministers and the region, making it easier to articulate to political decision-makers and to the general public.

- An increased thematic focus may make the process of finding potential partners and developing project ideas easier for some educational actors, as they can search and be connected with others who are interested in working around the same theme, and as the theme (and an increasing portfolio of past projects) may give ideas and inspiration about potential project ideas.
- This strategy would bring the Nordic vision and shared identity into focus in the profile of the Nordplus programme and would thus differentiate Nordplus further from Erasmus+.
- This strategy would focus programme resources on educational activities and development work that also promote a shared Nordic vision for the region.



- **However**, this strategy would mean the elimination of funding opportunities for projects that do not align with the themes that are chosen. This may limit access to support for educational activities for educators who do not wish to pursue projects within those themes.
- It is unclear how well this strategy aligns with the goal of promoting a Nordic-Baltic community; however, the long-term goals of the Vision 2030 are, with the possible exception of the promotion of Nordic culture and languages, also largely shared by the Baltic countries.

## Appendix A

# Data and methods

This evaluation is based on a survey among all Nordplus applicants (project coordinators) from 2018-2020, interviews with selected project coordinators, external stakeholders, and interviews with administrators/representatives of information points and programme committee members from participating countries and autonomous regions.

### Survey among Nordplus applicants

Using project application data from the Nordplus application system Espresso, Ramboll contacted all project coordinators responsible for applications submitted in the period 2018-20 by email to request their participation in a survey about their experiences with the Nordplus Programme. Coordinators who had submitted more than one application in the period were only contacted in relation to one project – prioritising either the latest application to receive funding from Nordplus or, if all the coordinator's applications had been rejected, the latest application.

A total of 1087 applicants were contacted, and 569 complete responses were submitted, for an average response rate of 52 %. The response rates do not differ greatly between the subprogrammes. The table below displays the number of applicants contacted, the number of completed responses and the response rate for each subprogramme.

**Table A.0.1. Survey: Applicants contacted and completed responses**

|                             | Nordplus Junior | Higher Education | Adult | Horizontal | Nordic Languages | Total       |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------|------------|------------------|-------------|
| <b>Applicants contacted</b> | 374             | 343              | 210   | 103        | 61               | <b>1087</b> |
| <b>Completed responses</b>  | 202             | 181              | 103   | 49         | 34               | <b>569</b>  |
| <b>Response rate</b>        | 54%             | 53%              | 49%   | 48%        | 56%              | <b>52%</b>  |

The survey was conducted in English on Ramboll's web-based platform Survey Xact. It included basic information about the purpose of the survey and evaluation, as well as request for consent from participants to use the information they provided in the

evaluation. Only participants who gave consent were able to proceed to the survey questions.

The survey itself consisted of questions about how the coordinator had learned about Nordplus, the project's target groups and activities, experiences with applying to and (for funded projects) administration and reporting, knowledge of an comparison with similar programmes, overall satisfaction with Nordplus and (for funded projects) the project results.

Survey data were analysed with focus on presenting relevant data relating to the evaluation's purpose, in particular with reference to participant experiences and perspectives overall, by subprogramme and, where relevant, by country. To present results on the value of Nordplus more succinctly, items assessing perspectives on key dimensions were combined in four indices (see sections 4.2-4.5), each of which were checked for internal validity using statistical tests.

### Interviews with project coordinators

To ensure in-depth perspectives on experiences with Nordplus and its value for target groups, Ramboll also conducted interviews with 20 of the project coordinators who responded to the survey and whose projects received funding. Interview participants were selected with an aim to ensure distribution of interviews across subprogrammes and participating countries in approximate proportion with project funding in recent cycles. The numbers of interviewed project coordinators are displayed in the table below, by subprogramme and country. Selected project coordinators were contacted by email to request their participation in an interview.

