

# Evaluation of Nordplus









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*Göran Melin, Miriam Terrell and Karolina Henningsson*

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# Contents

Preface .....	7
Summary.....	9
1. Introduction .....	15
1.1 Background to the evaluation .....	15
1.2 The evaluation questions .....	16
1.3 Methodology .....	19
1.4 Structure of the report.....	22
2. Nordplus and the current programme period 2012–2016.....	23
2.1 Management and administrative set-up.....	24
2.2 Ongoing activities and work in Nordplus .....	27
3. Organisational and administrative efficiency.....	29
3.1 The administrative set-up .....	29
3.2 The strengthening of the main co-ordinator function.....	30
3.3 The programme committee.....	33
3.4 Espresso.....	36
4. Results and impacts of changes in specific sub-programmes.....	39
4.1 The simplification of Nordplus Junior .....	39
4.2 Changes in Nordplus Nordic Language.....	41
4.3 Mobility activities in Nordplus.....	47
5. Profiling and communications .....	55
5.1 Nordplus and Erasmus+.....	55
5.2 Profiling and marketing .....	57
6. Conclusions and recommendations.....	63
6.1 Administration and organisation .....	63
6.2 Changes in Nordplus Junior and Nordplus Nordic Language .....	65
6.3 Mobility .....	67
6.4 Profile and communications .....	67
6.5 Nordplus and Erasmus+.....	68
6.6 Recommendations .....	69
Sammanfattning.....	71

Appendix A The sub-programmes and application and grant data 2012–2015.....	77
Nordplus Higher Education .....	77
Nordplus Junior .....	78
Nordplus Adult.....	79
Nordplus Horizontal.....	80
Nordplus Nordic Language .....	81
Appendix B Interviewees, focus group and interpretation seminar participants.....	83

# Preface

Nordplus is one of the most widely known initiatives under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers. For decades, Nordplus has provided a large number of people in the Nordic countries with opportunities to study or in other ways get culture and knowledge related experiences in another Nordic, and since 2008, Baltic country. Nordplus has shifted in character and scope over the years, but can indeed be labelled a flagship programme and even a trademark for the Nordic Council of Ministers, and is perhaps its best recognised initiative of all.

In this report, Technopolis Group (Technopolis Sweden and Technopolis Baltics) presents the results of an evaluation of the current programme period of Nordplus, 2012–2016.

The evaluation was undertaken between January 2014 and August 2015. The evaluation team has consisted of Göran Melin (project manager), Jelena Angelis, Katre Eljas-Taal, Maria Grudin, Karolina Henningsson and Miriam Terrell. Kristel Kosk, Ala Širaliova and Linnéa Järpeštam have assisted the evaluation team and AnnaKarin Swenning has continuously provided the team with internal quality assurance.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank all who have contributed to our work with this evaluation. As can be seen in the following, the team has participated in several Nordplus meetings and a substantial number of interviews have been made with administrators and other stakeholders who are engaged in Nordplus. Some have been interviewed more than once. Everybody has generously taken their time and contributed to the evaluation, sharing their experiences and ideas.



# Summary

Nordplus is the Nordic Council of Ministers' education and training programme, offering financial support to achieve lifelong learning within all educational sectors in the Nordic and the Baltic countries, including the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland Islands. The programme provides funding for mobility, network and project activities and is open to institutions, organisations and others whose main purpose is education and lifelong learning or who work within the area. Nordplus annually funds around 400 projects with approximately EUR 9 million and consists of the five sub-programmes Nordplus Higher Education, Nordplus Junior, Nordplus Adult, Nordplus Nordic Language and Nordplus Horizontal.

To streamline the structure of Nordplus and to make the sub-programmes uniform and more user friendly, some changes and simplifications were introduced in the current programme period 2012–2016.

In this report, Technopolis Group presents the results of the evaluation of the current programme period. The evaluation has been carried out from January 2014 to August 2015. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide a basis for continuing and modifying Nordplus after 2016. The evaluation thus serves as a basis for future development opportunities in terms of both content and administration.

The current model of the programme committee, a joint committee with two representatives from each Nordplus country, works well for the Nordplus programme. The new model is an improvement compared to the order of the previous programme period, which has led to a more holistic programme management. This is linked to the strengthening of the main co-ordinator function, which has also been successful with respect to coordinating joint tasks and creating a clear administrative link between the administrators in the different sub-programmes, the programme committee and the Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat (NCMS).

When it comes to the strategic development of the programme, it is clear that both the programme committee and the administrators request further input from each other. On the one hand, the administrators ask for stronger strategic guidelines from the members of the programme committee and NCMS. The committee members and NCMS, on the other hand, ask for more strategic initiatives from the administrators. The mismatch should be solved by the main co-ordinator, who is responsible for assisting the programme committee regarding strategic development.

The new joint programme committee has evidently functioned well as a relevant and effective control mechanism. Communication and information between the sub-programmes and the programme committee run smooth. The programme committee has taken action when problems have occurred, for instance regarding Nordplus Nordic Language, where particular actions were decided in order to come to terms with the general drop in the number of applications and the many ineligible applications.

The start-up of the new online application and reporting system Espresso has been successful. Espresso functions much better than the previous system. There is still a need to keep developing the function of retrieving statistics from the system. Good mobility data is needed to see some of the more important results from the programme.

A set of changes have been made in Nordplus Junior since the previous programme period, essentially with the purpose to simplify the application process and make the programme more applicable to users. All evidence suggest that these changes have been well received and have led to a more functional and effective sub-programme, with easier access for users.

Nordplus Nordic Language has undergone more substantial changes and several attempts have been made to deal with perceived problems in the programme. It now seems as the number of eligible applications are decreasing and the quality of the applications are increasing. However, the conditions that need to be met in order to be eligible are still perceived as challenging for many potential users.

The main conclusion is that the actions undertaken so far have been steps in the right direction in order to make the programme both more

relevant and more accessible to the potential users. Different specific programme issues have been brought up and dealt with in a solution-focused manner. It is clear that the programme is well monitored by the main administrator as well as by the overall Nordplus administration. In summary, we would like to stress the importance of continuously clear and extensive information regarding the conditions to participate in this sub-programme.

There is a lack of consistent data regarding how mobility activities have developed during the programme period. The statistics that are available indicate that mobility is working well and that mobility activities occupy a substantial share of the Nordplus funding. Although Nordplus is not formally a mobility programme there is a substantial political and societal interest in mobility activities within Nordplus. Nordplus should continue to support mobility activities and maintain the current priority of enabling as many as possible to receive funding for their respective desired mobility activities.

Many things have been done to improve and better coordinate the marketing and profiling strategy of Nordplus. The efforts so far have been sufficient but this does not mean that continued efforts are unnecessary. It is important to keep developing the profile and to market Nordplus to new potential users. The development of a communication plan is an additional step towards strengthening the profiling and communication in Nordplus.

It is important that Nordplus is not marketed as a complement to Erasmus+. There are unique features and support possibilities within Nordplus compared to Erasmus+ and these could be marketed better. It is of great importance that the relative ease and simplicity to apply to and participate in Nordplus, and to communicate with the administration of Nordplus, is kept and protected. A non-bureaucratic and reasonably informal communications culture is in our opinion a Nordic sign and something that should characterise Nordplus also in the future.

We see no reason for the Nordplus management or NCMS to make drastic changes in Nordplus in relation to Erasmus+, of the kind where existing overlaps are removed or minimised. The wide scope and coverage that Nordplus has today is highly appreciated and effective, and should be kept.

Based on the empirical findings from this evaluation, we recommend the Nordic Council of Ministers and concerned authorities to take adequate measures related to the following points:

- Nordplus should be given political support for yet another programme period. This includes financial support on a level which approximately equals the level provided during the current programme period. The reason for this recommendation is that Nordplus is a most well-functioning programme that meets significant education related needs throughout the Nordic and also Baltic societies, offering opportunities for learning and sharing of experiences from early childhood and onward in life, in the neighbour countries. The restructuring of the programme management has been successful and the programme is now operated in a more efficient and effective way.
- There is a need for information and clarification of who has responsibility for certain tasks. The administrators ask for stronger strategic guidelines from the members of the programme committee and NCMS. The committee members and NCMS, on the other hand, ask for more strategic initiatives from the administrators. The need for information should be handled by the main co-ordinator. There is also some uncertainty regarding area responsibility among the members of the programme committee. Programme committee members need to be clear about their role and expected contribution; generalist or expert; junior-, adult-, higher education-, or Nordic languages area expertise. Such a clarification of the respective responsibilities is likely to improve the strategic discussions and development of Nordplus. Moreover, there are examples of individuals who are appointed as representatives on different levels in the system at the same time, which can create a risk for confused responsibilities. Since the programme committee is responsible before and reports to the Committee of Senior Officials, it is not advised that an individual is a member of both the programme committee and the Committee of Senior Officials at the same time.

- The main co-ordinator should consider any possible improvements regarding how the programme committee meetings could be even better planned and executed. This includes background material and preparations before the meetings, for instance better motivations from the administrators for approval and rejection of applications, which in turn requires improved guidance from the committee to the administrators of what should be prioritised.
- Nordplus Nordic Language is in further need of clarification regarding the purpose of the programme and the rules for applying. There is an uncertainty regarding the instructions for application and the actual evaluation and decision-making regarding applications. We recommend that continued efforts are made to inform and clarify the purpose and the rules for applying in order to minimise the number of ineligible applications. We also recommend that the main co-ordinator, in dialogue with the main administrator, initiates a discussion about a change of the application rules, which specifically targets the interpretation of the Programme Document's phrasing regarding which language applications can be written in. The aim is to even better meet the need for language exchange and mutual sharing of language knowledge in the Nordic and Baltic countries.



# 1. Introduction

This chapter begins with a background description of Nordplus and the evaluation. The chapter further contains a presentation of our assignment including the evaluation questions, the methodology and the data sources used in the evaluation.

## 1.1 Background to the evaluation

Nordplus is the Nordic Council of Ministers' education and training programme, offering financial support to achieve lifelong learning within all educational sectors in the Nordic and the Baltic countries. The programme provides funding for mobility, network and project activities and is open to institutions, organisations and others whose main purpose is education and lifelong learning or who work within the area. Nordplus consists of five sub-programmes aimed to support different target groups, from pre-schools to higher education institutions but also companies and other organisations whose activities are in line with the programme targets.

Nordplus covers the five Nordic countries (including the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland Islands) and the three Baltic countries. With a total budget of approximately EUR 9 million, Nordplus have granted around 400 projects annually during the four first years of the current programme period (excluding the fall application round of 2015).

The original Nordplus programme, founded in 1988, served as a mobility programme in the higher education sector. The following generation of Nordplus was reorganised in 2004 and five sub-programmes replaced the previous eleven actions. By the time of Nordplus' 20th anniversary in 2008, the programme developed into a framework programme and the Baltic countries were invited to participate.

The previous programme period, 2008–2011, was evaluated by NIFU.<sup>1</sup> The evaluation was quite comprehensive and included a thorough investigation of the Nordplus Framework programme, including sub-programmes, and the Nordplus Nordic Languages and Culture programme. The evaluators at NIFU concluded that Nordplus was a well-functioning programme, appreciated among all types of actors involved. The evaluators presented three different scenarios (consolidation, concentration and co-ordination) which outlined possible paths for future development of Nordplus. All three scenarios implied improvements regarding the overall management, the profiling and the dissemination of project results.

The changes implemented in the current programme period are largely in line with the consolidation scenario and some specific changes are based on suggestions in line with the other two. In consideration of consistency and stability, the Nordic Council of Ministers' chose not to propose numerous larger changes in the programme. Instead, the changes that were initiated and later implemented mainly aimed to simplify the programme for the benefit of the users.

In this report, Technopolis Group presents the results of the evaluation of the current programme period of Nordplus, 2012–2016. In comparison to NIFU's extensive evaluation, our assignment has been to review and assess the impact of the specific changes made in the current programme period. A more specific description of our assignment is presented in the following section 1.2.

## 1.2 The evaluation questions

The purpose of the evaluation is to provide a basis for continuing and modifying Nordplus after the current programme period 2012–2016. The evaluation must also be able to serve as the basis for future development opportunities in terms of both content and administration, if such a need is identified.

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<sup>1</sup> Evaluation of Nordplus, TemaNord 2011:521, <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:norden:org:diva-4059>

The evaluation questions concern the changes introduced in the current programme period. Based on the questions presented in the call to tender, Technopolis formulated the following evaluation questions, sorted in three sections:

### **Results and impact**

- Has the simplification of Nordplus Junior had the desired effect?
  - Is there a need for further simplification of the programme?
- How has Nordplus Nordic Language functioned since it was opened up to the Baltic countries and since the introduction of new requirements for participation?
  - Is there a need for further amendments to the programme?
- How is mobility working in Nordplus?<sup>2</sup>
  - How do the mobility activities vary by country?
  - How do the mobility activities vary by sub-programme?
  - What is the mobility pattern in the programme as a whole, and how have the mobility activities developed since the previous evaluation?
  - How do the participants of the programmes perceive the mobility activities?
    - Is funding deemed sufficient?
    - Are requirements for participating in mobility activities at a reasonable level?

### **Organisational and administrative efficiency**

- How does the new programme committee function?
    - Has a joint programme committee led to a more strategic and holistic programme management?
    - Is the programme committee a relevant and effective control mechanism?
- 

<sup>2</sup> Since the evaluation does not directly include the user perspective, we have asked the administrators of their view instead.

- How has the administrative set-up functioned since the strengthening of the main co-ordinator function?
- How has the start-up with the new online application and reporting system, Espresso, functioned, and is there a need to take any further action in this area?

