



Evaluation of scholarship schemes Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbours

Comparision of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

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Nordic Council of Ministers

Store Strandstræde 18

DK-1255 Copenhagen K

Phone (+45) 3396 0200

Fax (+45) 3396 0202

Nordic Council

Store Strandstræde 18

DK-1255 Copenhagen K

Phone (+45) 3396 0400

Fax (+45) 3311 1870

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Introduction

This report gives an overview of the evaluation of two scholarship schemes – Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbours. In the beginning of January, head of Nordic Council Ministers' office (NCM) Estonia, Carita Pettersson, and head of Estonian Institute for Futures Studies (EIFS), Erik Terk, agreed to compile an evaluation report concerning the Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbours scholarship programs.

The results of the evaluation report are necessary to assist in making decisions about the possible continuation of the programs. The primary purpose of the evaluation was to make conclusions about the rationality of process regulation and achievement of the results. The estimation of financial support and its implementation in the scholarship schemes was not part of its remit.

The reason for carrying out an evaluation of these two scholarship schemes while they continue to operate, is in light of the changes to the schemes presently being considered by the Nordic Council of Ministers' secretariat in Copenhagen.

The evaluation report has been carried out by two researchers of the Estonian Institute for Futures Studies – Külliki Tafel and Anna Murulauk. Throughout January and the first two weeks of February, when methodological phase of the report was completed, they interviewed almost 20 representatives of NCM offices and participants of both above named programs in all relevant Baltic countries.

The main objectives of the evaluation were to obtain a comprehensive overview of the processes and outcomes of Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbours scholarship schemes; find out the opinions of each and every party involved in the process; analyse received information and generate a list of perceived advantages and disadvantages of the programs. Subsequent proposals can be applied to the following grant programs.

Work process has been divided into three main parts. First, a methodological basis has been established. Additionally, topics of research and choice of methods for collecting information have been concluded with the NCM Office in Estonia. As a result, instructions for in-depth interviews and questionnaires were compiled. Anne Randmer, an expert on evaluation, was also involved in preparing the evaluation questionnaires.

In-depths interviews have been carried out with those responsible for the scholarship schemes in the NCM Offices in Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius as well as with the representatives of the Ministries of Culture in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in order to broaden the cultural policy perspective. Additionally, a questionnaire was drawn up with the purpose of finding

out the opinions of the participants of the programs in each Baltic country. There was also 4 interviewees per country chosen to find out about their experience in greater detail. The third and final part of evaluation process was the analysis of the results received from the interviews and the web-survey.

The report is divided into five parts.

In the first part the description of the theoretical basis of evaluation is given.

The second part gives the overview of the scholarship schemes – Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbours – which are being evaluated (Also described is the basic information and statistics of the participants of these schemes).

The third part of the report concentrates on the description of the methodology – the in-depth interview and the questionnaire – that was used throughout the evaluation.

The fourth part analyses the results of the evaluation. Based on the interviews the comparative analysis of the views of those responsible for the scholarship schemes in the NCM Offices in Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius is given in tandem with the views of the representatives of Ministries of Culture in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The views of the former scholarship holders are analysed according to the results of the questionnaire and interviews. The focus of analysis is concentrated on general aspects (such as gender, age, sphere of culture), the attractiveness of the Nordic region, amount and quality of information, period of using the grant (set purposes and achieved results) and follow-up activities (future joint project and outcomes/impacts after using the grant).

In the fifth part the main conclusions and recommendations are given focusing primarily on the possibilities how to improve the effectiveness and usefulness of the schemes.

1. Theoretical background of evaluation

If starting with evaluation, we have to understand what evaluation is and which type of evaluation fits in the context of analysing cultural grant programs. In practice, program evaluation can include more than 35 different types of evaluation, such as cost/benefit analysis, effectiveness, efficiency, formative, summarising, goal-based, process, outcomes, etc. (McNamara 2007)

Evaluation has many meanings depending on the field of research and many alternating factors. More general definition for evaluation is given by Korporowicz¹, defining evaluation “as a systematic survey of values or features of a given program, activity or an object, taking into consideration the adopted criteria to enhance, improve or understand them better”.

Evaluation involves different types of activities – starting from overview of the concrete program and ending with the results of the evaluation process that might be practically realised in the future. The type of evaluation undertaken to improve programs depends on what is learnt about the program. It is most important not to lose the focus of the programs and concentrate on the outputs (or decisions if necessary) that are needed, whilst collecting the information accurately and understanding it properly.

When determining the main evaluation goals, it is necessary to know the potential benefit of evaluating these cultural programs. Implementing the proper evaluation scheme and choosing the right mechanisms and evaluation tools helps to enhance coordination among various program components, saves time and even financial resources. Taking this into account can even increase the efficiency of the program and increase its popularity by offering more opportunities. Evaluation might focus on identifying the areas in which a program is most successful in order to capitalize upon them. It might also identify weaknesses in order to make improvements, eliminate or add further elements to the program².

There are four levels of evaluation information that can be gathered from the participants, including their: (McNamara 2007):

¹ European Commission: Evaluating EU expenditure programs (1997)

² See more detailed in “Evaluation Handbook” by Lana D. Muraskin (1993)

- reactions and feelings (feelings are often poor indicators but, taking the nature of these culture programs into account, its intensity might be stronger)
- learning (enhanced attitudes, perceptions or knowledge)
- changes in skills (application of learning to practice)
- effectiveness (improved performance because of enhanced behaviours)

Furthermore, these levels can produce additional sub-levels and vary in order and intensity. In fact, such examples of additional information levels appeared in information gathered from the representatives of NCM premises and Ministries of Culture in the Baltic countries. The evaluation of cultural programs in particular often acknowledges a stronger influence of “soft factors” (for example organizational skills, environment, mentality of the countries involved etc).

In this case, evaluation of Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbours programs is more complicated process, as we are dealing with different approaches of evaluation:

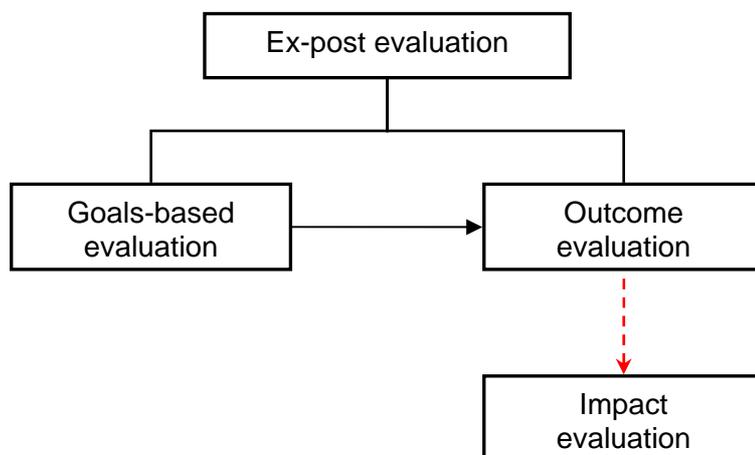


Figure 1. Ex-post evaluation approaches and their implementing order

Ex-post evaluation³ aims to examine examining long-lasting effects of a program and their sustainability. It is worth mentioning that some results of a program impact will be visible only in the long term. Consequently, this evaluation examines the anticipated effects, as well as identifying the effects brought about by an intervention that have not been expected, and this is of great importance as ex-post evaluation constitutes the source of useful information for planning future interventions.

³ Evaluating EU Expenditure Programs: A Guide: Ex post and intermediate evaluation including glossary of evaluation terms, paper available on the website of the European Commission

The report also incorporates the goal-based type of evaluation as one of the tasks is to estimate to what extent the aims of both cultural programs have been achieved. Goal-based evaluations essentially evaluate the extent to which programs are meeting predetermined goals or objectives. The following types of questions appear when designing an evaluation to see if the goals were reached (McNamara 2007):

- How were the program goals (and objectives) established? Was the process effective?
- What is the status of the program's progress toward achieving the goals?
- Will the goals be achieved according to the timelines specified in the program implementation or operations plan? If not, then why?
- Do personnel have adequate resources (money, equipment, facilities, training, etc.) to achieve the goals?
- How should priorities be changed to put more focus on achieving the goals?
- How should goals be changed? Should any goals be added or removed, and why?
- Establishment of goals in the future

In general, making a goal-based evaluation assumes large-scale analysis. In this report the authors tried to concentrate more on the progress made towards achieving the goals, outline priorities and identify potential for change with the intention to give a comprehensive overview of the main aims set and the extent to which they are being achieved.

