



Concept for joint Nordic cultural initiatives outside the Nordic region



Background

During the Danish presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2015, a Nordic working group developed a concept for joint Nordic cultural initiatives outside the Nordic region. The concept was approved by the Nordic ministers for culture in 2015, and was tested in conjunction with the Nordic Matters event in London in 2017. On the basis of the experiences of using the concept with Nordic Matters, the concept was revised by the Nordic ministers for culture on 31 October 2018.

Aim of the concept

The aim is to present a sustainable concept for cultural initiatives outside the Nordic region. The concept defines concepts and indicates overall objectives and basic conditions and frames for joint Nordic initiatives. This text should therefore be seen as a tool that can be used in decisions regarding joint Nordic cultural initiatives, and in planning, implementing and evaluating such initiatives.

For each initiative, more specific descriptions should be prepared, showing aims and objectives, organisation, funding/budget, division of responsibility and authorisation, and plan for evaluation.

What is a joint Nordic cultural initiative?

A joint Nordic cultural initiative is a cultural event, such as a festival, a major manifestation, or a series of small, interrelated projects, arranged outside the Nordic region. Cultural initiatives may vary in content, size and character. It may be one major initiative or a series of smaller projects with a common theme, a common venue, etc. The initiative may also be linked to an existing festival or cultural event at the location.

The cultural initiative should involve several art forms, and focus on innovation that can help promote the art and cultural scene in the Nordic region and internationally.

All the Nordic countries, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland must be represented in a joint Nordic cultural initiative.

What is the purpose of a joint Nordic cultural initiative?

The primary objective is always to strengthen the interaction between the Nordic culture sectors and the rest of the world, raise the profile of the Nordic culture sectors abroad, and generate added value for the participants/artists, and thereby market the Nordic region as a creative region.



Who decides on implementation of joint Nordic cultural initiatives?

The Nordic ministers for culture decide whether to implement a joint Nordic cultural initiative.

They decide on the process for choosing a location and partners for the initiatives. The process can, for example, involve an open call for project proposals.

The Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Culture (EK-K) prepares the decisions of the ministers for culture regarding future initiatives. The initiatives will be anchored in the culture sector in the Nordic region, so the preparation phase will include expert assessment of quality criteria. If and when necessary, initiative-specific reference groups or similar may be set up for this purpose.

Criteria and principles for joint Nordic cultural initiatives

Proposals for joint Nordic cultural initiatives are assessed in relation to the following principles and criteria:

High quality

The content of the cultural initiative must be of high artistic quality and cultural value. The initiative is chosen on the basis of quality criteria, such as innovative ways of working with and presenting Nordic art and culture, the ability to schedule and communicate a diverse and modern image of Nordic art and culture, knowledge about Nordic art and culture, and the potential of current scenes/arenas to reach out to and involve different target groups.

Local interest, demand and relevant partners

There must be demand for and interest in a Nordic cultural initiative at the chosen location, and key, competent local partners must be involved. This promotes cultural dialogue between the participating countries.

Nordic interest, demand and relevant partners in the Nordic region

The location will be chosen after consulting a broad circle of relevant cultural participants in the Nordic region, who thereby give their support to the choice.

Key cultural participants from the Nordic countries should see a purpose in participating in the cultural initiative, and should be interested in contributing. Key cultural participants include culture boards and councils, film institutes, design organisations, art organisations, and sector organisations, as well as cultural institutes and embassies.

A plan must be in place to show how Nordic partners will be involved in designing the content of the initiative.

Nordic support/involvement

The content in the initiative must be supported by national and Nordic participants. In many cases, this will involve local meetings in the Nordic countries, or involvement of these participants in some other way.

Long-term perspective

The cultural initiative must have a perspective that stretches beyond the initiative itself. Parallel with the initiative, there should be opportunities for artists and their sector organisations to meet in forums for sales and networking. The initiative should also help build and develop networks involving local artists and the participating Nordic artists.

The following should be included in the project description:

- Measurable, long-term quantitative and qualitative targets, and expected impact of the initiative.
- Clear and ranked success criteria, specific to the initiative.
- Funding plan for the initiative.



Potential for contacts and synergies with other sectors in society

The cultural initiative can help to create opportunities and arenas for meetings, events, and networks that connect Nordic partners with local partners in other societal sectors than culture and art.

Organisation of adopted cultural initiatives

The Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Culture within the Nordic Council of Ministers is responsible for overall project management at Nordic level for the individual initiatives, assisted by the Secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Every initiative will be organised in such a way that the project's development and progress can be ensured and monitored, and that coordination between participants is ensured.

Ahead of the initiative, it will be clarified who

- is project manager, ensuring that the project proceeds according to plan
- ensures coordination between participants
- formulates success criteria and objectives, and develops risk and stakeholder analyses
- develops a funding plan and budget, and monitors them
- examines and assures the quality of content
- establishes the terms of the relationship to national participants and initiatives
- evaluates different parts of the initiative and decides when these evaluations will take place

The organisation can, for example, be based on a local project group comprising key partners/local participants, such as embassy representatives and/or cultural participants. Ahead of the initiative, such a project group or similar will define in detail the responsibilities and authorisations of each member of the group.

Secretariat services/project management at Nordic Council of Ministers/joint Nordic level will be funded through the budget for the initiative, and the services/management will be based at the most suitable location for each project.

For each project, contact persons/points will be appointed/set up at both national and Nordic level and at the project location; these will ensure coordination and communication between participants. The Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Culture is responsible for appointing such contact persons at national and Nordic level.

Funding

The interests of different parties in a joint Nordic cultural initiative are reflected in, for example, the funding for the initiative. For implementation, a minimum requirement is that both the Nordic Council of Ministers and local partners (such as cultural representatives/arenas or local authorities where the initiative is placed) allocate the necessary funding. The joint Nordic cultural initiative may also be financed through public and private Nordic and national funds.

Where Nordic countries contribute national funding, it should be clarified in advance the role of the funding in relation to funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers. It must also be made clear how the national funding is to be used. The national funding must not influence the degree to which artists/participants from each Nordic country are represented in the initiative.

The expected role of the Nordic support schemes should also be made clear.



Evaluation

The joint Nordic initiatives should be evaluated against quantitative and qualitative goals set up for each initiative. The goals and their indicators should be defined in advance. The evaluation should be planned at the start of the initiative, to enable monitoring during the period of implementation. The initiative should be evaluated immediately after its completion and, if possible, again a certain time after the event, to identify any long-term effects.

As part of the evaluation, the main local partners will report on the measurable effects of the initiative in the subsequent years.

Updating the concept for joint Nordic cultural initiatives outside the Nordic region

The concept can be continually revised by the Nordic ministers for culture in the light of new experiences arising from decisions, preparations and implementation of joint Nordic cultural initiatives.