### **Strategic input to further development**

- Is there a need to optimise Nordplus' tools and instruments primarily in Nordplus Junior and Nordplus Higher Education in relation to the EU's Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)?<sup>3</sup>
- Have the systematic and continuous efforts to strengthen the profiling, information and dissemination of results been sufficient?

#### ***1.2.1 Additional instructions to question 7***

In January 2014, EU launched Erasmus+, which replaced LLP (including the sectorial programmes Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig) and the programme Youth in Action. Initially, the intention was to compare Nordplus with the LLP sub-programmes but instead comparisons are made with Erasmus+.

At the start of the evaluation, NCMS provided clarifying instructions regarding the evaluation question of Nordplus' tools and instruments in relation to the EU-programme. The clarifications were:

- What are the similarities and differences between Nordplus and Erasmus+?
- Are there any overlaps or gaps in the activities offered in Nordplus and Erasmus+?
- Are Nordplus and Erasmus+ competing in any way?

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<sup>3</sup> Replaced by Erasmus+ since 01/01/2014.

## 1.3 Methodology

Below, the evaluation methods and data sources used in this evaluation are presented.

### **1.3.1 Desk research**

A large amount of documentation of Nordplus have been investigated. The provided documentation concern for instance activities carried out and decisions taken prior to the current programme period as well as complete information of activities carried out during the current period. The documentation has been of significant importance in following how the work within Nordplus has changed and developed.

### **1.3.2 Interviews**

The evaluation encompass interviews with 37 individuals, covering all eight participating countries (including Åland Islands and the Faroe Islands).<sup>4</sup> During the initial part of the evaluation (spring 2014), interviews were conducted with the main co-ordinator, the main administrators, the information offices and the information points. The initial interviews were of an exploratory nature and provided the evaluation team with an overview of the organisation and the administrative set-up of Nordplus. In connection to the programme committee meetings (spring 2014 and autumn 2014), in-depth interviews with programme committee members were conducted. Early on, interviews were also conducted with administrators working specifically with either Erasmus+ or both programmes.

Due to a change of main administrator in Nordplus Junior in 2015, a group interview was conducted with three individuals at the Swedish Council for Higher Education in January 2015. We have also conducted exploratory interviews and been in continuous dialogue with the NCMS along the course of the evaluation.

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<sup>4</sup> No representative from Greenland has been available for an interview.

When possible we conducted the interviews face to face (in Stockholm or in connection to a meeting), although a majority were conducted by telephone, due to the geographical distance.

### **1.3.3 Participant observation**

The evaluation includes attendance of several meetings and activities held within, or in relation to, Nordplus in 2014 and 2015:

- Attendance at the two programme committee meetings of 2014, the spring meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland (27 May, focusing on grant allocation) and the autumn meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania (19 November, focusing on strategic issues). Attending the committee meetings have provided us with a deepened understanding of the strategy work in Nordplus and the strategic challenges ahead. In addition to the 2014 programme committee meetings, we have also attended the 2015 spring meeting in Torshavn, the Faroe Islands.
- Attendance at the administrator meeting in Mariehamn, Åland Islands, 4–5 September 2014. In addition to gathering useful information concerning the work of the administrators, the meeting entailed group discussions on different themes currently on the agenda in Nordplus and highly relevant for the evaluation at hand. The themes of the discussions were Results of projects and programmes, Assessment of applications, Espresso, Profiling and Nordplus online and Erasmus+ and Nordplus in the future.
- In connection to the programme committee meeting in Vilnius 2014, we attended a seminar with the theme Education and Work Life arranged by the main co-ordinator, the head of the programme committee and the administrators working with Nordplus in Lithuania. The seminar (20 November 2014) was attended by representatives from Nordplus administrators, Nordplus programme committee members, NCMS as well as users and possible users of the different Nordplus sub-programmes.

- Participation at an information meeting held by the Swedish Council for Higher Education in Stockholm, 16 January 2015. The meeting informed existing and potential users of programmes available to support international collaboration and mobility at all educational levels, such as Nordplus and Erasmus+.

All occasions of participant observations, attended by two individuals of the evaluation team, have been of great importance for our understanding of how Nordplus works and how the administration is set up. Altogether, it has enabled us to meet a majority of the people who work with Nordplus in all eight countries, including the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland Islands.

### **1.3.4 Focus groups**

On 4 November 2014, two focus groups were held, one in Vilnius, Lithuania, and one in Tallinn, Estonia. Participants in the focus groups in Vilnius and Tallinn were programme administrators, programme committee members, administrators working with Erasmus+ and some experienced users of Nordplus and/or Erasmus+. The themes of discussion were profiling of Nordplus, mobility activities in Nordplus, the new online reporting system Espresso, simplification of Nordplus Junior and changes in Nordplus Nordic Language. Native speaking Jelena Angelis and Ala Širaliova, led the Vilnius focus group and native speaking Katre Eljas-Taal and Kristel Kosk led the Tallinn focus group.

The discussions in the focus groups were held at programme and international level rather than national level. The aim of the focus groups was to provide information not only useful when analysing the Baltic perspective of the evaluation questions, but on a more general level. The focus group participants work at an international level and successfully discussed the issues at an overall Nordplus level.

A third focus group was held in Copenhagen, 4 December 2014, with staff at the NCMS (Education Team) and was led by Göran Melin and Miriam Terrell. The themes of the discussion were Nordplus Junior, Nordplus Nordic Language, mobility activities in Nordplus, organisa-

tional and administrative efficiency and strategic issues in relation to the further development of Nordplus.

In total, 25 individuals have participated in focus groups, all listed in Appendix B.

### **1.3.5 Interpretation seminar**

On 26 March 2015, an interpretation seminar was held in Copenhagen, Denmark. An interpretation seminar is part of the data collection; it serves as an opportunity to present the results of the evaluation to a selection of key stakeholders, and to get feedback and comments from the stakeholders and the client. The seminar participants are listed in Appendix B.

## **1.4 Structure of the report**

The report begins with a background description of the evaluation, including our assignment and the evaluation questions. The second chapter contains an overview of Nordplus, including the programme structure, management and administrative set-up.

In contrary to the order of the evaluation questions presented in section 1.2.1, we choose to start with the organisational and administrative efficiency perspective in the third chapter (question 4–6), since it concerns the overall function of the programme. Then, we present our observations in relation to the result and impact perspective in the fourth chapter (question 1–3). Subsequently, we report on the evaluation questions concerning strategic input to further development in the fifth chapter (question 7–8), i.e. the profiling of Nordplus including Nordplus in relation to Erasmus+.

In chapter 6, we outline concluding remarks and recommendations as well as our overall reflections on the first three years of the current programme period of Nordplus. Appendix A contains short descriptions as well as application and grant data for each sub-programme, 2012–2015 (only spring application round for 2015). Interviewees, focus group participants and interpretation seminar participants are presented in Appendix B.

## 2. Nordplus and the current programme period 2012–2016

In this chapter, we present an overview of Nordplus, and the present programme period. The programme document, the Nordplus 2012–2016 Handbook, updated in 2014, and the programme website, [nordplusonline.org](http://nordplusonline.org), provide extensive and detailed information and instructions of how to apply to the Nordplus sub-programmes as well as general Nordplus facts. The overview serves as background when answering the evaluation questions throughout the report.

Nordplus allocate approximately EUR 9 million annually to around 400 projects including more than 2,000 organisations annually. The main objectives of Nordplus, 2012–2016, is to serve as a tool

- to strengthen and develop Nordic educational cooperation and contribute to the establishment of a Nordic-Baltic educational region
- to support, develop, draw benefit from and disseminate innovative products and processes in education through the systematic exchange of experiences and best practice
- to contribute to the development of quality and innovation in the educational systems for lifelong learning in the participating countries by means of educational cooperation, as well as cooperating with workplaces, about development projects, exchanges and building of networks
- to promote Nordic languages and culture, as well as mutual Nordic-Baltic linguistic and cultural understanding

- to strengthen the language comprehension for the Nordic languages, especially among children and youth, primarily for Danish, Swedish and Norwegian
- to encourage the interest in, knowledge of, and understanding of the Nordic languages.

## 2.1 Management and administrative set-up

The organisation of Nordplus and the distribution of roles and administrative responsibilities in the current programme period is specified in the programme document, and as specified, the programme is based on a joint administration system that ensures systematic cohesion and holistic quality across all activities within Nordplus.

The Nordplus programme committee consists of two members for each of the five Nordic and the three Baltic countries, one generalist and one expert selected to serve as representatives for one of the sub-programmes. There are no committee members specifically representing Nordplus Horizontal since it aims to support collaboration of organisations within the sectors concerned in the other sub-programmes. The programme committee elects a chair and a deputy chair for one year at a time. During the current programme period, the chair of the programme committee rotates along with the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) and the deputy chair rotates repetitively between the three Baltic countries (Estonia in 2012, Latvia in 2013 and Lithuania in 2014). If necessary, the programme committee can decide to change the rotation of the chair. The NCMS and Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland Islands (two representatives each) are observers of the programme committee. In short, the programme committee are responsible for the choice of projects and allocation of funding as well as contributing to realise the Nordplus general objectives. The committee are also obliged to have an important role in the strategic development of the programme.

The main co-ordinator function, currently held by the Danish Agency for Higher Education (UDS), is positioned between the NCMS, the

programme committee and the Nordplus administration. The overall responsibility of the main co-ordinator is the day-to-day management of Nordplus, striving to fulfil the Nordplus objectives and the actions specified in the programme documents mentioned above. Among other things, this includes:

- Run the daily operation and administration of Nordplus, including setting up meetings with the main administrators and the programme committee.
- Secretary of the programme committee meetings (including preparing documents prior to meetings and reporting notes and results after meetings) and assist the committee in fulfilling its mandate.
- Co-ordination of the main administrators' contributions to the programme committee.
- Contributing to the strategic development of Nordplus, including management of the strategic work among the administrators and the programme committee.
- Systematic work to improve the Nordplus profile and simplification of the programme.
- Managing the efforts to disseminate Nordplus results, including programme conferences and activities.

Nordplus is operated by a national organisation in each country and Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland Islands. The five Nordic countries are main administrators for one sub-programme each and together with the main co-ordinator they form the Nordplus administration. In addition to the main administrators, there are Nordplus information offices in each of the Baltic countries and Nordplus information points in Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland Islands. All national and regional organisations representing Nordplus are responsible for the entire programme in their own country, which includes providing and disseminating information, promoting Nordplus and providing guidance to lo-

cal organisations. Table 1 shows the current national and regional distribution of roles and responsibilities in Nordplus.

**Table 1: Overview of the participating countries' (and regions') current functions and responsibilities within Nordplus**

Function and responsibility	Country/region	Organisation
Main co-ordinator*	Currently Denmark, since 2014	Danish Agency for Higher Education (UDS)
Main administrator Nordplus Junior	Sweden	The Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR)
Main administrator Nordplus Higher Education	Finland	Centre for International Mobility (CIMO)
Main administrator Nordplus Adult	Denmark	Danish Agency for Higher Education (UDS)
Main administrator Nordplus Nordic Language	Iceland	The Icelandic Centre for Research, Rannis
Main administrator Nordplus Horizontal	Norway	Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU)
Information office	Estonia	Archimedes Foundation
Information office	Latvia	State Education Development Agency
Information office	Lithuania	Education Exchanges Support Foundation
Information point	Åland Islands	The Government of Åland, Department for Education and Culture
Information point	The Faroe Islands	University of the Faroe Islands, International Office
Information point	Greenland	The Nordic Institution in Greenland, NAPA

\* SIU held the position as main co-ordinator during 2012 and 2013.

Led by the main administrators, the information offices also participate in processing the applications within each sub-programme (the procedure is further specified in the programme document and the Nordplus Handbook). The information offices also contribute to quali-

ty control and development of the sub-programmes. The information points are only responsible for providing local guidance and information of Nordplus.

Nordplus consists of four sectoral and one inter-sectoral sub-programme, which all vary in terms of size and primary target groups. As mentioned above, the Nordplus Handbook contains comprehensive information and instructions for all sub-programmes. A short description as well as application and grant data for each sub-programme can be found in Appendix A.

## 2.2 Ongoing activities and work in Nordplus

A typical Nordplus year starts with a joint application round for all sub-programmes. The application deadline for all areas of the Nordplus programmes is 1 March every year. Two of the sub-programmes, Nordplus Junior and Nordplus Adult, offer support to preparatory visits. In addition to 1 March, applications for preparatory visits can be submitted in the autumn with a deadline on 1 October. If the deadline occurs on a Sunday/holiday, the deadline is moved to the next working day.

The Nordplus programme committee meetings are held, for one full day, twice a year. The spring meeting takes place in the country holding the chair at the time and the meeting focus on allocation of funds in Nordplus. The location of the autumn meeting, focusing on strategic issues and allocation of funds for preparatory visits, rotates between the three Baltic countries along with the deputy chair position.

In addition to a continuous dialogue between the main co-ordinator and the administrators, three Nordplus consortia meetings are held every year.

A new thing in Nordplus, since 2014, is to hold a joint lunch-to-lunch meeting for all administrators working with the programme (including main co-ordinator, main administrators, co-administrators as well as communication staff). The meetings are planned to take place every other year and in 2014 (4–5 September), the meeting was arranged in Mariehamn, Åland Islands, gathering 28 individuals.

Twice a year, the NCMS is meeting with the organisation holding the main co-ordinator function. The meetings, where the main co-ordinator reports to NCMS, aim to monitor the work of the main co-ordinator according to the planned time schedule for the programme period, to discuss strategic issues and to document and keep track of the work conducted and what remains to be done.