As for the last type of evaluation (outcome based) that has been used in this report, it is worth mentioning that it can bring the following program certain savings and project progress in reference to the specific location in which the program takes place. Such means of evaluation evidences how well the program is achieving its objectives. This helps program managers decide whether to continue the program and with what degree of input. The authors also chose in favour of this type of evaluation as it seemed a logical outcome of the goal-based type and would help demonstrate the outcomes of the program's activities and outputs. They make no effort to determine whether the outcome was actually caused by the program or by external influences or if it would have likely occurred in lieu of the program.

Impact evaluations take outcome evaluations one step further by estimating the proportion of the outcomes that are attributable to the program as opposed to other external influences. As previously mentioned the benefits of outcome evaluations, are that usually their findings help program managers decide whether to continue the program and at what level of effort. Obviously, impact evaluations often require more complex methods of data collection and analysis (General evaluation... 2007).

Therefore, if feasible, it is usually better to expand the outcome evaluation into an impact evaluation (although this is not the task of this particular evaluation report).

Following consideration of these aspects, an outcomes model has been employed⁴. The following figure is an abstract illustration of the initial point and the final presumptive result of the evaluation of *Sleipnir* and *Closer Culture Neighbours*:

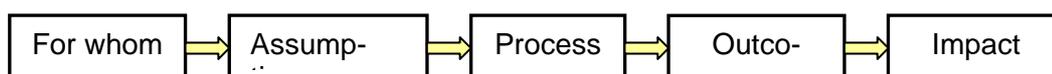


Figure 2. *Implementation of outcome model.*

Source: Evaluation book, p. 38(Millett 1998)

It should be borne in mind that the process of making an evaluation involves partners who are interested in its results. Evaluation partners are not only the recipients of the eventual results, but also bodies that constitute a significant source of information necessary to properly conduct the evaluation research⁵.

In case of *Sleipnir* and *Closer Culture Neighbours* the following partner groups can be distinguished:

- *Persons managing and implementing the program* – this is a group of people (employees of NCM offices, intermediary bodies) whose tasks include managing the different aspects of the program; the evaluation results supply them with information about the effects of their work, about difficulties, and also about aspects that have a positive influence upon the operations conducted.
- *Persons initiating the program* – these are the employees of the final beneficiary institution; as a result of the report on the program persons belonging to this group may see the effects of their work in a wider context.
- *Program target groups* – these are the final recipients and beneficiaries, but also all those who are potential beneficiaries. The evaluation results enable this group to see what they may expect of the program (ex-ante evaluation) as well as what has been done within it (ex-post evaluation).

After the evaluation partners are determined, the next phase is making assumptions. As practice shows, to do so it simplifies the process of designing evaluation and the choice of evaluation mechanisms and tools. For example, in evaluating cultural programs such assumptions could be

⁴ See more detailed information about outcomes model in Evaluation Handbook, Millett (1998)

⁵ EU Structural Funds in Poland. <http://www.fundusze-strukturalne.gov.pl/English/Evaluation/>

certain idiosyncrasies of different countries and fields of activity, attractiveness of various aspects, different purposes of using the scholarship, inequality of achieved aims or received outcomes.

Consequently, it is easier to segue to the next stage which is the process itself. For example, in the cases of Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbours, the process comprises sequential implementation of interviews (meanwhile receiving feedback from the web-survey). As far as every process is connected to the time factor, it is crucial to plan the schedule accurately. Process planning plays a significant role in determining the quality of the final evaluation, nonetheless evaluators have to reckon with the possibility of pilot interviewing (in the beginning of the process) and the possibility of unpredictable complications (during the process implementation).

In evaluating these cultural programs the authors aimed to answer both questions of whether “the right things have been done” and “whether things have been done correctly”. Such appraisal of these programs allows a movement towards more successful achievement of their aims through certain changes.

Basically, evaluation of Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbours is carried out at a concrete point in time and consists of an in-depth study which seeks to determine systematically and objectively the efficiency and effect of the programs. Even though the two programs, involve substantially different target groups, and involve certain differences in methodology tools, it does not alter the methodology in general.

The report is based on a typical process of evaluation which can be figuratively presented as following:

At the first step (see Figure 3) the purpose was to receive as much background information about Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbours as possible. Capacity of information gave a strong streamline to pass through the *second and the third step* of evaluation – determining the purpose of evaluation and figuring out what information was needed.

Considering the NCM has not carried out any previous evaluations for culture programs, it was crucial to work out the methodology for making the evaluation possible and constructive. Then the fourth step of the process is entered, and at this point a survey questionnaire and an interview questionnaire has been compiled for both programs. With the aim of reaching as many participants of Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbours as possible, the web-questionnaire was drafted in two languages (Estonian and English) and containing different blocks of questions depending on the information sought. The following steps of the evaluation process were the most time and resource consuming.

Such structures should generally apply to both Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbours programs. The main criteria EIFS has been paying attention to were the inputs, outputs, results and possible outcomes (longer impact) of both programs.

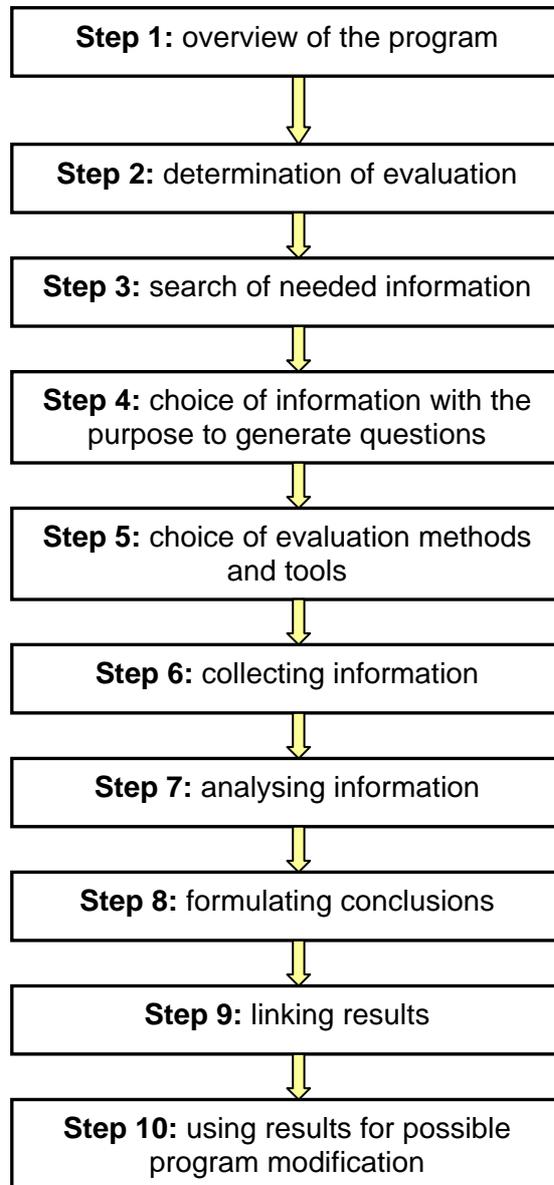


Figure 3. Steps of evaluation.

Source: "Understanding evaluation...", Muraskin (1993).

2. Analysis of the background

2.1 A description of the schemes evaluated

The relevant schemes – Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbours – being evaluated were both scholarship schemes within the field of culture. Both of the schemes have been administered by the Nordic Council of Ministers Offices in the Baltic countries. The character and the aims of these programs are generally the same: to increase the mobility between and encourage the establishment of professional contacts between Nordic and Baltic countries. The programs' broader aim is to promote cultural cooperation and interchange between Nordic and Baltic countries.

The main differences of the programs lie in their target groups and the duration of their application. Both of the schemes focus on young professionals, but Sleipnir focuses on professional practitioners of the arts and Closer Culture Neighbours on professional cultural managers. Closer Culture Neighbours has been running in the Baltic States since 2003 (beginning then as a pilot project), and Sleipnir has been functioning since 1997.

Both of the schemes are described below in more detail.

*Sleipnir*⁶

Sleipnir is the Nordic Council of Ministers' travel grant programme for young professional artists in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

In the Baltic countries, the aim of the programme has been to give young professional artists a possibility to involve themselves in artistic processes in the Nordic countries, to increase their mobility, encourage the establishment of professional contacts, to promote co-operation between artists, to contribute to their efforts to participate in festivals, master-classes, seminars, visit concerts and exhibitions.