**Table A.O.2. Interviewed project coordinators, by subprogramme and country**

|              | Junior   | Higher Education | Adult    | Horizontal | Nordic Languages | Total     |
|--------------|----------|------------------|----------|------------|------------------|-----------|
| Denmark      | 1        | 1                | 2        |            | 1                | 5         |
| Estonia      | 1        | 1                |          |            |                  | 2         |
| Finland      |          | 1                |          | 1          | 1                | 3         |
| Iceland      | 1        | 1                |          |            |                  | 2         |
| Latvia       |          | 1                | 1        |            |                  | 2         |
| Lithuania    | 1        |                  | 1        |            |                  | 2         |
| Norway       | 1        |                  |          | 1          |                  | 2         |
| Sweden       | 1        | 1                |          |            |                  | 2         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>6</b>         | <b>4</b> | <b>2</b>   | <b>2</b>         | <b>20</b> |

The interviews were semi-structured, based on an interview guide with questions about the coordinators' organisations, experiences finding and applying to Nordplus, administration of and reporting on their projects, the experienced results of the project and the overall value of Nordplus.

Each interview took 25-45 minutes. The interviews were conducted in English, or in a few cases Scandinavian languages, and were held over Teams or telephone.

### Interviews with external stakeholders

To ensure perspectives on target group needs and priorities for Nordplus that go beyond individual institutions and projects, Ramboll also contacted a number of organisations that represent key target groups in the participating countries and in the Nordic region. Interviews were held with 17 representatives of these strategic stakeholders, displayed in the table below.

**Table A.0.3. Interviewed external stakeholder organisations**

| Country      | Number of interviews | Organisation  |
|--------------|----------------------|---|
| Nordic       | 3                    | Nordic Association of University Administrators<br>Nordic Network for Adult Learning<br>Nordic Folk High School Council |
| Denmark      | 3                    | Danske universiteter<br>Danske Gymnasier<br>Københavns Professionshøjskole  |
| Estonia      | 2                    | Universities Estonia (Rektorite Nõukogu)<br>Estonian Teachers Association (Eesti Õpetajate Liit)                        |
| Finland      | 2                    | Universities Finland<br>Finnish Association of Adult Education Centres  |
| Iceland      | 1                    | Íslands Universitet   |
| Latvia       | 1                    | Vocational Education Association of Latvia  |
| Lithuania    | 2                    | Lithuanian School Head Association<br>Lithuanian Association of Adult Education   |
| Norway       | 1                    | Voksenåsen  |
| Sweden       | 2                    | Skolverket<br>Sverige universitets- och högskoleförbund   |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>17</b>            |   |

The interviews with external stakeholders were semi-structured, based on an interview guide with questions about the organisations' experiences with and perspectives on Nordplus and similar programmes, how Nordplus functions for target groups within education, the value of Nordplus, and reflections on the target groups' needs and interests going forward and on the future of Nordplus. As the

stakeholders typically are working with specific educational sectors, each interview focused on the relevant target groups and subprogramme(s) for each stakeholder.

Each interview took 30-60 minutes. The interviews were conducted in English, or in a few cases Scandinavian languages, and were held over Teams or telephone.

#### **Interviews with administrators, information point representatives and programme committee members**

Finally, interviews were conducted with internal stakeholders with important knowledge about and perspectives on Nordplus's functioning, supported activities and future priorities. Interviews were conducted with one or more administrators from each of the eight participating countries and with one or more information point representatives from the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland, respectively. In addition, interviews were conducted with one or more programme committee members from each of the eight participating countries. Taken together, 19 individual or small-group interviews were conducted with internal stakeholders.

The interviews were semi-structured, based on an interview guide with questions about the how the programme functions for participants in terms of application and administration, funding opportunities, perspectives on Nordplus in relation to Erasmus+ and the Nordic Master Programme, the value of Nordplus, and perspectives on future priorities for Nordplus.

Each interview took 45-90 minutes. The interviews were conducted in English, or in a few cases Scandinavian languages, and were held over Teams.

#### **Analysis of interview data**

Data from all the interviews were coded systematically, gathering excerpts from each interview transcript thematically and analysing the aggregated excerpts for key points. This process typically focused on points and reflections shared by multiple interviewees, yet perspectives central to the programme goals that related to particular types of institutions, target groups or to regions with smaller populations were also included to ensure representation of these more marginal perspectives in the report. From the coded statements, some short excerpts were selected for direct inclusion as citations within the report to illustrate the highlighted perspectives in interviewees' own words.



## Appendix B

# Shares of mobility between country pairs

### Nordplus Junior

Data are from 2018-2020. Percentages displayed represent shares of students or teachers from each sending country who traveled to each of the other countries.