In Nordplus' programme document, it is stated that the administration must organise a minimum of three and a maximum of five conferences between 2012 and 2016. Two have been held by the time of this report; the contact seminar in Stockholm in October 2013 and the seminar on working life in connection to the programme committee meeting in Vilnius, November 2014. A third one is planned to be held in the autumn of 2015, focusing on the current evaluation of Nordplus. The evaluation will serve as a basis for discussion on how Nordplus could and/or should develop in a potential next programme period, after 2016.

# 3. Organisational and administrative efficiency

The following chapter deals with the organisational and administrative processes within Nordplus, with respect to the administrative set-up, the strengthening of the main co-ordinator function and the joint programme committee.

## 3.1 The administrative set-up

At first glance, the Nordplus management structure can be perceived as complicated. Eleven states including Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland Islands, with different roles and different degrees of influence, are involved in the management of five different sub-programmes. The responsibilities are divided into national programme offices, information offices and information points and the organisations working with the Nordplus administration can be both main administrators, co-administrators and main co-ordinator.

Compared to the previous programme period, the current administrative set-up is more streamlined with clear division of responsibilities between the different roles within the administrative organisation. The application procedures and the daily running of the five programmes appear to work well and the administrators interviewed often describe the organisation as flexible, pragmatic and democratic. A typical statement from the administrators working with Nordplus is:

Nordplus has a well-organised and hierarchical structure, but a non-hierarchical communication.

This statement reflects the transparency and simplicity often described in the organisation of Nordplus. Overall, there seems to be a fundamental culture of cooperation within the Nordplus administration, and the people working with the administration is highly appreciated for their engagement and willingness to solve problems that may arise in the daily management of the programme.

Even though it is organisations and institutions that are commissioned the specific responsibilities within the Nordplus organisation, these responsibilities are strongly associated to dedicated individuals working with Nordplus. There is always a risk of loss of embedded experience and organisational competence when building a comprehensive organisation on a few committed and dedicated administrators. A significant result of the new administrative set-up is improved and more systematic documentation of the programme activities, but the need for documentation cannot be emphasised enough. In the way the Nordplus organisation is built up, the co-administrators at the information offices and information points, as well as the users, are highly dependent on the knowledge of the main administrators. This means that a change of main administrator can cause damage in the organisation if the handover process and the documentation of the programme is insufficient.

A majority of the administrators working with Nordplus are also working with other similar programmes. Due to the size of Nordplus, compared to other programmes, Nordplus is often a relatively small part of the administrators' daily work and they express a concern that such circumstances makes it somewhat difficult to significantly influence the work within Nordplus.

## 3.2 The strengthening of the main co-ordinator function

The Nordic Council of Ministers appoints one of the five Nordic main administrators as main co-ordinator for the Nordplus administration. For the period of 2012–2013 SIU in Norway had the role of main co-ordinator and for the period 2014–2016 UDS in Denmark has this role.

As the current programme period started in 2012, the role of the main co-ordinator function was strengthened with increased responsibility, authority and budget. The previous evaluation showed that the responsibility for joint tasks was diluted under the previous management structure, which contributed to long timeframes in the decision making processes. Hence, it was decided that the main co-ordinator function should have a distinct leadership function and the overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of Nordplus, as well as the running of the application and reporting system. Further, the main co-ordinator should monitor activities in the programme in relation to its stated objectives, contribute to the strategic development and profiling of Nordplus and ensure and verify that the results, statistics, experiences and best practise from the programme are disseminated.

During the first two years of the strengthened function (when SIU was main co-ordinator), the main co-ordinator came to focus a lot on developing the new application and reporting system Espresso and the new website nordplusonline.org. These were comprehensive development projects in Nordplus that took a lot of time to implement. Parallel to these projects, the work to establish frameworks and structures for the new programme committee was prioritised and a lot of effort was put into creating transparency and coordination in the administration and application process, while trying to find a common development strategy for the five sub-programmes. Even though the strengthened role meant that some of the responsibility of running the programme was moved from NCMS to the main co-ordinator, the dialogue with NCMS continued to be important and frequent during this period.

Three consortium meetings were held during 2013, which mainly focused on application and reporting procedures in the new system Espresso and planning of the upcoming contact seminar in Stockholm. During the yearly administration meeting, it was decided to change the form of the administrators meeting and invite all administrators working with Nordplus to participate, both co- and main administrators from all sub-programmes. This new administration meeting was, due to its comprehensive and resource intensive nature, decided to take place every second year and replaced the programme specific meetings that were previously held in the autumn.

The transition to UDS as main co-ordinator in 2014 appears to have proceeded without any inconvenience for the Nordplus administration and users. The first year of UDS as main co-ordinator was partly characterised by the transition, primarily regarding the running of Espresso and nordplusonline.org. During the first year, effort was put into strengthening the strategic role of the programme committee, as well as harmonising the administration of the sub-programmes when it comes to specific development initiatives such as the handling of residual funds, statistics and results dissemination.

The new form of administrators meeting that took place in Mariehamn in September 2014, as well as the working life seminar that took place in Vilnius in November 2014, were two steps towards harmonising the administration of the sub-programmes and highlighting common strategic challenges. The administrators meeting focused on different thematic group discussions concerning the running and profiling of Nordplus. The themes discussed were the features and functioning of Espresso, the profiling of Nordplus, assessment of applications, Erasmus+ and Nordplus in the future and results of projects and programmes. The meeting was an appreciated opportunity for the whole administrative organisation to meet and discuss common issues and challenges.

At the programme committee meeting in Vilnius, specific strategic issues and questions of concern were brought up, e.g. concerning Nordplus Nordic Language and minority schools. Some of the issues put forward at the meeting required the committee and the Nordplus administration to sort out unclear parts of the programme objectives and to discuss the overall programme profile. The form of the meeting, an occasion to discuss strategic development in Nordplus, seems to work in an expedient way and the committee members and main administrators have the possibility to raise topics for discussion before the meetings.

The administrators in Nordplus describe the main co-ordinator function as important in its ability to gather the five sub-programmes and make the Nordplus programme more holistic and strategic. The simplicity and accuracy of the communication with the main co-ordinator is also highly appreciated among the administrators and committee members in Nordplus. In interviews, the extensive documen-

tation before and after meetings, as well as the quick and accurate feedback on questions and emails, are especially mentioned as improvements since the strengthening of the main co-ordinator function.

The long timeframes in the decision making processes, which was one of the problems highlighted in the previous evaluation, seem to have shortened and the decision making process is, on the contrary, now perceived as effective and efficient by the people working with Nordplus. The impression is that questions discussed during one meeting is followed-up during the next meeting and information is transferred between the different functions in the organisation in an adequate way.

### 3.3 The programme committee

Since 2012, Nordplus has one joint programme committee. The programme committee is both the decision making body for granting funds through all sub-programmes and has the responsibility to monitor and control the development of each sub-programme and of Nordplus as a whole. The committee also has an important role in the strategic development of the programme. The role and responsibility of the programme committee is stated in the programme document.

The joint programme committee is the result of recommendations made in the evaluation of the previous programme period.<sup>5</sup> Although the evaluation overall painted a positive picture of the Nordplus administration, it stated that parts of the Nordplus programmes and organisation could be made clearer and more user-friendly. A need for simplification of the management structure was identified and a joint programme committee was proposed instead of separate committees responsible for one sub-programme each.

Most frequently cited as an advantage of the joint programme committee is the administrative benefits of the merger of the five sub-programme committees into one. The comprehensive administration

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<sup>5</sup> Evaluation of Nordplus, TemaNord 2011:521, <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:norden:org:diva-4059>

and time consuming structure of the committees during the previous programme period was one of the main arguments for the introduction of the joint programme committee. Before the merger there were a lot of people involved in the different committees and many of them were only to a small extent involved in the programme except for the committee meetings once a year. Another argument for a joint committee was an increased possibility of strategic work in the programme. With committees working in different ways and with their own agendas the possibilities to formulate and achieve common strategic goals in the Nordplus programme was limited.

The main objection towards a joint committee was, and still is, the loss of competence when five committees are merged into one. To avoid losing too much competence in the joining of the committees, it was decided that each country should be represented by two members – one expert and one generalist. The expert shall, according to Nordplus programme document, possess specific competence in one of the areas represented by the sub-programmes, while the other member can be freely selected. Which area each country is responsible for has been agreed upon between the states participating in Nordplus. Today the areas of responsibility are divided as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Areas of expertise per country, in the programme committee**

Area of expertise	Country responsible
Junior	Norway, Finland, Lithuania
Higher education	Sweden, Estonia
Adult	Iceland, Latvia
Nordic languages	Denmark

Despite the formalised division of responsibility areas in the committee, the function of separate areas of expertise is rather unimportant and not always familiar to the committee representatives, according to the interviews. Consequently, it has led to a situation where no one feels specifically responsible when certain issues or strategic discussions related to the different sub-programmes are brought up at the committee meetings. It is important that the distribution of the areas of expertise and responsibility in the committee are clear to everyone involved. This

can facilitate the programme committee's contributions regarding strategic discussions concerning the sub-programmes.

During the programme period, it has been a high turnover of members in the programme committee. Even during the time frame of this evaluation have many representatives been replaced. The high turnover of members in the committee causes a certain lack of continuity that affects the possibility for the committee to fulfil its mission in a negative way.

During 2014, a number of initiatives have been taken to support the programme committee in its work and strategic role. For example, a common assessment template for applications was introduced. The template was developed to facilitate for the committee members to compare the material between the sub-programmes by making the material from the administrators more uniform.

At the programme committee meeting in Torshavn, May 2015, the main administrators also presented the grant proposals in a partly new and more uniform way. The graphs now have fewer dimensions but are easier and clearer. From now, the grant proposals also include sections on quality and funding, the distribution of applications between the different score levels as well as analysis of newcomers. The uniform presentations were well appreciated by the programme committee members. The main-coordinator carefully invited the committee members to ask questions and comment on the proposals.

Since the start of the current programme period, the committee has been informed of three good examples of applications per sub-programme at the spring committee meeting. In 2014, it was also decided that the committee should be given three examples of successful projects from each programme. These projects are selected with regard to their quality and to NCM's policy priorities and such successful examples were presented at the administrators meeting in the autumn 2014. Both the applications and the project examples can be used by the committee members to profile Nordplus in a national context. The main co-ordinator has had the task to form a guide for all new committee members. The guide is under development and is supposed to help the committee in its role and facilitate the handover when a committee member is replaced.

The need to further strengthen the strategic development of Nordplus has been pointed out in the interviews conducted. When it comes to the strategic development of the programme, it is clear that both the programme committee and the administrators request further input from each other. On the one hand, the administrators ask for stronger strategic guidelines from the members of the programme committee and NCM. The committee members and NCMS, on the other hand, ask for more strategic initiatives from the administrators. In practical terms, the members of the committee emphasise the need for more comprehensive material before the committee meetings, where strategic consequences of different choices in the allocation of funds between the applications are pointed out. At the same time, the administrators find it hard to develop this kind of material without having a clear instruction considering the strategic priorities of NCM and the programme committee.

### 3.4 Espresso

Prior to the application round of 2013, a new application and reporting system was introduced for Nordplus as the old system ARS was replaced by Espresso. The new system has proven to be a great improvement compared to the old one, which caused both users and the administrators problems due to lack of functionality. The previous evaluation showed that both users and administrators were positive about the actual concept of the old system and liked the idea of an online portal capable of coping with multiple functions including applications, information and analysis. However, ARS had major operational problems and more or less collapsed in the start-up phase. Even though the system worked relatively well towards the end of the previous programme period it was suggested by the main administrators to replace the system in 2012. Prior to the application round in 2013 the new system was in place.

SIU is the supplier of Espresso, which seems to facilitate the administration, monitoring and follow-up of the system. To have SIU as the supplier of the system has proven to function well, especially since

SIU was also the main co-ordinator of Nordplus during the start-up period of the system. The administrators working with Espresso states that help and need for adaptations and modifications of the system has only been a phone call away and SIU has been perceived as a helpful supplier of the system. In addition to inadequate follow up and support from the supplier, using the previous system ARS was problematic in terms of insufficient ICT competence needed by the main co-ordinator and the main administrators to be able to run the programme. With Espresso and in-house competence and resources at SIU, this is not a problem anymore.

It has also proven helpful for SIU to know the weaknesses of the former system while building Espresso. The ambition has been to keep the concept of the old system but to make it more user-friendly, flexible and adaptable. Several statements from administrators working with Espresso indicate that the system is a great improvement compared to the old one. The administrators' impression is that the users of Nordplus also find Espresso more user-friendly than the old system. There was of course a risk embedded in changing the system concerning the users' "learning curve" and the fact that the users had got used to the old system. However, many administrators claim they received fewer phone calls concerning the new system in the start-up phase than they expected. This shows that SIU succeeded in its ambition to create a system with the same concept as the old one, where the users recognised themselves and easily could find their way. Overall, the administrators experience much fewer phone calls from users in need of support in the application and reporting process with Espresso compared to the old system.

Since 2014, the co-administrators have extended access to Espresso. This means that all administrators in Nordplus now have access to the same information concerning the applications and reporting in Espresso. The only difference between the main and co-administrators is that the co-administrators are not able to approve or reject applications. The extended access was a highly appreciated change, meaning that the co-administrators at the information points and information offices are no longer forced to refer the user to the main administrators or give the users second hand information when they have questions concerning

their application. However, the administrators point out that increased access also means that it is important that all administrators have the same understanding concerning what information should be given to the users, during for example the application round.