The target group has been professional practitioners of the arts aged 36 or younger. The scholarship encompasses all the arts: theatre, dance, visual art, design, architecture, music, film and video, literature etc.

Only Individuals are eligible to apply, thus excluding applications by groups, organizations and institutions. People still pursuing their studies have not been able to apply, either, i.e. it is not a programme for current arts students.

The scholarship given has usually covered costs for journey and accommodation, but there has been no per diem included. However, there have been no formal requirements of self or co-financing.

⁶ Source: Materials from NCM Office in Tallinn.

There have been two or three application deadlines per year, depending upon decisions made in each of the separate NCM offices, i.e. the offices have been able to choose their own deadlines.

*Closer Culture Neighbours*⁷

Closer Culture Neighbours has been a Nordic Council of Ministers' exchange programme for practitioners in cultural management.

The objective of the program has been to create a platform for the development of new cultural projects between the Nordic countries and the Baltic States and to promote long-term co-operation between cultural organizations based in those countries. Specifically: the idea of the programme has been to give young professional cultural managers from the Baltic States an opportunity to spend one month working in a cultural organization in a Nordic country and to participate in the process of organizing cultural events and festivals, or to become a temporary member of a cultural institution, i.e. finalise for instance a co-operation project together with an institution.

The target group of the exchange programme has been young professional cultural managers up to the age of 36. According to the requirements they should have had at least two years of work experience in the sphere of cultural management.

Again, only Individual applications have been accepted. Students have not been eligible to apply.

The scholarships given have covered travel and accommodation and there has also been a per diem included. There have been no formal requirements of self or co-financing.

The program involves a single annual deadline, with some exceptions.

2.2 Organisation of the programs

2.2.1 Informing about the programs

In terms of the methods of disseminating information about the programs, all three Baltic States use more or less similar channels. The different media outlets such as radio, newspapers, magazines, television are actively used; also different internet possibilities: homepage of the NCM Office, different mailing-lists, etc. NCM Offices are regularly sending the information about the programs to different professional unions and associations (e.g. Artists' Association, different sub-unions, etc.). Direct contacts with the artists and cultural managers are also used.

⁷ Source: Materials from NCM Office in Tallinn.

2.2.2 *The decision making process of participant selection*

Certain differences in the decision making process of accepting or rejecting applicants exist among the Baltic countries. The main differences concern the existence of an organisational body for that decision making.

In *Estonia* no jury or committee exists. The final decision is made by the representatives of Estonian the NCM office. In case of need, additional information from the representatives of Estonian cultural circles will be sought. At the outset of the programs there were discussions about establishing such a body, but it was found that there was insufficient need. It was postulated that Estonia is a relatively small country, the creative/cultural demographics are small and accordingly, the people are well known. The other reason for not creating the committee was a wish to ensure flexibility in the decision making process. According to the representative of Estonian the NCM Office, this system has worked well so far.

Latvia represents a case with a permanent committee or jury. The permanent expert committee has existed from the very beginning. The committee acts on a voluntary basis, the members are not remunerated. There is one responsible person for each applicable field of the arts. There are about 5–6 people, representatives of different fields of art/culture (visual arts, theatre, etc.). The members change from time to time. The representative of Ministry is also taking part in this jury.

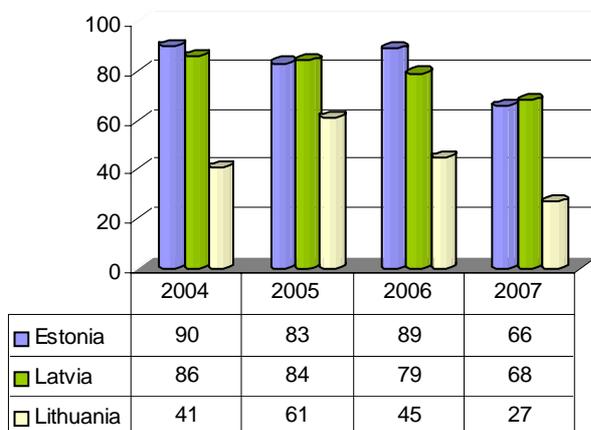
The *Lithuanian* model is close to Latvian one with the exception that even though there is a committee, it is not permanent. Similarly to Latvia there are approximately 5 persons, representatives of different fields of art/culture, belonging to the committee. The decision making process takes place in several stages. The first decision is made at the Lithuanian NCM Office and is then sent to the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture for additional comments. The applications are then returned to the Lithuanian NCM Office where the final decision is made.

2.3 Statistical overview of the participants of *Sleipnir* and *Closer Culture Neighbour* programs

Below is displayed the statistical overview of participants of *Sleipnir* and *CCN* programs, describing the participants by year, field of culture, gender, etc. The division of participants among three Baltic countries is also analysed.

The number of participants who have been beneficiaries of the *Sleipnir* and *CCN* programs varies among the three Baltic States. The artists from Estonia and Latvia (*Sleipnir* grant users) have applied for the grants more actively than their colleagues in Lithuania. The activity of using the grants among cultural managers (using *CCN* grants) is practically the same in all Baltic countries. Comparative numbers about participants of

both programs in all three Baltic countries are available since 2004 (the first participants of CCN program were from the year 2004)⁸. See Figures



4 and 5.

Figure 4. The participants of Sleipnir program during 2004–2007 in the Baltic countries

Source: NCM Offices in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

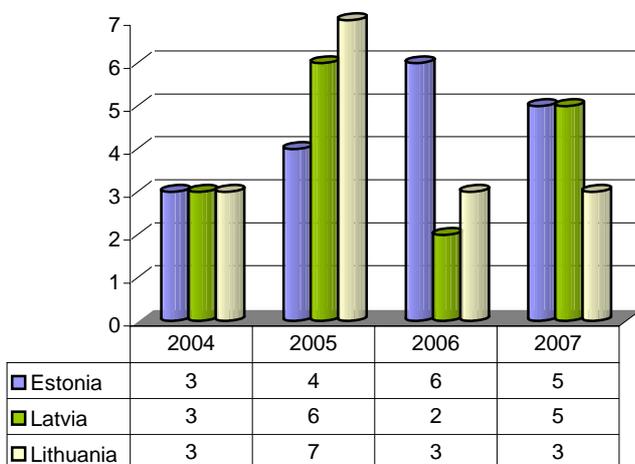


Figure 5. The participants of Closer Cultural Neighbours program during 2004–2007 in the Baltic countries

Source: NCM Offices in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

As Figure 4 shows, the number of participants of the Sleipnir program varies to a great extent. During the years of 2004–2007 328 artists have used the Sleipnir program in Estonia, 317 in Latvia and 174 in Lithuania. Regarding the CCN program (see Figure 5), the number of participants

⁸ According to Estonian NCM Office the total number of participants using Sleipnir grant since 1999 is 544 (for the year 2003 the data was available only for half a year). According to Lithuanian NCM Office the total number of participants since the year 1999 was 337.

during the same years is as follows: 16 participants in Latvia and Lithuania and 18 in Estonia.

It is also important to pay attention to how many applied and how many received the grant (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Applicants and grant holders of Sleipnir program

		2004	2005	2006	2007
Estonia	applicants	108	112	96	75
	grant holders	90	83	89	66
Latvia	applicants	106	98	97	87
	grant holders	86	84	79	68
Lithuania	applicants	53	74	62	41
	grant holders	41	61	45	27

Source: NCM Offices in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

Table 2. Applicants and grant holders of CCN program

		2004	2005	2006	2007
Estonia	applicants	5	5	6	6
	grant holders	3	4	6	5
Latvia	applicants	13	11	6	9
	grant holders	3	6	2	5
Lithuania	applicants	5	9	11	5
	grant holders	3	7	3	3

Source: NCM Offices in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

The Tables 1 and 2 conclude that during the years analysed there has been a trend of a certain density of competition among the applicants; this can be said for all the countries and for both programs. Evaluating the proportions between applicants and grant holders during the years of 2004–2007, it can be concluded that in the Sleipnir program the biggest density of competition has been in Lithuania. In Lithuania 76% of applicants were successful applicants for the grant, in Estonia this percentage was 84% and in Latvia 82%. Analysing the same proportion for the CCN program, the biggest competition among applicants was in Latvia. In Latvia 41% got a positive answer for their application, in Lithuania this percentage was 53% and in Estonia 82%.

The following table shows Sleipnir participants' division by field of culture⁹ (see Table 3).