### Students

| Receiving     |         |        |        |         |         |         |        |           |           |               |       |
|---------------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|-----------|-----------|---------------|-------|
| Sending       | Denmark | Norway | Sweden | Finland | Iceland | Estonia | Latvia | Lithuania | Greenland | Faroe Islands | Åland |
| Denmark       |         | 10%    | 9%     | 9%      | 24%     | 5%      | 12%    | 13%       | 8%        | 9%            | 1%    |
| Norway        | 35%     |        | 27%    | 10%     | 8%      | 1%      | 5%     | 4%        | 0%        | 4%            | 7%    |
| Sweden        | 20%     | 14%    |        | 23%     | 14%     | 7%      | 10%    | 8%        | 0%        | 2%            | 2%    |
| Finland       | 17%     | 5%     | 18%    |         | 14%     | 15%     | 11%    | 15%       | 1%        | 3%            | 3%    |
| Iceland       | 46%     | 7%     | 10%    | 14%     |         | 6%      | 4%     | 7%        | 1%        | 3%            | 0%    |
| Estonia       | 11%     | 4%     | 5%     | 20%     | 8%      |         | 27%    | 19%       | 2%        | 3%            | 0%    |
| Latvia        | 20%     | 2%     | 6%     | 12%     | 4%      | 17%     |        | 35%       | 1%        | 3%            | 0%    |
| Lithuania     | 23%     | 2%     | 5%     | 15%     | 6%      | 11%     | 34%    |           | 1%        | 3%            | 0%    |
| Greenland     | 60%     | 0%     | 0%     | 5%      | 0%      | 16%     | 4%     | 4%        |           | 11%           | 0%    |
| Faroe Islands | 43%     | 6%     | 3%     | 8%      | 7%      | 7%      | 12%    | 12%       | 2%        |               | 0%    |
| Åland         | 19%     | 34%    | 16%    | 31%     | 0%      | 0%      | 0%     | 0%        | 0%        | 0%            |       |

Note: "Students" consists of the categories 'Short-term', 'Long-term' and 'Express mobility';  
"Teachers consists of the remaining types of mobility, from Nordplus' own mobility statistics.

## Teachers

| Receiving     |         |        |        |         |         |         |        |           |           |               |       |
|---------------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|-----------|-----------|---------------|-------|
| Sending       | Denmark | Norway | Sweden | Finland | Iceland | Estonia | Latvia | Lithuania | Greenland | Faroe Islands | Åland |
| Denmark       |         | 15%    | 10%    | 14%     | 15%     | 6%      | 10%    | 12%       | 8%        | 10%           | 1%    |
| Norway        | 26%     |        | 16%    | 17%     | 7%      | 4%      | 10%    | 11%       | 0%        | 6%            | 3%    |
| Sweden        | 12%     | 11%    |        | 25%     | 15%     | 9%      | 14%    | 9%        | 0%        | 3%            | 1%    |
| Finland       | 15%     | 5%     | 16%    |         | 12%     | 19%     | 13%    | 14%       | 0%        | 4%            | 1%    |
| Iceland       | 23%     | 7%     | 12%    | 15%     |         | 19%     | 10%    | 11%       | 1%        | 4%            | 0%    |
| Estonia       | 7%      | 3%     | 6%     | 15%     | 13%     |         | 25%    | 23%       | 4%        | 5%            | 0%    |
| Latvia        | 11%     | 7%     | 7%     | 11%     | 6%      | 21%     |        | 33%       | 1%        | 1%            | 0%    |
| Lithuania     | 12%     | 5%     | 5%     | 14%     | 6%      | 21%     | 34%    |           | 1%        | 2%            | 0%    |
| Greenland     | 17%     | 0%     | 0%     | 3%      | 3%      | 29%     | 9%     | 10%       |           | 9%            | 0%    |
| Faroe Islands | 30%     | 12%    | 8%     | 12%     | 10%     | 13%     | 8%     | 6%        | 0%        |               | 0%    |
| Åland         | 17%     | 44%    | 11%    | 28%     | 0%      | 0%      | 0%     | 0%        | 0%        | 0%            |       |

Note: "Teachers" consists of the categories 'Development of teaching materials', 'Studies', 'Study visit', 'Teachers', 'Teaching', 'Tutoring', 'Work placement' from Nordplus' own mobility statistics.

## Nordplus Higher Education

Data are from 2018-2019 (no data for 2020). Percentages displayed represent shares of students or teachers from each sending country who traveled to each of the other countries.