In 2014 UDS and SIU closed an agreement concerning the running of Espresso. Due to the fact that SIU developed the system and have in-depth knowledge concerning the system's setup and functionality, it was decided that SIU will continue to be responsible for running Espresso on a contract that will be renegotiated once a year.

Although the current application and reporting system appears to work much better than the former, there are still need for improvements and developments of the system. For example it is not yet possible to extract all the statistics needed from the system. This is a well-known deficiency and something that SIU is currently working on.

# 4. Results and impacts of changes in specific sub-programmes

## 4.1 The simplification of Nordplus Junior

With the ambition to make Nordplus Junior more user friendly in terms of easier to apply for, to use and to administrate, a number of changes were made in 2012. Other desired effects of the changes made were an increase in the number of network and development projects and, to some extent, an increase in the total number of applications in the programme.

Further described below, the changes were

- reduced level of required self-financing
- introduction of the lump sum principle
- extension of project duration for pupil and class exchange.

According to administrators in Nordplus Junior, great emphasise was put on the programme during the first two years of the current programme period. As the applicants in Nordplus Junior require more guidance and support compared to the other sub-programmes, due to less experience of applying for funding, the changes required a significant amount of work and effort of the administrators to make the changes as smooth as possible for the programme users.

One of the changes meant reducing the level of required self-financing in project- and networking activities from 50 to 25%, meaning that the Nordplus funding now can make up for a maximum of 75% of

the total activity expenses. Working hours in direct connection to the project or network can be included as self-financing.

Another important change was the introduction of the lump sum principle, which generally means that left over funding from mobility grants can be spent on other project expenditure without any requirement of financial reports. Expressed in number of approved “mobilities” (one roundtrip between partners in a project), the decision of a granted application includes specific information of how much is allocated to cover travel costs. If the actual travel costs are less than the sum allocated, the beneficiary is free to use the leftover money for other costs within the project, such as accommodation.

Prior to 2012, users of Nordplus Junior requested to extend the one-year period of exchanges, since it was often difficult to conduct the exchange in both ways in such a short time. For both class and pupil exchange, it is now possible to apply for an extended period of implementation. The application should include specifications on whether the activities will be carried out within one, two or a maximum of three years. The administrators thought that the applicants would prefer the three-year alternative, instead many have chosen a project duration of two years.

In addition to these changes, there have been continuous efforts to enhance and simplify the programme in terms of adaptation to support the applicants and users. The handbook has been improved to better fit with Espresso and during the first years of the programme period, the main administrator produced a user guide for Espresso, specifically targeting the applicants in Nordplus Junior.

According to the administrators, the simplifications of the programme have been well received among both users and administrators. The number of phone calls and e-mails from users in need of support and guidance with their application or further information concerning the programme has decreased.

It also seems like the changes and efforts described above have been successful in terms of increased number of applications to network and development projects. The number of applications has increased from nine in 2013 to eighteen in 2014. However, it is too early to talk about a

trend of increased network and development applications based on the result of two application rounds.

Applications to Nordplus Junior are replied with one out of three possible decisions; fully granted, partly granted or rejected. During the administrators' decision process, an application can get a maximum of 20 points but projects with a minimum of 15 points are considered as fully feasible. The number of applications receiving between 15 and 20 points have increased. Although the simplifications of Nordplus Junior has resulted in improved quality of the applications and a reduced need of guidance during the application process as well as a slight increase in granted applications, the administrators stress that it will be difficult to manage more applications with the resources currently available. Unfortunately, 35 applications of good quality were rejected in 2014 due to lack of funds.

An additional possible simplification of Nordplus Junior has been mentioned in interviews with administrators. Currently, grants that exceed EUR 14,000 are disbursed at two occasions, 80% when the contract is signed and 20% when the final report has been approved. A similar rule was removed from Nordplus Higher Education and administrators of Nordplus Junior have suggested that it should be removed from this programme as well. Removing this regulation would facilitate the work of the administrators. The risk of not receiving the users' final reports is assessed to be low and hence an inadequate motivation to keep this rule.

## 4.2 Changes in Nordplus Nordic Language

In 2012, the language programme was for the first time fully integrated in Nordplus. The programme was named Nordplus Nordic language and culture until 2011, and the integration meant that the culture perspective of the programme was left out. At the same time, the programme was also opened up for the Baltic countries to participate. They had been able to participate in the other sub-programmes since 2008; in 2012 they got access also to the language programme.

The main intentions of implementing the changes in Nordplus Nordic Language were to clarify the programme towards both users

and administrators, to simplify the administrative setup, to strengthen the Nordic languages outside the Nordic countries and to reach more beneficiaries.

In the previous programme period, and as emphasised in NIFU's evaluation, the previous language programme mainly consisted of a language component and a mobility component. To clarify the profiles of both the new Nordplus Nordic Language and the already established Nordplus Junior, the mobility part of the language programme (targeting both pupils and teachers) was transferred to Nordplus Junior. Due to the transfer, DKK 2 million was earmarked for language projects in Nordplus Junior mobility activities.

In 2012, new criteria for funding were introduced in the programme as well, meaning:

- Only allowing applications from organisations, not individuals.
- Compensation for salary can no longer be applied for.
- New requirements of co-funding of projects (prior to 2012, project costs could be covered to 100%).
- Each application requires a minimum of three project partners from three different countries/areas, whereof one coordinating institution and at least two collaboration partners.

In light of the changes described above, Nordplus Nordic Language is the sub-programme that was subject to most changes in the current programme period. Consequently, the programme suffered quite radically in the beginning of the programme period. The number of applications decreased significantly, which was partly due to the transfer of mobility funding to Nordplus Junior, but also due to difficulties in understanding what the new conditions meant. Both already existing and new users found it hard to adapt to the new programme profile and criteria, which led to a majority of the submitted applications being ineligible. The circumstances mentioned caused the programme committee to decide on an additional application round in the fall of 2012 and encouraged the administrators to contact the submitters of ineligible applications with this information. To fully understand what caused the

large share of ineligible applications, the user perspective, regarding the programme set-up and the information provided by Nordplus administrators, must be taken into consideration.

The changes implemented have had an undesirable effect on both the development of number of applications in the programme and how it works in general. The negative effects were mainly recognised in the beginning of the programme period and initially, some of the administrators in Nordplus were quite sceptical towards implementing such comprehensive changes in the programme. Although the administrators, in general, consider the changes logical and somewhat necessary for the programme.

There is a clear decrease in the number of applications since the changes were introduced in the current programme period. The 15 applications submitted in 2015, resulting in ten granted applications, is remarkably low. In spite of the substantial decrease in applications during this programme period, an overall conclusion is that the changes within the programme were needed and in a long-term perspective appreciated by administrators working in Nordplus. Some of the administrators refer to the change of criteria for funding (minimum number of project participants) as “forced collaboration”, with a positive connotation. The changes in the programme were aimed to increase collaboration between the Nordic and the Baltic countries, primarily regarding the Nordic languages. The previous programme made it possible to, as an individual, apply for 100% funding and use the funding to compensate for salary costs. The programme is no longer available for individuals nor local research, and language projects that do not include collaboration can be applied for within some of the other sub-programmes. According to the main administrator’s annual report for 2014, joint efforts have been initiated to streamline and clarify the regulations for compensating salary costs.

The changes have necessitated comprehensive efforts from the programme administrators and the overall Nordplus administration in terms of providing information and supporting already existing users of the programme as well as new potential users concerning what is required for an application to be eligible. The Nordplus administration have since 2012 focused on how to increase the number of applica-

tions in the programme. Continuous information activities have been conducted on a national level in each country/area. For example, participation of Swedish organisations as co-ordinators has been low and, in line with the main purpose of the programme, a specific effort targeting Swedish schools was made in 2013 to increase the number of applications.

In 2013, the national administrators involved in Nordplus Nordic Language successfully conducted systematic information activities in each country to reduce the amount of ineligible applications to the programme. Clarified and extended information and instructions, as well as the new online application and reporting system Espresso, contributed to a decrease of the number of eligible applications and an increase of the general quality of all applications. Profiling and marketing activities of Nordplus are further described in chapter 5.

11% of all applications in Nordplus and 29% of the applications in Nordplus Nordic Language were a result of the contact seminar held in Stockholm in 2013. There was also a major interest to participate in the Nordplus Nordic Language contact seminar held in Reykjavik in January 2015 (further described in section 5.2). The 15 applications submitted to the programme in 2015 is an exceptionally low number. This makes it somewhat unclear of whether the location of the contact seminar positively affected the interest to participate rather than the programme itself. It is still too early to see the full effect of the contact seminar.

Since there was only one ineligible application in 2014, the changed conditions to participate in the programme seem to have reached the users. The main administrator has the ambition to hold annual teaching seminars for Icelandic participants aimed to help them apply to the programme, which has been well received by the users. The main administrator has even tried to market the programme by phone, but the programme objective is narrow which makes it difficult to attract applicants. According to the main administrator, the quality of the applications has increased consistently between 2012 and 2015, with a successful focus on children and young people. In the grant proposal from the main administrator in 2014, it is argued that the increased quality of applications and low number of ineligible applications (one, due to insufficient number of partners) is a result of the improved and extended

information in the Nordplus Handbook as well as comprehensive efforts to inform about the new conditions in the programme.

As mentioned above, the administrators of the sub-programme were a bit sceptical in the beginning when the changes were made as they feared a disturbance in the programme. Some are still sceptical towards the criteria of three partners, since it makes it hard for a large part of the potential users to participate. Prior to the current programme period, the Baltic countries showed an interest to participate in the language programme. Their request was met in the current programme period along with the integration of the language programme in Nordplus.

At the administrators meeting in Mariehamn 2014, where all administrators working with Nordplus participated, one of the sessions was about Nordplus Nordic Language. The Baltic countries' participation in Nordplus was discussed, among other things, at the session. It is clear that they feel excluded from the language programme. In the application round of 2015, no applications were submitted from the Baltic countries or Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland Islands. The issue is also put forward in the main administrator's annual report of 2014.

There are certain circumstances that make it difficult for the Baltic countries to feel fully involved in the programme and they continuously request clarifications. Both the Baltic representatives of the programme committee as well as the Baltic administrators have emphasised the difficulties, some wonder why they were included in the programme at all. They consider the language programme as an important potential tool, which can help to increase and improve the knowledge of Nordic languages in their countries. Although, their perception is that the programme is not equally available to them.

Issues or concerns within the Nordplus Nordic Language programme have been a topic for discussion at all occasions of participating observation conducted in the evaluation and according to the interviews, it has been so since 2012. The programme concerns a politically sensitive issue and changes or adjustments of conditions are often, not very surprisingly, met by strong opinions and objections.

Attempts are made to better integrate the Baltic countries in Nordplus. Recent examples of consideration of the language issue are that

the documentation regarding Nordplus Nordic Language, sent out prior to the two most recent programme committee meetings in Vilnius 2014 and Torshavn 2015, was provided both in English and Scandinavian language. In Torshavn, the Baltic committee members were also able to take part of the Nordplus Nordic Language discussions through an interpreter, which they highly appreciated. These examples are relatively simple ways of how to improve the integration of the Baltic countries in the programme and make them feel more included.

The handbook currently requires applications in Nordplus Nordic Language to be written in a Scandinavian language, which makes it specifically difficult for the Baltic countries to write applications and participate in the programme. The Programme Document<sup>6</sup> states:

All work within the framework of Nordplus Nordic language is conducted exclusively in the Scandinavian languages.

In the handbook, this has been interpreted as that applications can only be written in a Scandinavian language. However, this is not what the Programme Document explicitly states; the drafting is open to interpretations that can make it possible for users to write applications in English.

At the programme committee meeting in Torshavn, May 2015, an extra application round during the fall was decided. A remaining challenge in Nordplus Nordic Language, expressed by administrators and programme committee members, is to frame the programme and clarify its main purpose to existing and potential participants in all countries and areas involved. In interviews and participating observations performed within the evaluation, the administrators have mentioned that the name of the programme indicates an openness that in reality is not fully compatible with the conditions to participate.

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<sup>6</sup> Nordplus 2012–2016, Programme Document, p. 4.

### 4.3 Mobility activities in Nordplus

This chapter aims to answer the evaluation question concerning how mobility is working in Nordplus and contains a description of the different mobility activities offered in the three sub-programmes, including target groups. For each of the three sub-programmes we also present the data currently available on how the use of mobility activities has developed, covering 2012–2014.

Nordplus supports educational cooperation within and between the Nordic and the Baltic countries. Nordplus is not formally a mobility programme, although mobility grants constitute a comprehensive part of the annual funding. According to interviewees, approximately 70% of the funding within Nordplus Junior and Nordplus Higher Education, and 20% within Nordplus Adult, is allocated to mobility activities.

The interviews conducted in this evaluation, with both administrators and programme committee members, reveals that there is a substantial national and political interest in how the programme mobility activities work and have developed. According to some of the interviewees, politicians specifically request data on mobility activity participants, regarding e.g. country of origin, type of organisation, age of the users and direction of exchange etc.

As stated in the Nordplus programme document 2012–2016, mobility grants are awarded within three of the five Nordplus sub-programmes: Nordplus Junior, Nordplus Higher Education and Nordplus Adult. Applications for Nordplus mobility grants must be submitted by an institution or an organisation and require an agreement of at least one submitting part and one host institution/organisation. In Nordplus mobility activities, documented internal co-financing is not required. However, it is clear in the handbook that self-financing should be foreseen, since the grants do not cover daily allowances and extra costs for hotels and traveling.