⁹ Analogous table (the participants' division by field of culture) for CCN program is not presented as the number of participants of CCN program is small and often the cultural managers represent several fields of culture.

Table 3. Participants of Sleipnir program by field of culture

		2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
architecture	Estonia	2	1	2	0	5
	Latvia	1	7	4	5	17
	Lithuania	0*	2	1	0	3
theatre	Estonia	2	6	14	10	32
	Latvia	1	0	6	1	8
	Lithuania	0	3	2	4	9
art	Estonia	4	0	0	4	8
	Latvia	0	0	0	0	0
	Lithuania	0	0	0	0	0
film/photography	Estonia	7	4	4	3	18
	Latvia	1	0	3	5	9
	Lithuania	2	0	0	0	2
design	Estonia	9	23	21	5	58
	Latvia	2	23	8	9	42
	Lithuania	0	1	0	0	1
dance	Estonia	13	7	10	4	34
	Latvia	6	2	3	4	15
	Lithuania	4	3	5	1	13
visual arts	Estonia	15	11	25	3	54
	Latvia	30	32	27	29	118
	Lithuania	24	23	15	11	73
literature	Estonia	17	7	7	8	39
	Latvia	6	3	1	4	14
	Lithuania	0	5	2	0	7
music	Estonia	17	24	6	16	63
	Latvia	28	9	16	10	63
	Lithuania	8	18	16	5	47
other	Estonia	2	0	0	11	13
	Latvia	0	0	0	0	0
	Lithuania	3	6	4	6	19
diverse.**	Estonia	0	0	0	2	2
	Latvia	11	8	11	1	31
	Lithuania	0	0	0	0	0

* Zero means that there were no participants of this field of culture this year

** Diverse means that the participants represent different fields of culture

Source: NCM Offices in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

Table 2 shows that in Estonia and Latvia most of the participants of the Sleipnir program come from the field of visual arts, music and design. In Lithuania the majority of participants came from the fields of visual art and music, significantly less from other fields of culture.

Next, the division of the destination country the participants have chosen for the period of using the grant is brought out (see Table 4 and 5).

Table 4. Destination countries by three Baltic countries concerning Sleipnir program

		2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
Sweden	Estonia	31	24	26	40	121
	Latvia	34	27	27	30	118
	Lithuania	14	25	12	5	56
Finland	Estonia	28	35	35	8	106
	Latvia	20	29	31	15	95
	Lithuania	12	14	10	15	51
Norway	Estonia	13	7	6	5	31
	Latvia	18	3	11	8	40
	Lithuania	5	7	15	6	33
Denmark	Estonia	12	7	15	7	41
	Latvia	19	23	10	11	63
	Lithuania	9	12	8	3	32
Iceland	Estonia	6	6	2	3	17
	Latvia	3	4	2	4	13
	Lithuania	0	0	0	0	0
More than one partner	Estonia	0	0	0	3	3
	Latvia	0	0	0	0	0
	Lithuania	0	0	0	0	0
Faroe Islands	Estonia	0	4	5	0	9
	Latvia	1	0	0	0	1
	Lithuania	4	5	1	3	13

Source: NCM Offices in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

Table 5. Destination countries by three Baltic countries concerning CCN program¹⁰

		2004–2007
Sweden	Estonia	5
	Latvia	5
Finland	Estonia	4
	Latvia	2
Norway	Estonia	1
	Latvia	0
Denmark	Estonia	2
	Latvia	4
Iceland	Estonia	1
	Latvia	5
More than one country	Estonia	5
	Latvia	0

Source: NCM Offices in Estonia and Latvia

Tables 4 and 5 show preferences of participants in choosing the destination country. Sleipnir grant users have most frequently used Sweden as their destination country. Finland, Denmark and Norway follow. Grant

¹⁰ No data was available for Lithuania.

users of the CCN program have also most frequently based themselves in Sweden. Subsequently, Finland, Denmark and Iceland are considered equally important.

3. Methods used in evaluation

3.1 Choice of methodology and its explanation

The choice of methodology for the evaluation of programmes concerns both the gathering of data and the analysis of same.

The methodology used was largely determined by the setting of the task. According to it the evaluation required the analysis of opinions, attitudes, experiences etc. of various parties regarding the aforementioned programmes.

As for the criteria, which should be used for the selection of the data gathering method in the present case, the authors primarily emphasise the following:

First, the number of individuals and the time required for the interviewing; in other words – the judgement of how many individuals would be needed to record and how long it would take.

The type of required information is viewed by the authors as the second criterion determining the choice: i.e. how much specific or general information is required.

As the third significant criterion we can single out the level of detail required from the information (whether more detailed study of some aspects is required or whether more generalised information would suffice).

The fourth criterion concerns the individuals, whose information would be needed. The setting of the task defines three parties. First: the programme administrators – those who are responsible for the scholarship schemes in the NCM Offices in Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius. The second significant party, considering that we are dealing with programmes of the cultural sphere, are the representatives of the national culture policy – in our case the representatives of Ministries of Culture in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Thirdly: participants in the programmes in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

When evaluating the above criteria from the viewpoint of the present study's context, it is important to point out the following:

- The number of individuals, whose opinions would be required, is relatively large; the volume is expanded by the number of individuals taking part in the programmes;
- the parties, whose views will be needed, are dissimilar – i.e. dissimilar methods of data gathering would have to be used;
- considering that two months would be allocated for carrying out the entire work, the time for the gathering of opinions is very short;
- both specific and general information would be needed;

- it is necessary to gather both detailed and more general information about various subjects.

In due consideration of the above, the evaluation was carried out using the complex method: in-depth interviews and questionnaires for learning the positions of the individuals gathering the data.

The in-depth interview provides an opportunity to discuss the issue exhaustively with the interviewee, to discuss positions in detail if necessary, to ask additional questions and find out various connections, which have shaped the positions and opinions. Primary advantages:

- provides full range and depth of information
- develops relationship with client
- can be flexible with client (McNamara 2007)

The questionnaire offers a number of other opportunities. When it comes to quick and easy reception of information from people, it is better to compile a survey¹¹. Major advantages of this method are (McNamara 2007):

- it is easy to compare and analyse
- it is possible to administer such questionnaire to many people
- it can glean a large amount of data

The in-depth interview was used to learn about the positions of the NCM Office and Ministry of Culture representatives. The combined method was used with the participants in the programmes: the survey method dominated, while in-depth interviews were carried out with selected participants as the task was also to give a comprehensive description of the former scholarship holders.

For data analysis different qualitative methods were used. One method was comparison in order to:

- compare the opinions of the representatives of the NCM Offices and Ministries of Culture as well as the opinions between Baltic countries
- compare former grant holders' aims and their results of the program
- compare the opinions of former grant holders with the opinions of the representatives of NCM Offices and Ministries of Culture

The second method that was used was content analysis. This was used for:

- getting a closer view (broad description) of the experiences of former grant holders in order to present case studies for different experiences

¹¹ In this case a web-based survey was carried out.

- analysing the respondents' (the interviewees as well as the respondents to the survey) attitudes, opinions, etc. towards different aspects of the programs in order to compare these afterwards

The means of compiling the questionnaires for in-depth interview and the survey, as well as the process of carrying them out are described in more detail below.

3.2 Compiling the questionnaires and an overview of the process

The questionnaires were composed for the purpose of in-depth interview as well as for the web-based survey. In composing the questionnaires the authors used the evaluation principles that were described in chapter one. The questionnaires recognise the importance of the following themes for successful evaluation:

- the accordance of the programs to the aims that govern them
- the effectiveness of the operation of the program: how the general organization and the principals support the effectiveness of the programs
- the influence of the program: i.e. their influence on the activities of the participants and broader influence on Nordic-Baltic cultural cooperation
- the importance of continuing with the programs and the need for change

The list of questions compiled for the web-based survey was standardised and structured, the questions predominantly provided a set of choices or presumed a brief answer. The survey also contained five open questions, which permitted the respondent to express his/her opinion in a free form. The questionnaire totalled 31 questions, which were divided into five thematic blocks (see Appendix 1):

- Personal information
- Awareness of the program
- Using the grant
- Benefits from using the grant
- future perspectives of the program

The survey was completed via the Internet using specially designed software. The program provided for statistical processing of the data, allowing filtration of results from each other by way of different sub-aspects.

The goal of the web-based survey was the same for participants in both programmes (since the purpose of the programmes and the information required from the participants was identical). The web-based survey was available both in the Estonian and English languages.