### Students

| Receiving     |         |        |        |         |         |         |        |           |           |               |       |
|---------------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|-----------|-----------|---------------|-------|
| Sending       | Denmark | Norway | Sweden | Finland | Iceland | Estonia | Latvia | Lithuania | Greenland | Faroe Islands | Åland |
| Denmark       |         | 28%    | 18%    | 11%     | 9%      | 2%      | 2%     | 4%        | 19%       | 7%            | 0%    |
| Norway        | 40%     |        | 21%    | 8%      | 19%     | 2%      | 0%     | 9%        | 0%        | 1%            | 0%    |
| Sweden        | 25%     | 21%    |        | 22%     | 14%     | 8%      | 1%     | 8%        | 1%        | 0%            | 1%    |
| Finland       | 11%     | 23%    | 41%    |         | 6%      | 8%      | 5%     | 2%        | 0%        | 0%            | 3%    |
| Iceland       | 30%     | 15%    | 40%    | 9%      |         | 2%      | 3%     | 0%        | 0%        | 1%            | 0%    |
| Estonia       | 9%      | 2%     | 16%    | 24%     | 3%      |         | 20%    | 21%       | 0%        | 0%            | 3%    |
| Latvia        | 7%      | 7%     | 10%    | 4%      | 11%     | 30%     |        | 31%       | 0%        | 0%            | 0%    |
| Lithuania     | 7%      | 8%     | 15%    | 9%      | 3%      | 38%     | 19%    |           | 0%        | 0%            | 0%    |
| Greenland     | 7%      | 7%     | 0%     | 0%      | 7%      | 0%      | 0%     | 0%        |           | 14%           | 0%    |
| Faroe Islands | 4%      | 15%    | 0%     | 0%      | 33%     | 0%      | 0%     | 0%        | 48%       |               | 0%    |
| Åland         | 0%      | 0%     | 67%    | 33%     | 0%      | 0%      | 0%     | 0%        | 0%        | 0%            |       |

Note: "Students" consists of the categories 'Short-term', 'Long-term' and 'Express mobility'; "Teachers consists of the remaining types of mobility, from Nordplus' own mobility statistics.

### Teachers

| Receiving |         |        |        |         |         |         |        |           |           |               |       |
|-----------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|-----------|-----------|---------------|-------|
| Sending   | Denmark | Norway | Sweden | Finland | Iceland | Estonia | Latvia | Lithuania | Greenland | Faroe Islands | Åland |
| Denmark   |         | 20%    | 21%    | 22%     | 12%     | 8%      | 3%     | 0%        | 8%        | 5%            | 0%    |
| Norway    | 15%     |        | 35%    | 14%     | 13%     | 9%      | 6%     | 7%        | 0%        | 2%            | 0%    |
| Sweden    | 14%     | 23%    |        | 26%     | 6%      | 17%     | 3%     | 6%        | 0%        | 5%            | 1%    |
| Finland   | 7%      | 16%    | 32%    |         | 9%      | 20%     | 10%    | 4%        | 1%        | 0%            | 1%    |
| Iceland   | 15%     | 5%     | 29%    | 17%     |         | 15%     | 10%    | 0%        | 0%        | 10%           | 0%    |
| Estonia   | 8%      | 5%     | 23%    | 18%     | 7%      |         | 24%    | 13%       | 0%        | 0%            | 1%    |
| Latvia    | 1%      | 7%     | 12%    | 12%     | 5%      | 38%     |        | 25%       | 0%        | 0%            | 0%    |
| Lithuania | 6%      | 16%    | 4%     | 17%     | 7%      | 19%     | 30%    |           | 1%        | 0%            | 0%    |
| Greenland | 8%      | 13%    | 0%     | 13%     | 0%      | 13%     | 0%     | 0%        |           | 25%           | 0%    |

|               |     |    |      |    |    |     |    |    |    |    |    |
|---------------|-----|----|------|----|----|-----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Faroe Islands | 20% | 0% | 60%  | 0% | 0% | 20% | 0% | 0% | 0% |    | 0% |
| Åland         | 0%  | 0% | 100% | 0% | 0% | 0%  | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |    |

Note: "Teachers" consists of the categories 'Development of teaching materials', 'Studies', 'Study visit', 'Teachers', 'Teaching', 'Tutoring', 'Work placement' from Nordplus' own mobility statistics.