The question regarding making mobility data more available and usable in the Nordplus programme has been discussed since the previous programme period. It seems mobility data is desired from the ministries in the Nordplus countries, since it is looked upon as a clear and straight forward result from the Nordplus programme. This view is

shared by the administrators and committee members, who also look at it as an opportunity of marketing Nordplus. However, it has been emphasised by administrators that the purpose of more mobility data must be clear and resources must be set aside to administer the data.

The Nordplus administration is currently working on adjusting the online application and reporting system Espresso to enable data extraction. Since it is not yet possible to extract mobility data and statistics from Espresso, we have used statistics presented in the administrators' annual reports and the reports of the application rounds for 2012, 2013 and 2014. In addition, the main administrators of the three sub-programmes have provided some data of mobility activities granted during the current programme period so far.

#### **4.3.1 *Mobility in Nordplus Junior***

Mobility activities within Nordplus Junior are designed to bring together children, pupils, teachers and other pedagogical/academic staff in order to cooperate, teach, work or study in one or more of the Nordplus countries. There are five different activities of mobility in Nordplus Junior; preparatory visits, class exchange, pupil exchange- theoretical studies, pupil exchange – work experience and workplace based learning and teacher and staff exchange.

The mobility activities in Nordplus Junior require cooperation between at least two partners from two different Nordplus countries. Class exchange and pupil exchange (both types) can be carried out during a period of maximum three years, while preparatory visits and teacher and staff exchange can be carried out during a period of one year. The funding of mobility activities in Nordplus Junior are based on maximum rates, but are submitted to individual calculations for each application. Support for mobility activities is allocated according to the set maximum Fixed Travel Rates for the following mobility activities:

- Preparatory visits (teachers only).
- Class exchange (including accompanying teacher).

- Pupil exchange – theoretical studies (including accompanying teacher).
- Pupil exchange – work experience and workplace based learning (including accompanying teacher).
- Teacher and pedagogical/academic staff exchange.

Since 2013, it is possible to apply for a two or three year mobility project. The two year alternative has proven to be a popular choice, with 17 applications in 2013 and 18 in 2014. Compared to eight (2013) and three (2014) applying for a three year project duration.

The number of granted mobility activities (not applications) within Nordplus Junior has developed as presented in Table 3. Class exchange is, by far, the activity most applied for and granted within Nordplus Junior. The number of granted applications for mobility with a Nordic languages perspective has been relatively low since 2012. Although a small increase from 7% of the total amount of granted mobility activities in 2012 to 14% in 2014. The low number of granted preparatory visits in 2013 is due to the contact seminar that replaced the fall application round.

**Table 3: Granted mobility activities in 2012, 2013 and 2014, Nordic languages projects specified**

Granted activities	2012 (Nordic languages)	2013 (Nordic languages)	2014 (Nordic languages)
Preparatory visits	16 (0)	11 (3)	38 (6)
Teacher and pedagogical/academic staff exchange	16 (2)	29 (2)	33 (3)
Pupil exchange – work experience and workplace based learning	13 (1)	23 (1)	20 (0)
Class exchange	84 (6)	54 (7)	53 (11)
Total	129 (9)	117 (13)	144 (20)

Source: The 2013 and 2014 annual reports from the main administrator of Nordplus Junior.

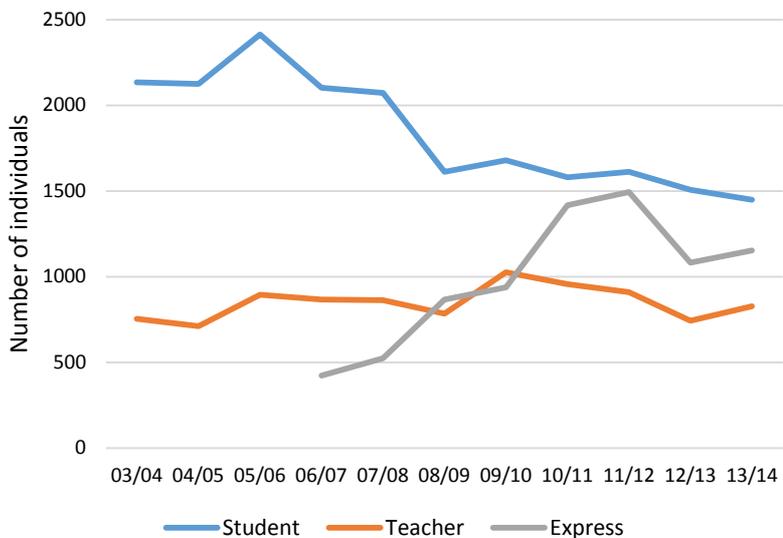
### **4.3.2 Mobility in Nordplus Higher Education**

The mobility in Nordplus Higher Education is defined as individual student or teacher exchanges between the partner institutions in a network. The mobility activities supported by Nordplus Higher Education are student mobility, teacher mobility, express mobility and intensive courses.

Student mobility grants are awarded for full time studies or work placements lasting from one to 12 months in another Nordplus country. Teacher mobility grants are awarded for teachers employed at HEIs in a Nordplus country for exchanges in another Nordic or Baltic country. The exchange can include teaching, tutoring, development of teaching material and so on. It is also possible to use these grants for activities connected to work placements and collaboration with the labour market. Students can be awarded express mobility grants for shorter exchange. The minimum duration of express mobility is one week. Intensive courses can be seen as a mobility activity if the course takes place in another country. Awards can be granted to intensive courses lasting between one week and one month. Intensive courses must include student and teachers from at least three different countries in order to receive grants. Compared to 2012/2013, participation in intensive courses has increased in 2013/2014 and about two thirds of the participants are female.

As shown in Figure 1, student mobility is the most popular type of mobility within Nordplus Higher Education and a majority apply for study visits within student mobility. In 2013/2014, 79% were granted for study visits within student mobility and 21% for work placement. Within express mobility, 94% were granted for studies and 6% for work placement. Teacher exchanges mostly concern the activity teaching (62% in 2013/2014).

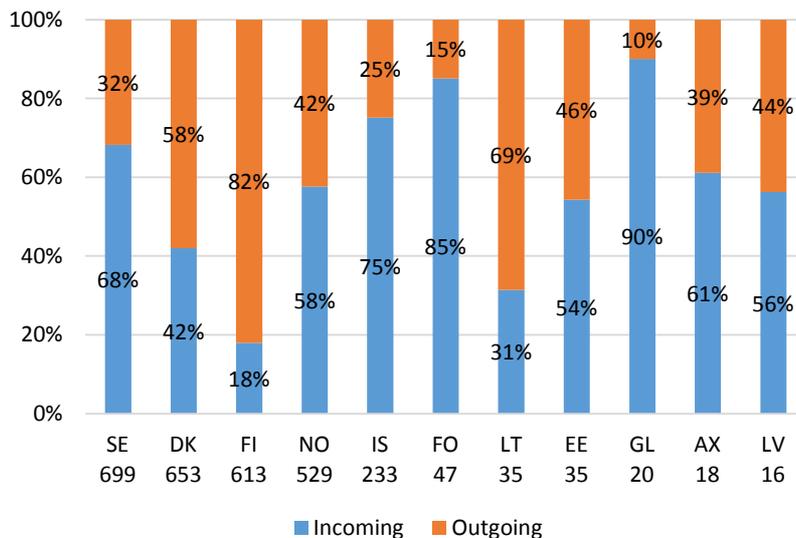
**Figure 1: Trends in student, teacher and express mobility in Nordplus Higher Education 2003/2004–2013/2014**



Source: Data provided by the main administrator of Nordplus Higher Education.

When comparing incoming and outgoing student mobility (one to twelve months) between countries/areas in 2013/2014, the numbers show that Greenland, the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Sweden had far more incoming students than outgoing, as presented in Figure 2. In contrary, Finland and Lithuania had far more outgoing than incoming students. Denmark, Norway, Estonia and Latvia show the most balanced exchange.

**Figure 2: Incoming and outgoing students per country/area in 2013/2014, bar labels show percentages of incoming and outgoing mobility**



1. The total number of incoming and outgoing students are presented under the country/area abbreviations.

Source: Data provided by the main administrator of Nordplus Higher Education.

In 2013/2014, 33% of all the 1,449 incoming students (Student mobility 1–12 months) went to Sweden, 19% went to Denmark and 21% to Norway (Iceland 12; Finland 8; the Faroe Islands 3; Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Greenland and Åland Islands 1 each). Concerning outgoing students, 35% came from Finland, 26% came from Denmark and 15% from Sweden and Norway each (Iceland 4; Lithuania 2 and Estonia 1).

Since the introduction of express mobility, the number of mobility activities has increased within Nordplus Higher Education. It has also made it easier for more individuals to use the opportunity to go abroad. It is specifically beneficial for those who, for e.g. family or economic reasons, cannot stay abroad for several months.

According to the 2013 application round report, and mentioned in interviews with Nordplus administrators, the level of funding for mobility activities is dissatisfactory to the users. However, competition for funds and the relatively constant programme budget level makes it difficult to increase individual grants, regardless of an increased number of applications.

Returned grants have been raised as a concern within Nordplus Higher Education regarding mobility activities. The construction of the application structure, meaning allocating grants to a defined group of students, has caused problems in cases when already granted students change their minds about conducting the activity. Due to the defined and often small group of students, it is difficult to reallocate the grant to another individual. To achieve a more efficient use of funding, i.e. avoid unused funds and transfers to the following year, the funding of mobility activities within Nordplus Higher Education in 2014 were allocated over several rounds. This means that the unused funds from 2014 can be used already in 2015.

The gender balance among the users within Nordplus Higher Education in 2013/2014 was uneven; a majority of the users of student (74%), teacher (62%) and express mobility (63%) were female. The numbers are similar to those for 2012/2013. A majority of the users of Nordplus Higher Education are active within the social sciences and humanities as well as medical sciences.

### **4.3.3 *Mobility in Nordplus Adult***

In Nordplus Adult, grants for mobility can be awarded for preparatory visits, exchange of teachers and other pedagogical staff and exchange of adult learners. For preparatory visits, grants are given for travel and accommodation for joint meetings with the aim to prepare and plan a common project within Nordplus Adult. Teachers and other pedagogical staff can receive grants for training courses as well as self-organised study or teaching stays in relevant institutions or organisations in another Nordic or Baltic country. Grants can also be awarded adult learners for exchange between Nordic or Baltic institutions and organisations. Mobility projects in Nordplus Adult require cooperation between

at least two organisations from at least two countries and may not last longer than one year.

According to the 2012, 2013 and 2014 annual reports from Nordplus Adult main administrator, the programme is traditionally a project programme rather than a mobility programme. This is believed to be due to the working and study conditions of adult teachers and learners as well as their family situation, which often makes them less motivated for exchange abroad. However, it seems that the number of applications for mobility grants have increased slightly during the programme period. During 2012, the distribution between applications for mobility activities and project activities were similar to previous years and approximately 35% of the applications in the programme concerned mobility activities. In 2013, the focus on mobility slightly increased and 47% of the applications in the programme concerned mobility activities, which accounted for approximately 25% of the total amount of grants available in the programme. Table 1 shows the numbers for 2014.

**Table 4: Application for mobility activities in Nordplus Adult 2014**

Programme action	No. applications	Applied		Proposed	
		Grant (KEUR)	No. applications	Grant (KEUR)	No. applications
Preparatory visits (PV)	12 (12 %)	44 (1 %)	4 (10 %)	9 (1 %)	
Teacher and staff mobility	20 (19 %)	182 (5 %)	11 (27 %)	118 (10 %)	
Adult learner mobility	10 (10 %)	282 (7 %)	3 (7 %)	76 (6 %)	
Total	42 (41 %)	508 (13 %)	18 (44 %)	203 (17 %)	

Source: The 2014 annual report from the main administrator of Nordplus Adult.

In 2014, mobility applications accounted for 41% of the total amount of applications to Nordplus Adult. Although this is a slight decrease from 2013, it is still a large amount, especially compared to the previous programme period, when mobility applications accounted for around 25% of the applications in the programme. In 2014, the least applied mobility action in Nordplus Adult was adult learner mobility and the most applied mobility activity was teacher and staff mobility.

## 5. Profiling and communications

The following chapter deals with the profiling and communications in Nordplus. The evaluation has partly focused on the Nordplus profile and tools and how the programme can be optimised in relation to Erasmus+, and partly on how Nordplus continuously has worked on strengthening its profile through different communication efforts during the programme period.

### 5.1 Nordplus and Erasmus+

As part of the present evaluation, a report concerning the overall similarities and differences between Nordplus and Erasmus+ has been presented. The following section will handle the question if Nordplus should optimise its tools and instruments in relation to the EU-programmes.

The Erasmus+ programme was launched 1 January 2014 and replaced the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) and the Youth in Action programme. In short, the change meant that LLP's four sub-programmes and complementing programmes were merged into one programme called Erasmus+. When changing the structure of the programme, some activities that used to be included in the LLP programme were removed and the new structure is built on three key actions: learning mobility of individuals (key action 1), cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practise (key action 2) and support for policy reforms (key action 3).

The administrators working with Nordplus do not regard Erasmus+ or other EU-programmes as competitors to Nordplus. Quite on the contrary, they seem to look at the different programmes as complementary

instruments to increase internationalisation and exchange in the Nordic and Baltic countries. Nordplus' main advantages compared to Erasmus+ still seem to be the simplicity in the application and reporting procedure and the low threshold for contacts with administrators, partly due to the low language barriers. Nordplus and Erasmus+ are more or less targeting the same users and are to a large extent funding similar projects and activities. However, Erasmus+ covers all European countries and Nordplus is much smaller than Erasmus+ when it comes to programme budgets. Also, the individual funding in Erasmus+ is often higher than in Nordplus. According to Nordplus administrators, users seem to think that the level of support in Nordplus is low compared to Erasmus+ and other programmes supporting international mobility, especially when it comes to mobility activities in higher education.