The in-depth interview was a rather voluminous, lowly standardised and partly structured interview. The respondents were requested to express their opinions of a variety of subjects, provide grounds for their positions and to illustrate their views with examples. The interview was carried out in the form of a free conversation, without a strict order of the questions.

There were a total of 40 interview questions, which were divided in five major thematic blocks (see Appendix 3):

- Aim of the programs, managing them and cooperation
- Awareness of the program
- Choice criteria of the participants
- Influence of the programs (on Nordic-Baltic cultural cooperation)
- Feedback and future perspectives

Dependent on whether we were dealing with the representatives of the NCM Office or the Ministry of Culture, the emphases of the interview were varied: representatives of the NCM Office were questioned in greater detail about the organisational aspects of the programmes, while with the Culture Ministries' representatives emphases were placed on the effect of the programs' in Nordic-Baltic cultural cooperation, the compatibility of the Nordic and Baltic national culture policies, etc. The questions of the in-depth interview were both in Estonian and in English.

As the detailed description of chosen scholarship holders was also needed, the separate interview questionnaire was worked out. This was an extended version of the questionnaire: the questions used were predominantly the same as in the questionnaire, but instead of using a pre-selected set of answers the respondent could provide his/her own answers (see Appendix 2). The questionnaire for the interview, used for the interviews with the participants in the Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbour programme, was the same. The interviews with the participants shall be treated in the report as case studies and will be used as examples.

The interview questionnaire for interviewing the programme participants was written both in Estonian and in English.

The in-depth interviews with the NCM Office and Ministry of Culture representatives took mainly 1–1.5 hours. The interviews with the programme participants were predominantly shorter – up to one hour (with some exceptions). The interviews were recorded and transcribed. A total of 18 interviews were carried out:

- 3 interviews with the NCM Office representatives – one in each of the Baltic states
- 3 interviews with the Ministry of Culture representatives – one in each of the Baltic states (there was a multiple interview in Latvia, which was attended by 2 experts)
- 12 interviews with programme participants, incl. 6 interviews with Sleipnir program participants (2 in each of the Baltic States) and 6 interviews with Closer Culture Neighbours program participants (2 in each of the Baltic States).

4. Research results

4.1 Analysis of interviews with the representatives of the NCM Office and Ministry of Culture in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

In this section the interviews with the representatives of the NCM Office and Ministry of Culture in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are analysed. Altogether 6+2 interviews were carried out: 3 interviews with the representatives of NCM Offices in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (including a joint interview with two persons) and 3 interviews with the representatives of Ministries of Culture in Estonia, Latvia (including a joint interview with two persons) and Lithuania.

The results of the interviews are analysed with reference to the following themes:

- The rationality of the process
- The programs' correspondence to their aims
- The influence of the programs on the cooperation on Nordic-Baltic cultural cooperation
- The importance of continuing with the programs and necessity for making changes

Under the rationality of the process the awareness of the programs and the conditions, as well as the efficiency of selection criteria and sufficiency of financing are analysed.

Secondly, the interviewees' opinions about how successfully the activities taking place under the programs correspond to the founding aims.

Thirdly attention is paid to the influence of the programs on Nordic-Baltic cultural cooperation.

And fourthly, the importance of continuing with the programs and the necessity for making changes in organization, choice criteria, information exchange, etc. is analysed.

Analysing the results of the interviews, attention is paid to the possible differences between the three Baltic States on the one hand; and the differences between the representatives of the NCM Office and Ministries of Culture on the other hand. The interviewees provided concise answers regarding both programmes – Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbours – therefore the following positions also concern both programmes. If the respondents pointed out dissimilarities, these have been included.

The rationality of the process

The following aspects were used to evaluate the rationality of the process: the awareness of the program, the effectiveness of the choice criteria, and sufficiency of financing.

First, *awareness*. In this subject area the interviewees were interested in two different aspects: first, the general awareness about the existence of the program; secondly, the awareness of the conditions for applying for the grant.

Considering the *awareness of the programs* (question No 11), all the interviewees found that, in general, the cultural circles are informed about the program. Still, based on the responses, different opinions in the various applying countries about public awareness can be brought out.

The Latvian respondents felt most positively about the awareness: “The participants are quite well informed. ... The information about the possibilities of getting the grant is very good” (LVC)¹². Also the Estonian interviewees found that the awareness of the programs is good, stating at the same time that the number of applicants could be bigger: “... [in order to] have bigger opportunity to choose” (EC). The differences in awareness between the two programs were seen from Lithuanian side: “Sleipnir – a lot, CCN – not so many people know about it” (LTN). As a whole, the Lithuanians found that awareness could be gauged as at an average level.

Considering the awareness of the conditions (question No 12) – is the information provided thorough – the respondents talked about two aspects. On the one hand, it was stated that the information given is not very complete. On the other hand, it depends on the person: one group of applicants need and want to grab the phone and ask questions, others don’t. The opinion that was shared by all the countries was that need for additional information has decreased.

The interviewees pointed out several channels used for spreading information about the programs (see Item B1). One aspect that is related to the level of awareness is the sufficiency of channels used for spreading information (question No 10). The responses to the question about sufficiency of information channels coincide with the opinions about the awareness of the program. Estonia and especially Latvia reported that current channels were sufficient. Lithuania at the same time expressed its worries about the limitations of the channels that they have used. Quoting the respondent:

“If it continued like this, I think we have to work something out and think about information effort. To tell you the truth, I do not know what to do. We can send out so much and still there is no guarantee of a feedback.” (LTN)

¹² Hereinafter the figure indicates the code of the respondent. E=Estonia, LV=Latvia, LT=Lithuania, C=Ministry of Culture, N=Nordic Council of Ministers; PCCN1=participant No 1 of CCN program, etc.

One of the aspects that reveal levels of awareness is the dynamics in the number of applicants (participants) (question No 13). The responses show the differences in the situations of each of the Baltic countries. Respondents of Estonia and Latvia stated unanimously that the trend in the number of applicants during the years has been definitely positive. Lithuania, at the same time, pointed that the number of applicants has been volatile: “It has been a curve actually (increased and then decreased).” (LTN)

The interviewees were also asked about the density of competition: the sufficiency of the number of applicants (question No 14)¹³. The differences by countries can be identified. The Latvians expressed the most positive attitude: “the number of applicants is enough to make a good competitiveness” (LVC). The respondents of Estonia found that the number of applicants would increase in natural way. For Lithuanians the number of applicants caused most concerns, quoting the respondent:

“... It could be bigger. We have always experienced the situation when we could not spend all of the budget money. It means that the interest of the applicants is not as big as it could be. We did all the efforts we could in the marketing. Probably it is because that culture was never number 1 for this institution; it was never its main profile.” (LTN)

All the respondents pointed to certain differences in the numbers of participants by the field of activity by pointing out the fields (visual arts, music, etc.¹⁴) the biggest number of applications comes from. The peculiarities of the field are the reason for different level of activity. As the interviewees pointed:

“The most problematic is literature. One reason is that the people in this field achieve the maturity in older age.” (LVC)

“There are not so many actors or writers. It is obviously connected to the language barrier.” (LVN)

The second important aspect for evaluating the rationality of the process is the selection of the participants. Here the questions about the rationality of decision making and the choice criteria are analysed in more detail.

The responses to the question about the basis and principles of the choice criteria reveal differences among the Baltic countries. Two different situations can be described (questions No 19 and 23).

Regarding Estonia and in Lithuania it can be concluded that there are no fixed rules for making the choice. Specifying their response, the interviewees of Estonia pointed out objective requirements: accordance to the age limit, having two recommendation letters, etc. The support to those who are not applying for the first time can also be noticed: “in case of

¹³ See point 2.3 for general statistics.

¹⁴ See point 2.3 for general statistics.

those [applying for second (third, etc.) time] we are talking about persons with strong initiative ... and we do not want to bring down their eagerness” (EN).

The representative of Lithuanian NCM Office pointed out they prefer: “.., new ones ... who have not participated before” (LVN). At the same time the representative of Lithuanian Ministry of Culture noted that “it is always easier to go the second time than for the first time”.

Latvian respondents, on the other hand, brought out several principles which they are using in decision making. In addition to the objective requirements (having recommendation letters, etc.) the following criteria are used to make the choice among the applicants.