## Nordplus Adult

Data are from 2018-2020. Percentages displayed represent shares of students or teachers from each sending country who traveled to each of the other countries.

### Students

| Receiving     |         |        |        |         |         |         |        |           |           |               |       |
|---------------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|-----------|-----------|---------------|-------|
| Sending       | Denmark | Norway | Sweden | Finland | Iceland | Estonia | Latvia | Lithuania | Greenland | Faroe Islands | Åland |
| Denmark       |         | 0%     | 0%     | 82%     | 0%      | 0%      | 0%     | 7%        | 11%       | 0%            | 0%    |
| Norway        | 20%     |        | 10%    | 0%      | 60%     | 0%      | 0%     | 0%        | 0%        | 10%           | 0%    |
| Sweden        | 11%     | 2%     |        | 68%     | 2%      | 9%      | 0%     | 5%        | 0%        | 2%            | 0%    |
| Finland       | 38%     | 0%     | 54%    |         | 0%      | 0%      | 2%     | 6%        | 0%        | 0%            | 0%    |
| Iceland       | 52%     | 20%    | 14%    | 12%     |         | 0%      | 0%     | 0%        | 0%        | 2%            | 0%    |
| Estonia       | 46%     | 0%     | 12%    | 29%     | 0%      |         | 0%     | 12%       | 0%        | 0%            | 0%    |
| Latvia        | 0%      | 0%     | 6%     | 6%      | 6%      | 13%     |        | 69%       | 0%        | 0%            | 0%    |
| Lithuania     | 0%      | 0%     | 12%    | 5%      | 0%      | 23%     | 51%    |           | 0%        | 0%            | 0%    |
| Greenland     | 0%      | 0%     | 0%     | 0%      | 0%      | 0%      | 0%     | 0%        |           | 0%            | 0%    |
| Faroe Islands | 0%      | 0%     | 100%   | 0%      | 0%      | 0%      | 0%     | 0%        | 0%        |               | 0%    |
| Åland         | 0%      | 0%     | 0%     | 0%      | 0%      | 0%      | 0%     | 0%        | 0%        | 0%            |       |

Note: "Students" reflects the categories 'Adult learners' and 'Folk High School Visits' from the 'Type' variable within Nordplus' own mobility data.

### Teachers

| Receiving |         |        |        |         |         |         |        |           |           |               |       |
|-----------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|-----------|-----------|---------------|-------|
| Sending   | Denmark | Norway | Sweden | Finland | Iceland | Estonia | Latvia | Lithuania | Greenland | Faroe Islands | Åland |
| Denmark   |         | 31%    | 31%    | 0%      | 0%      | 8%      | 0%     | 0%        | 31%       | 0%            | 0%    |
| Norway    | 15%     |        | 26%    | 5%      | 0%      | 10%     | 21%    | 23%       | 0%        | 0%            | 0%    |
| Sweden    | 13%     | 19%    |        | 22%     | 9%      | 4%      | 11%    | 19%       | 4%        | 0%            | 0%    |
| Finland   | 16%     | 5%     | 24%    |         | 0%      | 16%     | 11%    | 27%       | 0%        | 0%            | 0%    |
| Iceland   | 3%      | 0%     | 10%    | 16%     |         | 0%      | 16%    | 55%       | 0%        | 0%            | 0%    |
| Estonia   | 3%      | 13%    | 5%     | 40%     | 0%      |         | 5%     | 35%       | 0%        | 0%            | 0%    |
| Latvia    | 9%      | 13%    | 10%    | 20%     | 7%      | 6%      |        | 35%       | 0%        | 0%            | 0%    |
| Lithuania | 3%      | 13%    | 11%    | 8%      | 16%     | 13%     | 28%    |           | 0%        | 0%            | 0%    |
| Greenland | 0%      | 0%     | 0%     | 0%      | 0%      | 0%      | 0%     | 0%        |           | 0%            | 0%    |

|               |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |      |    |    |
|---------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|------|----|----|
| Faroe Islands | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 100% |    | 0% |
| Åland         | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0%   | 0% |    |

Note: "Teachers" consist of the categories 'Accompanying teachers', 'Preparatory visits', 'Studying', 'Teaching', 'Teaching and Studying' and 'Training Courses' from Nordplus' own mobility data.

# About this publication

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