There are also differences in the activities offered in the two programmes. Nordplus offers activities in both Nordplus Higher Education and Nordplus Junior that are not available in Erasmus+. To simplify, one could say that all mobility activities in higher education exceeding two months overlap in Nordplus and Erasmus+, while express mobility, with a minimum duration of one week, is one of the unique activities in Nordplus. Express mobility has been a great success in Nordplus Higher Education and according to administrators, express mobility is a highly appreciated activity among the users and an activity that makes Nordplus more attractive as a programme. Express mobility has increased the possibility for internationalisation for individuals who for different reasons cannot stay abroad for a longer period of time, and it contributes to the Nordplus objectives by increasing the number of unique exchange students that can benefit from internationalisation. Another activity offered in Nordplus Higher Education, that is not available in Erasmus+, is intensive courses. In Erasmus+ it is only possible to arrange an intensive course within the framework of another project.

Also in Nordplus Junior, Nordplus offers activities that are not available in Erasmus+. Class exchange is one such activity that was removed in the EU-programme in the transition from LLP to Erasmus+. Mobility as a separate activity in elementary schools is now only available for teachers and other staff in Erasmus+, while in Nordplus, mobility activities are offered also to pupils. Class exchange has always been the dom-

inant activity in Nordplus Junior and makes up the largest share of activities in every application round. Due to the geographical closeness and the low threshold of contact and communication within the Nordplus programme, many administrators find class exchange in elementary schools a very suitable and important activity in the Nordplus programme. Preparatory visits is yet another activity that no longer have a separate budget in Erasmus+ but is still offered as an activity in Nordplus. Grants for preparatory visits are supposed to fund travel expenses for institutions that wish to establish cooperation in a project and meet and prepare an application for Nordplus Junior grants. According to administrators, preparatory visits are highly appreciated among both users and administrators and improve the quality of both the applications submitted and the projects that are conducted within the frames of the programme. In addition, activities corresponding to Nordplus Horizontal and Nordplus Nordic Language are not available in Erasmus+. However, projects including inter-sectoral collaboration and language exchange can still be granted within Erasmus+.

Because of the simplicity in application and reporting procedures and low thresholds in the Nordplus programme compared to Erasmus+, many administrators in Nordplus seem to regard the programme as a first step towards internationalisation. Administrators working with both programmes see a tendency that users apply for Nordplus grants to develop ideas and networks, and then move from Nordplus to Erasmus+ in search for wider mobility activities with better funding. Administrators highlight the importance in enhancing Nordplus' intrinsic value and not only assess Nordplus in relation to other programmes, but instead emphasise what is unique with Nordplus.

## 5.2 Profiling and marketing

The profiling of Nordplus and the dissemination of project results, has been, and is a continuous challenge within the programme. Both previous evaluations of the Nordplus Framework Programme (until 2011) have pointed this out as an area of improvement. The evaluation of the previous programme period noted that the work on strategies concern-

ing information dissemination in Nordplus had been relatively fragmented during the years preceding the evaluation, despite the fact that yearly information strategies had been drawn up. According to that evaluation, marketing actions were carried out, but there were no systematic and coordinated input into the work of marketing and the initiatives that were taken were not rigorously followed up. Prior to the current programme period, it was therefore decided to put more emphasis on the profiling and marketing of Nordplus. The profiling activities planned for during this programme period primarily focused on information and dissemination of results, development of statistics and the web-portal [www.nordplusonline.org](http://www.nordplusonline.org), as well as an increased focus on contact seminars.

During the programme period, the website [nordplusonline.org](http://nordplusonline.org) has been developed and the new version was launched in February 2014. When developing the website, both users and administrators answered a user survey which formed the basis for the new website design and structure. The user survey revealed that there was a need to make the website more user friendly, to focus more on dissemination of project results and to provide better information on ongoing projects. To make the website more user friendly, the structure of the website was made to fit the different target groups, and central tools such as Espresso and the Nordplus handbook were made visible and more accessible. Further, Espresso was directly linked to the website and all projects that had received funding in the programme were made available in a searchable project database. At the same time, examples of good results have been given a prominent place on the website, which strengthens the website's role as a disseminator of project results. Another new feature of the website is the partner search, where users can register to find a partner for a Nordplus project; a similar service called eTwinning is offered by Erasmus+. In addition, a step-by-step guide of how to apply for funding in Nordplus and how to use Espresso is provided online.

Following the ambition to make the Nordplus programme more systematic and transparent, for both users and administrators, the handbook has been simplified and standardised for the different sub-programmes. The improvements of the handbook have contributed to

the profiling of Nordplus by ensuring that all Nordplus users receive the same information about the programme.

Contact seminars were identified as an important tool for information dissemination prior to the current programme period. The purpose of a contact seminar is to bring representatives from various institutions and countries together to form partnership and plan for Nordplus projects and applications. In 2013, a joint contact seminar for all sub-programmes was for the first time organised and held in Stockholm. The contact seminar was organised on initiative of the programme committee and two main themes were identified: Interaction between education and working life and Nordic languages. 180 institutions and organisations were selected to participate in the seminar, among which 55% had not participated in Nordplus activities before. The seminar was highly appreciated and 85% of the participants claimed that the seminar led to a start of an actual project plan. In order to follow up on the results of the contact seminar, all applicants in the application round of 2014 were asked to report if their application was a result of the contact seminar in 2013. It turned out that approximately 10%, or 68 applications resulted from the seminar.

In January 2015, a contact seminar in the Nordplus Nordic Language programme was organised in Reykjavik in order to increase the number of applicants in the programme. The interest for the seminar was high and 150 unique organisations applied to participate, among which 40 organisations were selected. The result of the seminar is yet to be seen, since the analysis of the 2015 application round is not yet completed at the time of writing. However, it is important to consider the long-term perspective of these kinds of seminars. Partnership and plans that develop during these types of seminars might not lead to a project application during the application round closest in time, but can still lead to a Nordplus application in the future.

When UDS took over as main co-ordinator they took over the responsibility for the communication strategy of Nordplus. During 2014, a communications officer was appointed in order to further coordinate and systemise the work of marketing the programme. The work started with a group discussion at the administrators meeting in Mariehamn 2014, with the purpose to gather information and experience of market-

ing activities taking place in the different Nordplus countries today. The need for marketing and communication, resources available and the main obstacles for communication and marketing of Nordplus were also brought up during the discussion.

Typical activities that are carried out today are conferences, seminars, information meetings and brochures targeting various potential user groups. Most countries also have their own websites where they typically make information concerning all international exchange programmes available. Common to all countries is that most activities are intensified just before the application rounds and that the administrators feel that their resources for marketing activities are rather limited. During the first half of 2015, a survey to all administrators in Nordplus is planned to be conducted as a supplement to the discussions that took place in Mariehamn 2014. The answers to the survey aim to form a basis for continued work with a more unified communication strategy between the different countries and sub-programmes in Nordplus. A Nordplus communication plan for 2015 and 2016 was presented by the main coordinator at the programme committee meeting in Torshavn, 2015.

A lot of different marketing activities are carried out in and around Nordplus, but in different ways and to a different degree in the participating countries. At the programme committee meeting in Torshavn, May 2015, the need of a more uniform and consistent flow of information was discussed. It was recognised that the Nordic countries need to work more on an information kit such as e.g. as roll-ups and fact sheets, which are already used in the Baltic countries.

The spring application round for 2015 resulted in a record of 3,921 involved organisations, an increase of 5% compared to 2014. Although a decrease in total number of applications, compared to the spring application round of 2014, the record of involved organisations shows that Nordplus has become more well-known.

One suggestion of a marketing tool, brought up by an administrator, is to issue a certificate or a diploma to everyone that has participated in a Nordplus programme. These certificates could be issued to both individuals and to schools or organisations. When unemployment is high and building a good resume is of high importance, this could be

an appreciated measure that could also work as a way of marketing the programme.

Nordplus is often marketed together with Erasmus+ and other EU-programmes. This strategy is used by the administrators to get around scarce marketing resources, while still reaching out to as many potential users as possible. The strategy has both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it is a good thing that Nordplus is being marketed when the intended users are already addressed or gathered. On the other hand, Nordplus might end up in the wake of the other programmes, with a risk that the users do not absorb information concerning the added value Nordplus can provide in relation to the other programmes.



## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

At this point, we may refer the reader to the evaluation questions that are listed in section 1.2. We have quite carefully focused on these questions through the evaluation. This means that the findings of the evaluation concern administration, organisation, some changes in selected sub-programmes, profiling and communication, and Nordplus' relation to Erasmus+. The evaluation has not been targeting the results, outcome or effects of Nordplus. To investigate this further would be a truly interesting and exciting undertaking, but that is beyond the scope of this evaluation. Below, the findings of this evaluation are concluded before a set of recommendations are provided.

### 6.1 Administration and organisation

The general conclusion is that the current model of the programme committee, a joint committee with two representatives from each Nordplus country, works well for the Nordplus programme. The new model is an improvement compared to the order of the previous programme period, which has led to a more holistic programme management. This is linked to the strengthening of the main co-ordinator function, which has also been successful with respect to coordinating joint tasks and creating a clear administrative link between the administrators in the different sub-programmes, the programme committee and NCMS.

When it comes to the strategic development of the programme, it is clear that both the programme committee and the administrators request further input from each other. On the one hand, the administrators ask for stronger strategic guidelines from the members of the pro-

gramme committee and NCMS. The committee members and NCMS, on the other hand, ask for more strategic initiatives from the administrators. The mismatch should be solved by the main co-ordinator, who is responsible for assisting the programme committee regarding strategic development. It should be noted that the main co-ordinator has indeed initiated strategic work in order to better link the respective sub-programmes to each other and to strengthen the profile of Nordplus.

There has been a relatively high turnover of programme committee members, and this in combination with lack of area responsibility has undermined the strategic work of the committee and lowered the “strategic level” of the discussions during the programme committee meetings. In 2014, it was decided for the main co-ordinator to develop a guide for all new committee members. The guide is supposed to help the committee in its role and facilitate the handover when a committee member is replaced. It needs to be clear in the guide which responsibility area each of the committee members have – and what purpose that responsibility has. For example, a committee member with a certain area responsibility needs to be able to “lift” the strategic discussions under their specific area – and feel the responsibility.

The new joint programme committee has evidently functioned well as a relevant and effective control mechanism. Communication and information between the sub-programmes and the programme committee run smooth. The programme committee has also taken action when problems have occurred, for instance regarding Nordplus Nordic Language, where particular actions were decided in order to come to terms with the general drop in the number of applications and the many ineligible applications.

Else, the evaluation has revealed a highly transparent organisation where it is easy to follow documentation and decisions that have been made during the programme period. This transparency has been praised by many interviewees.

### **6.1.1 Espresso**

The start-up of the new online application and reporting system has been successful. Espresso clearly functions much better than the previous system. There is still a need to keep developing the function of retrieving statistics from the system. In this respect, it is important that effort is spent on specifying what statistics that are actually needed and for what purpose it should be used, not least in order not to overwhelm the administrators with requests for statistics only because it is suddenly easy to retrieve them. Good mobility data is needed to see some of the more important results from the programme.

The need for some sort of common document to the administrators concerning what is appropriate and not to communicate towards the users during the application rounds has been discussed since all administrators recently have been provided with full access to Espresso.

## **6.2 Changes in Nordplus Junior and Nordplus Nordic Language**

A set of changes have been made in Nordplus Junior since the previous programme period, essentially with the purpose to simplify the application process and make the programme more applicable to users. All evidence suggest that these changes have been well received and have led to a more functional and effective sub-programme, with easier access for users. It remains to be seen if this early positive view will prevail.

Nordplus Nordic Language has undergone more substantial changes and several attempts have been made to deal with perceived problems in the programme. It now seems as the number of eligible applications are decreasing and the quality of the applications are increasing. However, the conditions that need to be met in order to be eligible are still perceived as challenging to many potential users.

The main conclusion is that the actions undertaken so far have been steps in the right direction in order to make the programme both more relevant and more accessible to the potential users. Different specific programme issues have been brought up and dealt with in a solution-

focused manner. It is clear that the programme is well monitored by the main administrator as well as by the overall Nordplus administration.

There is still an in-built discrepancy in the name of the programme (Nordic Language) and the actual rules for participating. To many users, it is simply difficult to understand what the purpose is with the programme and how they can participate, and many perceive that the programme promises more than it actually holds. The instructions say that it is primarily for Scandinavian languages, which of course means that any other Nordic language is after all also welcome and included in the programme. Still the applications need to be written in a Scandinavian language. The requirement that a project needs to contain three parts (including at least one Nordic country/area) is also a barrier towards using the programme for many. Not least the Baltic countries have expressed that they do not understand how they can participate and use the programme under these conditions. From what we can find in the project database for 2014, only one approved application contained Baltic participants; two schools in Lithuania and in Estonia.

Den litauiske skolen skal utvikle sin kunnskap ved å arbeide med norske språk og lære det som et tredje fremmedspråk på skolen. Estiske og islandske skoler kommer til å fortsette å lære elevene det danske språket som et resultat og erfaring med tidligere kulturprosjekter.

(Excerpt from the project abstract).