First, the clarity of the idea and the seriousness of the applicant’s motivation:

“the idea should be very concrete ... we need the description in couple of sentences ... what is the aim [and so on]. ... It should be well formulated, clearly and concretely.” (LVC)

“... motivation [of the participant and] the seriousness of the application ... this is one of the major criterion for choosing.” (LVN)

Secondly, explanation of his/her future plans:

“... and another factor is that: what he/she supposes to do afterwards. How the applicant can explain the future plans. We are quite small society and if there is no feedback ... it is important that the people who get the grants are taking it seriously.” (LVC)

“works done, contents of the project, his/hers level of activity, ...” (LTN)

Third important factor is the background information of the applicant. It was also said that they prefer participants from outside Riga:

“we are always looking for the participants for those out of Riga. In bigger cities it is not so problematic to find money or sponsors for support than in the countryside or in smaller cities” (LVC).

Considering the question re: repeated application, the interviewees of Latvia were on the position that the priority is given to people who are applying for the first time:

“if we have some money left, we give the opportunity to those who applied for the grant and are interested to go there again” (LVN).

The applicant’s activity after getting the grant is considered very important:

“we are evaluating what he/she has done after the grant. How the applicant is growing. And why she/he is asking again” (LVC).

Additionally, a couple of specifying questions about the selection criteria were asked: first, the importance of achieving or keeping the balance of fields (question No 20) and secondly the importance of the “cultural enrichment” (question No 21).

Regarding the importance of achieving or keeping the balance between the cultural fields, the interviewees expressed different opinions. In Estonia it was mentioned that the dominance of some field can become evident by one year. At the same time it was also stressed by the respondent of Estonia that they are trying to support those fields where the number of applicants is smaller. Generalizing the responses of Latvian interviews it can be concluded that the balance of fields does not directly belong to choice criteria. The respondents of Lithuania hold opposite opinions: the representative of Ministry of Culture said: “this is not important at all; the project counts” while the representative of the Lithuanian NCM Office contended that this is extremely important.

The question of the importance of “cultural enrichment” as a choice criteria was considered important by all the respondents.

The interviewees were also asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the choice criteria (question No 22). Despite the differences in the selection criteria (see Appendix 3, choice criteria), all the interviewees stressed that the criteria work well and that they do not see any need to change. No differences among countries can be brought out here.

The third important aspect for evaluating the rationality of the process is analysing the respondents’ attitudes towards financing: attitudes towards the amount of money¹⁵ that the Baltic countries have received from Nordic countries in the framework of programs (question No 5). It is important to stress that the respondents did not share a common opinion here: all Baltic countries felt differently about the amount of money required.

The respondents of Latvia shared the opinion that the amount of money that comes from the NCM Office of Nordic countries is very small. They argued that the grant covers only some of the necessary expenses and pointed that additional support comes from Latvian Ministry of Culture. Quoting the respondent:

“... [the grant covers] travel and accommodation costs plus participation fee, seminars and insurance. So many expenses stay uncovered: entrance to the museums, transportation of the paintings etc. That’s why we can say that we deal with symbolic sum of money. When there have been some bigger projects, the participants apply for some additional money from Latvian Cultural Fund. So financing from the Latvian side is already in this program.” (LVN)

The respondents of Lithuania found that the amount of money is optimal.

¹⁵ The amount of money is about 32 thousand EUR per year (the amount is not fixed). Source: NCM Offices in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Estonian respondent expressed most positive attitude towards the amount of money:

“it has been very big amount of money after all and during the years it has increased.” (EN)

The programs' correspondence to their aims

Generally speaking, the aim of the programs (Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbours) is to intensify/strengthen cooperation between Baltic and Nordic countries, including encouraging creation of contacts, giving the participants the possibility to participate in different processes etc. (see also Appendix 3, choice criteria). Keeping in mind the general aim the respondents were asked to assess the benefits from the program (question No 1). The keywords the respondents brought out were different, but all of them coincide with the aim that was set up for the programs. The most important keywords are the following: the importance of the practical experience, the importance of the programs for the young artist and cultural managers as well as the importance of the programs for cultural life as a whole. Citing the interviewees:

“it's very good, especially for young artists ... who start from the very beginning” (LVC)

“ ... there are many practical things they get ...” (LVC); “practical experience is a major advantage of this program” (EC)

“[the experience they get] ... comes back to our cultural life” (LVC)

“regarding cultural cooperation] these programs are definitely important ... such tool provides people with the opportunity to visit Nordic countries and take part in some program” (EC).

The respondents did not point to significant differences in fields of culture considering the benefits from the program (question No 2). The interviewees suggested that the only differences can be derived are that in some fields (e.g. visual arts) the artist are more active to apply for the grant and also (which is connected to the previous aspect) that in some fields the sharing of experiences and winning from mutual cooperation is more complicated because of the essence of the field (e.g. literature).

One of the critical aspects in achieving the aims of the program can be considered the compatibility of the Baltic and Nordic cultural policies: how do aims in the cultural policy field correspond. Here the representatives of Ministries of Culture gave the main comments. It was stressed by the representative of the Latvian Ministry of Culture that from the Nordic side great attention is paid to their needs and priorities. Quoting the respondent:

“They [the Nordic Council of Ministries] are always paying attention to our cultural policies. They are always looking what is needed in Latvia, in the Baltic States. ... They are always paying close attention to our priorities. So, the aims in culture are matching well. They are always keeping hand on our pulse in culture. The people in NCM bureaus are very aware of our needs.” (LVC)

One fact that came to light is that the Nordic countries are an attractive region for Baltic artists and cultural managers and this also supports and helps the achievement of the aims of the program. Still, the answers to the question about evaluating the attractiveness of the Nordic region for the Baltic countries (question No 7) show differences between the countries. Respondents from Latvia and Estonia stressed the closeness (in geographical sense as well as in mentality) with Nordic countries and used this as an explanation for the attractiveness of Nordic countries. Quoting the respondents:

“the Nordic countries are close; there are many similar things. And it is close, not long distance; and you can find cheap opportunities. It is possible to go to Stockholm in the morning and return in the evening. And, it’s also easier to work with Nordic countries – the soul is close.” (LVC).

“Their working methods, lifestyle, their responsibility, the character, etc. are close in Baltic and Nordic. It makes the full communication much easier. The projects benefit from this. It’s about the mentality. The Baltic and Nordic doors are opening mutually much easier.” (LVC)

“[regarding attractiveness of the Nordic region] one of the reasons is probably experience gained from previous visits as much as rather cheap travelling opportunities. Year by year many institutions have become closely connected by very tight cooperation (especially with Finland and Sweden). Iceland and Denmark has also started this kind of “invasion”. Nordic social model is very positive ... young people always find something interesting for their creative quest there. We are dealing with a common environmental and cultural space. This explains such powerful necessity for Nordic contacts”. (EN)

At the same time it was argued by the Latvian side that despite the fact they find the Nordic region attractive, they do not share mental closeness:

“Lithuanians do not go to the Nordic countries because of some deep identity. ... Mentality of Lithuanians “puts brakes” on the process as they are shy and do not like challenges. ... They [Lithuanians] do not go there because they feel that they belong to the Nordic countries. They go there if there is something for them. [And there is also] language barrier (Lithuanian do not speak Finnish or Swedish very much). And probably this is the sense why Baltic countries might differ.” (LTC)

All the three countries pointed that a certain shift in interest towards central and/or southern European countries has been taking place since the Baltic countries joined with the EU. Quoting the respondents:

“there is a small indication that after joining EU, Estonians started visiting countries of Central Europe with the same enthusiasm as they visit Nordic countries.” (EN)

“After joining with EU, people became a bit more interested in southern countries as they want to combine vacation with work and seek for the sun and a lot of colourful inspirations.” (LVN)

At the same time, the importance of the cooperation with Nordic countries was stressed several times, especially from Latvian side:

“Being member of EU – there many programs you can take part in. But still the Nordic programs are very important – the family of eight countries – because these give the practical knowledge to young people. And also because of the same mentality that we are sharing with the Nordic countries – it makes easier to work together.” (LVC)

The interviewees were also asked if they see differences in the attractiveness of by destination countries (question No 16). Generally it can be concluded that the attractiveness of the country for the applicants depends on the applicants’ field of activity. Quoting one of the respondents:

“it depends on the field. E.g., if it’s design, then it’s Finland. If it’s modern dance then it’s Norway. If it’s glass, then it’s Denmark. There are different fields developed in different countries. It doesn’t depend on geographical factors.” (LVC)

Still, Latvian and Estonian respondents pointed out that the best and closest cooperation has been with Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Norway. The representative of Lithuania argued that the cooperation is closer with Denmark, Sweden and Finland and Norway is the least attractive country.