The two Baltic schools, one “gymnasium” and one “pro-gymnasium”, are thus to learn (teach?) Norwegian and Danish respectively. This is an example of a potentially promising usage of the programme but at the same time question marks could be raised regarding how the actual learning of the Scandinavian languages should be arranged at the Baltic schools.

We are well aware of the fact that many language oriented exchanges or other types of projects need not be directed only to the Nordic Language programme but can just as well apply for funding in any of the other sub-programmes. In summary, we would like to stress the importance of continuously clear and extensive information regarding the

conditions to participate in the programme. This refers not least to the specific rules for applying, as described in section 4.2.

### 6.3 Mobility

There is a lack of consistent data regarding how mobility activities have developed during the programme period. The statistics that are available indicate that mobility is working well and that mobility activities occupy a substantial share of the Nordplus funding. We have not found any indication or pattern of decreasing mobility activity or any other circumstances that would require special action to be taken. But, for a certified picture of the mobility pattern in each sub-programme and by country/area, more detailed and complete data need to be able to retrieve from Espresso.

Although Nordplus is not formally a mobility programme there is a substantial political and societal interest in mobility activities within Nordplus. In line with some of the main objectives of Nordplus, which are to contribute to lifelong learning and educational cooperation between the Nordic countries as well as the establishment of a Nordic-Baltic educational region, the programme should continue to support mobility activities and maintain the current priority of enabling as many as possible to receive funding for their respective desired mobility activities.

### 6.4 Profile and communications

Profiling has been the focus of many previous programme periods – and one conclusion is that a continued focus on strengthening the Nordplus profile and information and results dissemination is needed. We can also conclude that many things have been done to improve and better coordinate the marketing and profiling strategy of Nordplus. The efforts so far have been sufficient but this does not mean that continued efforts are unnecessary. It is important to keep developing the profile and to market Nordplus to new potential users. The development of a commu-

nication plan is an additional step towards strengthening the profiling and communication in Nordplus. However, there is a need to develop indicators related to results and success of the profiling.

## 6.5 Nordplus and Erasmus+

The programmes are and should be complementary. At the same time, Nordplus should not only function as a programme to use when Erasmus+ is not offering anything better, but should emphasise its advantages compared to the EU-programmes. It is important that Nordplus is not marketed as a complement to Erasmus+. Nordplus can function as a first step towards internationalisation through other programmes like Erasmus+ for some applicants, which is completely legitimate and even an indicator of success, but it should not solely be seen as an “entrance programme”. There are unique features and support possibilities within Nordplus compared to Erasmus+ and these could be marketed better.

It is of great importance that the relative ease and simplicity to apply to and participate in Nordplus, and to communicate with the administration of Nordplus, is kept and protected. A non-bureaucratic and reasonably informal communications culture is in our opinion a Nordic sign and something that should characterise Nordplus also in the future. In fact, this could be a characteristic or an ethos that is clearly communicated to potential users and presented as an advantage with Nordplus: a support programme where the administration is as informal and pragmatic and flexible as can be, a programme which is designed to meet the needs of the users.

We see no reason for the Nordplus management or NCMS to make drastic changes in Nordplus in relation to Erasmus+, of the kind where existing overlaps are removed or minimised. The wide scope and coverage that Nordplus has today is highly appreciated and effective, and should be kept. A certain pluralism of funding possibilities for the users is healthy, and there is thus no need to feel concern regarding overlaps with Erasmus+ or other similar support schemes. On a general note, what is problematic to many users, is when activities are

only partly funded by a support instrument, resulting in the necessity for the user to find complementary funding in order to carry out the project. Any support instrument that funds a certain activity or project, should fund it fully.

## 6.6 Recommendations

While the conclusions above contain reflections and some suggestions for change that we think would deserve to be further discussed and considered, we end this report with a set of distinct recommendations.

Based on the empirical findings from this evaluation, we recommend the Nordic Council of Ministers and concerned authorities to take adequate measures related to the following points:

- Nordplus should be given political support for yet another programme period. This includes financial support on a level which approximately equals the level provided during the current programme period. The reason for this recommendation is that Nordplus is a most well-functioning programme that meets significant education related needs throughout the Nordic and also Baltic societies, offering opportunities for learning and sharing of experiences from early childhood and onward in life, in the neighbour countries. The restructuring of the programme management has been successful and the programme is now operated in a more efficient and effective way.
- There is a need for information and clarification of who has responsibility for certain tasks. The administrators ask for stronger strategic guidelines from the members of the programme committee and NCMS. The committee members and NCMS, on the other hand, ask for more strategic initiatives from the administrators. The need for information should be handled by the main co-ordinator. There is also some uncertainty regarding area responsibility among the members of the programme committee. Programme committee members need to be clear about their role

and expected contribution; generalist or expert; junior-, adult-, higher education-, or Nordic languages area expertise. Such a clarification of the respective responsibilities is likely to improve the strategic discussions and development of Nordplus. Moreover, there are examples of individuals who are appointed as representatives on different levels in the system at the same time, which can create a risk for confused responsibilities. Since the programme committee is responsible before and reports to the Committee of Senior Officials, it is not advised that an individual is a member of both the programme committee and the Committee of Senior Officials at the same time.

- The main co-ordinator should consider any possible improvements regarding how the programme committee meetings could be even better planned and executed. This includes background material and preparations before the meetings, for instance better motivations from the administrators for approval and rejection of applications, which in turn requires improved guidance from the committee to the administrators of what should be prioritised.
- Nordplus Nordic Language is in further need of clarification regarding the purpose of the programme and the rules for applying. There is an uncertainty regarding the instructions for application and the actual evaluation and decision-making regarding applications. We recommend that continued efforts are made to inform and clarify the purpose and the rules for applying in order to minimise the number of ineligible applications. We also recommend that the main co-ordinator, in dialogue with the main administrator, initiates a discussion about a change of the application rules, which specifically targets the interpretation of the Programme Document's phrasing regarding which language applications can be written in. The aim is to even better meet the need for language exchange and mutual sharing of language knowledge in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

# Sammanfattning

Nordplus är Nordiska ministerrådets utbildningsprogram som erbjuder ekonomiskt stöd för att uppnå livslångt lärande inom alla utbildningssektorer i de nordiska och de baltiska länderna, inklusive Färöarna, Grönland och Åland. Programmet finansierar mobilitet, nätverk och projekt och är tillgängligt för institutioner, organisationer och andra aktörer vars främsta syfte är utbildning och livslångt lärande eller som arbetar inom området. Nordplus finansierar årligen omkring 400 projekt med cirka nio miljoner euro och består av de fem delprogrammen Nordplus Högre utbildning, Nordplus Junior, Nordplus Vuxen, Nordplus Nordiska språk och Nordplus Horisontal.

För att strömlinjeforma strukturen i Nordplus och göra delprogrammen enhetliga och mer användarvänliga har vissa förändringar och förenklingar införts i den nuvarande programperioden 2012–2016.

I den här rapporten presenterar Technopolis Group resultaten av utvärderingen av den innevarande programperioden. Utvärderingen har genomförts från januari 2014 till augusti 2015. Utvärderingen syftar till att utgöra underlag för en fortsättning och modifiering av Nordplus efter 2016. Utvärderingen tjänar alltså som en grund för framtida utvecklingsmöjligheter vad gäller både innehåll och administration.

Den nuvarande formen för programkommittén, det vill säga en gemensam kommitté med två representanter för varje land som ingår i Nordplus, fungerar bra för programmet. Programkommitténs nya form har lett till en mer holistisk ledning av Nordplus och är en förbättring jämfört med den föregående programperioden. Förstärkningen av huvudkoordinators roll har lett till en bättre samordning av gemensamma uppgifter och en tydligare administrativ koppling mellan administratörerna i respektive delprogram, programkommittén och Nordiska ministerrådets sekretariat (NMRS).

När det gäller den strategiska utvecklingen av programmet är det tydligt att både programkommittén och administratörerna efterfrågar

ytterligare bidrag från varandra. Å ena sidan önskar administratörerna tydligare strategiska riktlinjer från medlemmarna i programkommittén och NMRS. Å andra sidan önskar kommittémedlemmarna och NMRS att administratörerna bidrar med mer strategiska initiativ. Denna obalans bör åtgärdas av huvudkoordinatören som är ansvarig för att bistå programkommittén vad gäller strategisk utveckling av Nordplus.

Den nya gemensamma programkommittén är bevisligen väl fungerande som relevant och effektiv kontrollmekanism. Kommunikation och information mellan delprogrammen och programkommittén fungerar smidigt. Programkommittén har vidtagit åtgärder när problem har uppstått, till exempel när det gäller Nordplus Nordiska språk, där särskilda åtgärder beslutades i syfte att komma till rätta med den allmänna nedgången i antalet ansökningar och det stora antalet ogiltiga ansökningar.

Införandet av det nya webbaserade ansöknings- och rapporteringssystemet Espresso fungerade bra och systemet är långt mer tillfredställande än det föregående. Det finns emellertid fortfarande ett behov av att utveckla systemet vad gäller vissa funktioner, så som att extrahera statistik. Data om mobilitet är viktigt för att kunna påvisa några av de viktigaste resultaten av programmet.

Under nuvarande programperiod har ett antal förändringar gjorts i Nordplus Junior med det huvudsakliga syftet att förenkla ansökningsprocessen och göra programmet mer användarvänligt. Allt tyder på att dessa förändringar har mottagits väl och att de har lett till ett mer funktionellt och effektivt delprogram, mer tillgängligt för användarna.

Nordplus Nordiska språk har genomgått mer omfattande förändringar och flera försök har gjorts för att ta itu med upplevda problem i delprogrammet. Antalet ogiltiga ansökningar förefaller minska och kvaliteten på ansökningarna ökar. Kriterierna för att delta i delprogrammet upplevs dock fortfarande som svåra att uppfylla för många potentiella användare. Den huvudsakliga slutsatsen är att de åtgärder som hittills vidtagits har varit steg i rätt riktning för att göra delprogrammet både mer relevant och mer tillgängligt för potentiella användare. Olika delprogramrelaterade frågor har tagits upp och hanterats på ett lösningsfokuserat sätt. Det är tydligt att programmet är väl bevakat av huvudadministratören samt av den övergripande administrationen av Nordplus. Samman-

fattningsvis vill vi betona vikten av kontinuerlig, tydlig och omfattande information om villkoren för att delta i detta delprogram.

Det råder brist på kompletta och enhetliga uppgifter om hur mobilitet har utvecklats under programperioden. Den statistik som finns tillgänglig tyder på att mobilitet fungerar väl och att utbytesverksamhet upptar en stor del av Nordplus medel. Även om Nordplus inte formellt är ett utbytesprogram finns det ett betydande politiskt och samhälleligt intresse för utbytesverksamhet inom programmet. Nordplus bör fortsätta att stödja mobilitet och behålla den nuvarande prioriteringen av att så många som möjligt ska få stöd för den utbytesverksamhet som önskas.

Mycket har gjorts för att förbättra och bättre samordna marknadsförings- och profileringsstrategin inom Nordplus. Ansträngningarna har hittills varit tillräckliga men det betyder inte att ett fortsatt arbete är överflödigt. Det är viktigt att fortsätta utveckla programmets profil och marknadsföra Nordplus till nya potentiella användare. Kommunikationsplanen är ytterligare ett steg mot att stärka profilering och kommunikation i Nordplus.

Det är viktigt att Nordplus inte marknadsförs som ett komplement till Erasmus+. Det finns unika egenskaper och stödmöjligheter inom Nordplus jämfört med Erasmus+ och dessa kan marknadsföras på ett bättre sätt. Det är av stor vikt att den relativa lätthet och enkelhet som råder när man vill söka till och delta i Nordplus, samt i kommunikationen med programadministrationen, bibehålls och skyddas. En icke-byråkratisk och rimligt informell kommunikationskultur är enligt vår mening ett nordiskt signum och något som ska präglade Nordplus också i framtiden.

Vi ser ingen anledning för programledningen eller NMRS att göra drastiska förändringar av Nordplus i förhållande till Erasmus+, av det slag där befintliga överlappningar avlägsnas eller minimeras. Den bredd som Nordplus har idag är uppskattad och ändamålsenlig, och bör bevaras.

Utifrån de empiriska resultaten i denna utvärdering rekommenderar vi Nordiska ministerrådet och berörda myndigheter att vidta lämpliga åtgärder gällande följande punkter:

- Nordplus bör ges politiskt stöd för ännu en programperiod. Detta inkluderar ekonomiskt stöd på en nivå som ungefär motsvarar den innevarande programperioden. Anledningen till denna rekommendation är att Nordplus är ett mycket väl fungerande program som tillmötesgår betydande utbildningsrelaterade behov i hela Norden och även de baltiska länderna. Nordplus erbjuder möjligheter till lärande och utbyte av erfarenheter från tidig barndom och vidare i livet, i grannländerna. Omstruktureringen av programledningen har varit lyckosam och programmet drivs nu på ett mer effektivt och ändamålsenligt sätt.
- Det finns ett behov av information och klargöranden kring vem som har ansvaret för vissa uppgifter. Administratörerna önskar tydligare strategiska riktlinjer från medlemmarna i programkommittén och NMRS. Kommittémedlemmarna och NMRS, å andra sidan, önskar mer strategiska initiativ från administratörerna. Behovet av information bör hanteras av huvudkoordinatören. Det finns också en viss osäkerhet när det gäller områdesansvar bland medlemmarna i programkommittén. Medlemmarna bör vara införstådda med vilken roll de har och vad de förväntas bidra med, om de är generalister eller experter, och vilket område de har särskilt ansvar för, junior, vuxen, högre utbildning eller nordiska språk. Ett sådant förtydligande av respektive ansvarsområden kommer sannolikt att förbättra de strategiska diskussionerna och utvecklingen av Nordplus. Dessutom finns det exempel på personer som utsetts till företrädare på olika nivåer i systemet parallellt, vilket riskerar att skapa förvirring vad gäller ansvar. Eftersom programkommittén är ansvarig inför och rapporterar till ämbetsmannakommittén, är det inte lämpligt att en person är medlem i både programkommittén och ämbetsmannakommittén samtidigt.
- Huvudkoordinatören bör överväga eventuella förbättringar när det gäller hur programkommitténs möten kan planeras och genomföras. Detta inkluderar underlag och förberedelser inför mötena, exempelvis mer utförliga motiveringar från administratörerna för godkännande och avvisande av ansökningar, vilket i sin tur kräver en förbättrad och tydligare vägledning från

kommittémedlemmarna gentemot administratörerna kring vad som ska prioriteras.