As the aim of the program is to strengthen Baltic-Nordic cooperation, the question of cooperation between Baltic countries – in this context the cooperation between NCM Offices in Baltic countries as well as between the Ministries of Culture – in the frame of the program is also important. All the respondents stressed that the cooperation between the NCM Offices in Baltic countries is very good. It was stated like this by the representatives of NCM Offices in Baltic countries; quoting one of the respondents:

“We talk every week and share different issues and coordinate some guidelines in these programs. For example, we do not decide [here] that we want to concentrate on cinema without consulting with others. Sometimes we make different decisions but then we are aware of these differences, too. ... it is crucial that the offices have a constant streamline and connection with each other.” (LTN)

It was also the opinion of the representatives of Ministries of Culture as bystanders’: “the offices in Tallinn, Riga, and Vilnius are in good contacts. Always, if you have some questions and you are turning to them, they always have or get the answer.” (LVC)

The influence of the programs on Nordic-Baltic cultural cooperation

One of the central themes in this evaluation is the influence of the programs. At the same time, especially considering the aim of the programs (strengthen the cultural cooperation between Nordic and Baltic countries), measuring the effectiveness is complicated. One respondent gave the following example to illustrate the complexity:

“Once, Finnish model for estimation of work quality of employees has been put into use. The main purpose was to find those criteria how to measure/estimate the quality of an employee's work. It occurred practically impossible. The same thing is with culture – it is nearly impossible to evaluate the efficiency of cultural cooperation.” (EC)

The interviewees were asked what index they would use to measure efficiency of cultural cooperation (question No 26). Despite the fact that the interviewees considered the cultural cooperation as a “thing not to measure” (LVC) the following possibilities were described:

“Hard to answer, but probably it would be possible if someone looked through all the culture events that had took place (festivals, workshops etc) and the names of those (musicians, painters etc) who came from Nordic countries, and those who came from Central Europe. That might give quite good overview.” (EN)

“You have to measure how much money has been spent and how many events have been made with the help of this money totally, how many articles about exhibitions has been made or something like that.” (LTC)

“[on the other hand it was said that] it cannot be measured by money. [The number of projects] has some value, but it tells nothing about the quality. You can tell only by the opinions of people who have participated. The presence of those programs and the fact that they have been continuing for so long already shows something.” (LTN)

Describing the influence of the programs on strengthening cultural cooperation between the Nordic and Baltic countries the interviewees pointed to different aspects (questions No 24, 26, 27, 29). Generally speaking, according to the responses, the influence can be divided into two: general influence on the countries' level and the influence on participant's individual level.

First: *the influence of the programs on cultural cooperation between Baltic and Nordic countries in general*. Several respondents mentioned that the direct influence of the programs on cultural cooperation is hard to measure because there are other activities taking place at the same time that also influence this process. Still, it can be said that the interviewees expressed a very positive attitude. On this question the respondents discussed the following themes: enrichment of culture, development of cultural fields, growth of openness, direct joint projects between Baltic and

Nordic countries and the increase in numbers of joint projects, strengthening of cultural communication, etc. Quoting the respondents:

“When coming back ... these artists and cultural managers bring here new ideas of doing new things and maybe some joint projects between Latvia and Nordic countries. And actually recently there have been many such (big) projects in Latvia. ... I would say that each of these individual trips really brought an outcome of bigger festival or some other bigger event.” (LVN)

“and the whole cultural landscape becomes richer” (LVC)

“we do not (always) have opportunities and/or skills and competencies for developing some cultural field at home country. For instance in the modern dance field – they come back and do the things here better afterwards, start new projects, establish new institutions, etc.” (LVC)

“There is partial contribution of communication. All grant holders have been in the role of ambassadors of Estonia, as they influenced Nordic cultural environment by giving some part of their own field of art. Reflection of their results and this whole phenomenon in the Nordic media has definitely shown some impacts and caused curiosity in the minds of many people. Consequently, curiosity grows into interest and interest develops into something bigger – serious joint projects and cooperation. And this has definitely found place.” (EN)

“[the influence of the programs becomes also obvious] in the increased number of joint cultural projects.” (EC)

“the “effect” is that they [who have come back] are open more to public afterwards – the effect is that they and their activities are more visible, etc.” (LVC)

“the communication has become more active ... there has been transmission of values, creation of contacts, etc.” (EN)

The durability and the number of contacts can also be considered as one indicator in evaluating the influence of the programs on cultural cooperation. The interviewees had different opinions on this, still, their quite fragmented answers prevent the possibility of explicit conclusions. On the one hand it was mentioned that there were more short-term contacts at the beginning which were/are increasingly developing into long-term contacts. On the other hand it was argued that the contacts are simply different as described one interviewee:

“the point of short and long-term relations is different. And it’s not so that the amount of contacts matter, it depends on the quality of contacts ...” (LVC)

Secondly, the interviewees discussed the influence of the programs on the participants’ individually¹⁶. The benefits revealed by the respondents included: practical experience, new experience, the grant as an acknowledgement, gathering contacts, etc. Quoting the interviewees:

¹⁶ Here also the results of the interviews with the participants are used.

“... if someone goes abroad – it has practical outcome which [in turn] brings wider positive impact.” (EC); “getting the inside look how the institution is working” (PCCN1); “getting important new information which can be implemented at home” (PCCN2); “Knowing that you want to do something together and that you have a certain partner” (PCCN3)

“Getting the grant is a acknowledgement that he/she is a good artist.” (LVC)

“it’s about making the contacts, the partnerships and so.” (LVC), “developing the network” Baiba)

“getting to know new things” (LVC);

One separate means of evaluating the influence of the programs is to analyse the frequency and density of the communication with the participants after the grant period as well as the so-called follow-up activities of the participants (questions No 33 and 34).

Interpreting the interview responses taken in Estonia it can be concluded that there are some examples of communication between the participants and the representatives of the NCM Office and the Ministry of Culture after the grant period. With certain generalization it can be stated that the participants themselves are more active in this communication. Quoting the respondents:

“Such communication was not designated by these programs. Still, there are sent some invitations from time to time. We are always kept in mind – number of invitations by months shows it very clearly. We are trying to do the same from our side.” (EN)

It was also mentioned by the Estonian interviewees that the participants of the programs could be better exploited.

Based on the results of the interviews it can be said that in Latvia and Lithuania the communication is more active and more bilateral:

“We have mailing lists and invite them here when he are having some events. We send them information. Many of them come to us if they need some advice etc. ... the circulation is very good all the time.” (LVN)

“There are things that follow: [on the one side]: when they [grant holders] are coming back from Nordic countries, they always try to organize some presentation: is it a book or exhibition or concert, etc.; we receive invitations to exhibitions, concerts, etc. every day. [And on the other hand] the NCM Office also organizes different events.” (LVC)

“[the communication is] very intensive, very active. They consult with us and we invite them to different occasions.” (LTN)

Despite the unilateral nature of the programs' benefits¹⁷ the interviewees were also asked what benefit did the Nordic countries gain in their opinion (questions No 31 and 32). The responses demonstrate certain differences in the views of interviewees. The representatives of the Estonian and Lithuanian Ministries of Culture as well as the representatives of the NCM Offices found that the Baltic countries have definitely gained more from these programs. At the same time it was stressed that if bigger projects would have taken place the benefits would be more multilateral. The representative of the Latvian Ministry of Culture expressed the opinion that Nordic countries have gained from these programs quite similarly to the Baltic countries referring that similar situation exists in the countryside as well as that the cultural fields and environment itself in Baltic countries is developing:

"it is quite the same for Nordic countries. Especially, if we are talking about smaller towns, villages, countryside. In big cities, there are many possibilities, different things are going on, and so. But in countryside, small towns, also in Nordic countries, they are very interested in that somebody is coming. And via this, they become personal friends." And

"...there are more and more those kind of examples [that the Nordic artists are interested in and coming to Baltic countries]. And this is so because here are very many things happening. There are more different events, different cultural institutions are opening and so ... and the fields are developing ..." (LVC).

The interviewees' attitude about the influence and the trend in the influence of the programs on Nordic-Baltic cooperation can be summed up with the following illustrative quotation:

"... There is a feeling that number of Nordic participants has been growing year by year. This is explained by the fact that posters of different culture events are seen not only in the biggest cities of Estonia ... Nordic accent is also recognized outside the biggest places. Such mobility has been happening gradually (but consistently) on this "bridge of culture". Contacts have become more intense and routine." (EN)

The importance of continuing with the programs and necessity for making changes in programs

In order to evaluate the importance of these programs (to continue with these/similar programs) and the necessity for making change in the programs the following devices are used: the advantages and disadvantages of the programs, the character of feedback received, the possible changes in the bases of the program.