- Det finns ytterligare behov av att förtydliga syftet med delprogrammet Nordplus Nordiska språk, samt kriterierna för att delta. Det råder en oklarhet mellan instruktionerna för att ansöka och den faktiska utvärderingen och beslutsfattandet av ansökningarna. Vi rekommenderar att fortsatta ansträngningar görs för att informera och förtydliga syftet och ansökningsreglerna för att minimera antalet ogiltiga ansökningar. Vi rekommenderar också att huvudkoordinatören, i dialog med huvudadministratören, initierar en diskussion om en ändring av ansökningsreglerna, som särskilt avser tolkningen av programdokumentets formulering om vilka språk som ansökan kan skrivas på. Syftet är att ännu bättre möta behovet av språkutbyte och ömsesidigt utbyte av språkkunskaper i de nordiska och baltiska länderna.



# Appendix A

## The sub-programmes and application and grant data 2012–2015

The specific objectives and target groups for each sub-programme are presented below. The grant proposals for 2015 spring application round serves as sources for the application and grant data. Data for Junior and Adult only include the spring application round.

### Nordplus Higher Education

Nordplus higher education is the biggest programme in Nordplus in terms of funding. In addition to the overarching objectives of Nordplus, four specific objectives of the Nordplus Higher Education programme have been formulated

- to link higher education institutions (HEIs) in the participating countries, private as well as public, offering recognised tertiary level qualifications, establishing networks for exchanging and disseminating experiences, best practices and innovative results
- to contribute to cooperation between HEIs and other institutions or organisations involved in or having vested interests in the area of higher education
- to contribute to cooperation between HEIs and the labour market
- to facilitate high quality individual academic or workplace based exchanges for students and teachers in Nordplus countries.

Nordplus Higher Education is divided into mobility-, project- and network activities. The mobility activities include student mobility, teacher mobility and express mobility. The project activities include intensive courses, joint study programmes and development projects within higher education. HEIs together with other organisations involved in higher education can act as applicants in the programme and the collaboration can be established either as a network or as a project partnership.

Number of applications/granted applications and applied amount/granted amount for Nordplus Higher Education 2012–2015 is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Statistics for Nordplus Higher Education 2012–2015**

Applications/granted activities	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total number of applications	246	228	229	230
Applied amount (MEUR)	13.6	12.7	13.1	13.1
Number of granted applications	184	190	184	191
Granted amount (MEUR)	3.9	4	4.5	4.2

## Nordplus Junior

In addition to the overall objectives of Nordplus, Nordplus Junior have five additional and specific objectives:

- Strengthening and developing cooperation between schools (including kindergarten/preschool).
- Promoting the development of quality, creativity and innovation in education.
- Promoting Learning for all by developing equal opportunities in inclusive education.
- Strengthening the Nordic languages and promoting knowledge and understanding of Nordic and Baltic languages and cultures.
- Promoting cooperation between schools (including kindergarten/preschool) and working life.

Nordplus Junior supports activities within three different areas: mobility, project and network. All activities carried out in the programme must correspond with the main objectives of Nordplus as well as with at least one of the programme specific objectives of Nordplus Junior. The target groups of Nordplus Junior are pupils, teachers, and other pedagogical staff in preschools, primary schools, lower and upper secondary schools, vocational schools, cultural schools and organisations and institutions involved with working in, or having strong interest in, the area of school education. However, organisations and institutions can only be partners in a project coordinated by one of the other target groups.

Number of applications/granted applications and applied amount/granted amount for Nordplus Junior 2012–2015 is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Statistics for Nordplus Junior 2012–2015\***

Applications/granted activities	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total number of applications	245	238	232	194
Applied amount (MEUR)	6.8	6	6.6	4.2
Number of granted applications	127	110	120	134
Granted amount (MEUR)	2.4	2.4	2.9	2.5

\* Only the spring application round is included.

## Nordplus Adult

The Nordplus Adult programme is The Nordic Council of Ministers' programme for adult learning. The programme specific objectives are

- to strengthen adults' key competences and recognition of adults' informal and non-formal learning
- to support adult education and learning to meet the challenges of modern citizenship
- to strengthen the link between adult learning and working life.

Nordplus Adult supports various forms of cooperation and exchange between Nordic and Baltic adult learning institutions, through mobility and collaboration projects. The mobility projects include preparatory visits, exchange of teachers and pedagogical staff and exchange of adult learners. The collaboration projects include thematic network, development projects and mapping projects. Nordplus Adult addresses all aspects of adult learning and the types of organisations that can take part are educational institutions, associations, businesses, NGO's, and research-based institutions with experience and expertise in adult learning.

Number of applications/granted applications and applied amount/granted amount for Nordplus Adult 2012–2015 is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Statistics for Nordplus Adult 2012–2015\***

Applications/granted activities	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total number of applications	104	83	104	119
Applied amount (MEUR)	3.5	2.9	3.8	4.4
Number of granted applications	50	43	41	52
Granted amount (MEUR)	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2

\* Only the spring application round is included.

## Nordplus Horizontal

Nordplus Horizontal has three programme specific objectives

- to support cross-sectoral network and project activities in the field of education
- to support innovative projects spanning traditional categories and sectors, which can tackle new, different, broader or more complex issues and challenges
- to support project and network activities that aim to contribute to the development of quality and innovation in the educational systems for lifelong learning in the participating countries.

Nordplus Horizontal is an inter-sectoral programme and supports collaborative project activities crossing the traditional educational sectors. The programme supports activities such as workshops, seminars for exchanging experiences, conferences, studies and analyses, statistic projects, projects aiming to exploit educational research, production of teaching material, establishments of new courses modules as well as publication, distribution and experience in education. Nordplus Horizontal is open for all participants that are involved in developing the education field in a lifelong learning perspective. Examples of organisations are public or private organisations, working life organisations as well as authorities and bodies on political or administrative levels.

Number of applications/granted applications and applied amount/granted amount for Nordplus Horizontal 2012–2015 is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Statistics for Nordplus Horizontal 2012–2015**

Applications/granted activities	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total number of applications	71	57	52	47
Applied amount (MEUR)	4.1	3	2.8	2.6
Number of granted applications	22	25	32	23
Granted amount (MEUR)	0.9	0.9	1.2	1

## Nordplus Nordic Language

Nordplus Nordic Language has two specific programme objectives:

- Supporting activities that improve language comprehension of the Nordic languages, primarily Danish, Norwegian and Swedish, among children and young people.
- Developing materials, methods and strategies for improving comprehension of the Nordic languages on all levels within the educational systems.

Nordplus Nordic Language support activities such as development of methods for including neighbour language learning in school, cooperation on development of school curricula, projects that inform about Nordic languages, conferences, seminars, publications, language technology projects. Also development and publication of educational aid and teaching materials as well as development projects and activities focusing on development and improvement of pedagogical and didactic methods.

As a general rule, only participants from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, including Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland Islands, are entitled support from the programme. However, the programme activities can include participants from other countries/areas if it is considered necessary or helpful for the execution of the project. Examples of organisations that can participate in the Nordplus Nordic Language programme are pre-schools, schools, universities, research institutions, NGOs, networks and private companies.

Number of applications/granted applications and applied amount/granted amount for Nordplus Nordic Language 2012–2015 is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Statistics for Nordplus Nordic Language 2012–2015**

Applications/granted activities	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total number of applications	44	24	28	15
Applied amount (MEUR)	1.6	1	1.2	0.7
Number of granted applications	20	17	18	10
Granted amount (MEUR)	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.4

# Appendix B

## Interviewees, focus group and interpretation seminar participants

### Interviewees

Anders Ahlstrand	The Swedish Council for Higher Education
Teresa Aidukienė	Ministry of Education and Science, Lithuania
Holger Arnbjerg	University of the Faroe Islands
Bodil Aurstad	The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat
Óskar Eggert Óskarsson	Icelandic Centre for Research
Vilija Gelažauskaitė	Ministry of Education and Science, Lithuania
Åsa Grönlund	Government of Åland
Peter Grønnegård	Danish Agency for Higher Education
María Kristín Gylfadóttir	Icelandic Centre for Research
Kerstin Hagblom	The Swedish Council for Higher Education
Jessica Hintze	The Swedish Council for Higher Education
Anne Hunderi	Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education
Anne Hutt	Archimedes Foundation, Estonia
Cecilie Høysæter	Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education
Tiina Jaksman	Estonian Ministry of Education and Research
Peter Johansson	Ministry of Education and Research, Sweden
Karin Kaikkonen	The Swedish Council for Higher Education
Mara Katvare	Ministry of Education and Science, Latvia
Grazina Kauklaskiene	The Education Exchanges Support Foundation, Lithuania
Sini Keinonen	Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland
Made Kirsti	Archimedes Foundation, Estonia
Frank Krohn	Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education
Rolf Larsen	Ministry of Education and Research, Norway
Siv Lien	The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat
Katrin Liliehöök	The Swedish Council for Higher Education
Kenneth Lundin	Centre for International Mobility, Finland
Marie von Malmborg	The Swedish Council for Higher Education
Roswitha Melzer	The Swedish Council for Higher Education
Henrik Neiiendam Andersson	Danish Agency for Higher Education
Sigrun Olafsdóttir	Icelandic Centre for Research
Guðni Olgeirsson	Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture
Malin Petersen	Ministry of Education and Research, Sweden
Paula Pinto Dias dos Santos	The Swedish Council for Higher Education
Viktoria Toomik	Archimedes Foundation, Estonia
Sigrídur Vala Vignisdóttir	Icelandic Centre for Research
Larisa Valte	State Education Development Agency, Latvia
Malene Vangdrup	Danish Agency for Higher Education

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## Focus group participants

### Copenhagen, 4 December 2014

Bodil Aurstad	The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat
Anders Geertsen	The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat
Kristina Marie Jensen	The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat
Kai Koivumäki	The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat
Siv Lien	The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat
Monika Mörtberg Backlund	The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat
Göran Melin	Technopolis Group
Miriam Terrell	Technopolis Group

### Tallinn, 4 November 2014

Annela Hendrikson	Archimedes Foundation
Anne Hütt	Archimedes Foundation
Hannelore Juhtsalu	Archimedes Foundation
Maria Jürisson	Estonian Academy of Arts
Made Kirts	Archimedes Foundation
Kerli Koppel	Gustaf Adolf gymnasium
Kersti Lepik	Rannu Secondary School
Marta Mugur	TTK University of Applied Sciences
Kertu Saks	Energy discovery centre
Sandra Sule	Estonian Academy of Arts
Katre Eljas-Taal	Technopolis Group
Kristel Kosk	Technopolis Group

### Vilnius, 4 November 2014

Teresa Aidukienė	Ministry of Education and Science
Jonė Česnaītė	UAB "Jolingva"
Dovilė Dovydenienė	Education Exchanges Support Foundation
Vilija Gelažauskaitė	Ministry of Education and Science
Asta Kundreckaitė	Education Exchanges Support Foundation
Vytautas Pačiauskas	Education Exchanges Support Foundation
Rima Rimšaitė	Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre
Edita Trečiokienė	Education Exchanges Support Foundation
Vitalij Zenčenko	Education Exchanges Support Foundation
Jelena Angelis	Technopolis Group
Ala Širaliova	Technopolis Group

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### Interpretation seminar participants

Bodil Aurstad	The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat
Mikkel Buchter	Danish Agency for Higher Education
Helle Glen Petersen	The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat
Kristina Marie Jensen	The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat
Sini Keinonen	Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland
Frank Krohn	Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education
Siv Lien	The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat
Katrin Lilliehöök	Swedish Council for Higher Education
Kenneth Lundin	Centre for International Mobility, Finland
Henrik Neiiendam	Danish Agency for Higher Education
Sigrun Olafsdottir	Icelandic Centre for Research
Jessica Svedlund	Swedish Council for Higher Education
Malene Vangdrup	Danish Agency for Higher Education
Karolina Henningsson	Technopolis Group
Göran Melin	Technopolis Group
Miriam Terrell	Technopolis Group

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## Evaluation of Nordplus

Nordplus is one of the most widely known initiatives under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers. For decades, Nordplus has provided a large number of people in the Nordic countries with opportunities to study or in other ways get culture and knowledge related experiences in another Nordic, and since 2008, Baltic country. Nordplus has shifted in character and scope over the years, but can indeed be labelled a flagship programme and even a trademark for the Nordic Council of Ministers, and is perhaps its best recognised initiative of all.

In this report, Technopolis Group (Technopolis Sweden and Technopolis Baltics) presents the results of an evaluation of the current programme period of Nordplus, 2012–2016.

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