Starting with the present advantages of the programs (question No 3) the advantages that were stressed by different respondents are the following.

Firstly, the experience the participants get. Quoting the respondents:

¹⁷ At the moment the Baltic artists and cultural managers are going to Nordic countries, the Nordic ones are not coming to Baltic countries in the frame of these programs.

“the biggest advantages are the practical as well as professional experiences the participants get from the Nordic countries.” (LVC)

“... from the viewpoint of the participant ... sensing of such necessity that gives something fresh and constructive to creative maturity.” (EN)

“experience, communication, inspiration etc” (LVN)

Secondly, the cultural enrichment, cultural exchange:

“the implementation of these new practices into our cultural life, cultural institutions, organizations, etc.” LVC

“You have to observe. It gives inspiration. This is probably the most important for such post-Soviet country like Lithuania. It is important to change way of thinking and this is what this programme offers, in my opinion.” (LTC)

“Possibility to travel and export the country, being a calling card.” (LTN)

Thirdly, the possibility for young artists: “the advantage is that it is directed to young artists (whose projects are not so mature or something – to get the support from for instance Culture Capital Foundation)” (LVC)
The fourth advantage is the simplicity of applying. Quoting the interviewees:

“the advantage is that the grants are easy to apply – the form is simple, etc.” (LVC)

“... Sleipnir might be the most flexible program of them all. Applying for the grant has been very simple; so has been the choice of applications.” (EN)

Besides the advantages, it is also important to pay attention to the disadvantages of the programs (question No 3, II part). Here a common opinion cannot be seen across the respondents. Conversely, respondents of Latvia and Estonia did not point to any disadvantages. As one of the interviewees stated:

“If there could be any disadvantages, majority of those are personal and does not have anything in common with the program” (LVN).

Lithuanian respondent, at the same time, pointed to couple of problematic aspects:

“Limit of the territory. ... in visual arts we have to choose the countries that are not actually the centre of this field. Language barrier (Lithuanian do not speak Finnish or Swedish very much). Mentality of Lithuanians “puts brakes” on the process as they are shy and do not like challenges.” (LTC)

The character of the feedback from the participants (questions No 36 and 37) coincides with the merit of the question of advantages-disadvantages

of the program. All the respondents stated that they have got no negative feedback from the respondents. As one respondent illustratively marked:

“And like the proverb says: it is not polite to look into the mouth of the gifted horse” (LVC).

The interviewees stressed with one voice that they have not received any comments from the participants about changing the program.

As a separate perspective, enquiries were made about the reports on the participants which they have to write after the grant period have been used. The interviewees from Estonia and Lithuania argued that these are read through, but they do not have a systematic way to use them afterwards. The representatives of Latvia stated that they have written some short reports and used the participants’ reports for sending them information about follow-up projects. Additionally, it should be said that the program Closer Culture Neighbours emerged from the Latvian NCM Office because cultural managers were not covered in Sleipnir. As one of the respondents said: “this is the result from the survey doing by the Latvian NCM office”.

A separate group of questions touched upon the possible changes in the principles of the programs (questions No 38 and 39). Still, it is important to stress that the general attitude towards the programs that the interviewees expressed was very positive; the following quotation illustrates this rather well:

“The Nordic countries are always very practically, pragmatically thinking. Everything is in order, in the right time in the right place. Comparing to other countries the Nordic countries are giving very big money to develop the cooperation. The cooperation with Nordic countries is on very practical level. And it is very open as well. Actually, both of the programs are not for comparing with any other programs. It has been excellent work of the NCM office.” (LVC)

Thus the changes to which the respondents referred can not be considered substantial or fundamental.

The proposals about the possible changes are discussed in two groups: the change in present principles and adding new aspects to the programs.

First, considering the necessity to change, the respondents referred that the programs could need overlooking in general. The issue that attracted most attention among the interviewees was the present age limit. The interviewees from Estonia shared the opinion that this limit, the maximum limit should be abolished. Quoting the respondent:

“Age limit is really a problem. On the other hand, talking about students, I think it is right. Studying period is meant for studying ... there are other education programs that provide such self-development and copying them would be a waste of resources.” (EN)

The interviewees from Latvia found both – pro and contra – arguments for the present age limit. Still, they rather tended to support that there is no need to change the age limit. Quoting the respondents:

“the age limit – we have discussed it many times that should it be or not. On the one hand, it is very good that the programs are especially for young people. Because they don't know very clearly what they want. Sometimes the experiences they got help them to find what they really want. On the other hand, why such age limit. ... the artists' activity depends on the personality and is not dependent only on age.” (LVC)

Lithuanian respondents presented different opinions. The representative of the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture found that the age limit is good; the representative of the Lithuanian NCM Office stated the opposite: “I would cancel the age limit ... there is no age limit in the Nordic system”. Additionally, the respondents pointed to several objective arguments that speak in favour of keeping the age limit as it is:

“Up to 36 people are looking for new opportunities; they are keen to make as many contacts as possible, to get around. Afterwards the people are more stable; the personality is not so keen to go. People change with age – and this is some kind of objective reason for this age limit.” (LVC)

“For an artist it is a bit too late to go there after being 36 years old.” (LTC)

“it is good that there is age limit ... it is concrete criterion and [it makes the program] a special program for young artists.” (LVC)

Secondly, is the issue of possible new topics which could be integrated into the programs. The interviewees did not point to very many new aspects. The possible new matters discussed can be grouped into three: additional contribution to Nordic-Baltic cooperation, additional focus of the programs, and administrative/organizational aspects.

First, additional contribution to Nordic-Baltic cooperation:

“it would be good if the new program would be both-sided. It would be even more important for the Nordic countries, because not feel that only them are giving something.” (LVC)

“I think that the Baltic States should be integrated [more] into the Nordic system.” (LTN)

Secondly: the additional focus of the programs. Here the possibility of integrating language training into the program:

“Language study is supposable. Lots of people have asked to go to the Nordic countries to study some Scandinavian language. Interest to go abroad would be even bigger. For example, number of translators to Scandinavian languages is very small in Estonia.” (EN)

Thirdly, the administrative/organizational aspects, under which a need for a database was alluded to:

“there could be a very good system or a database with the data about the places where to go or what to do by field of activity and other things.” (LTC)

4.2 Analysis of the web-based survey

The total number of respondents was 131; the number of respondents divides between two programs as follows: 111 respondents from Sleipnir program and 20 respondents from Closer Culture Neighbours program. Considering the Sleipnir programme has been in operation since 1997 and Closer Culture Neighbours since 2003 the amount of people who have been using the grant (see also item “general statistics” below), is remarkable. Therefore the amount of respondents from each program varies to a large extent.

The results of the survey are analysed separately by program to differentiate the participants’ different needs, aims, ambitions, etc. The attention is also paid on the possible differences between the three Baltic States.

4.2.1 Analysis of the results of Sleipnir grant users

Comparing the statements of Sleipnir participants is complicated due to the fact that the purposes and activity of the participants are varied. The quotation below from one of the interviews illustrates expressively the different possible activities:

“For example, in Sleipnir program some of participants went to workshops, which means that there was more or less a creative process on the spot. On the other hand, there are painters, for example. The main reason of going to the Nordic countries is looking for inspiration. We were pleasantly surprised when many painters came back and made an exhibition dedicated to some specific topic. One of the participants went to Lapland, spent a whole month there and made many paintings, part of which you are seeing here right now, inspired by Lapland’s nature.” (LVN)

General statistics

Together 111 persons responded to the questionnaire from three Baltic States. There were 15 respondents from Estonia, 50 respondents from Latvia and 46 respondents from Lithuania. The majority of the respondents were women (72%) (QA1¹⁸). The average age of the respondents was between the years of 27–28 in all three countries (QA2). The average

¹⁸ See Appendix 1 question Qxy, where *x* is the number of topic and *y* is the number of question.

length of the period of using the grant (QC3) was different in the three Baltic countries: in Estonia it was about 11 days, in Latvia 9 days and in Lithuania about 19 days. It is important to mention that all fields of culture among the respondents (QA6) were represented. The following figure shows the division of the respondents by sphere of culture (see Figure 6).

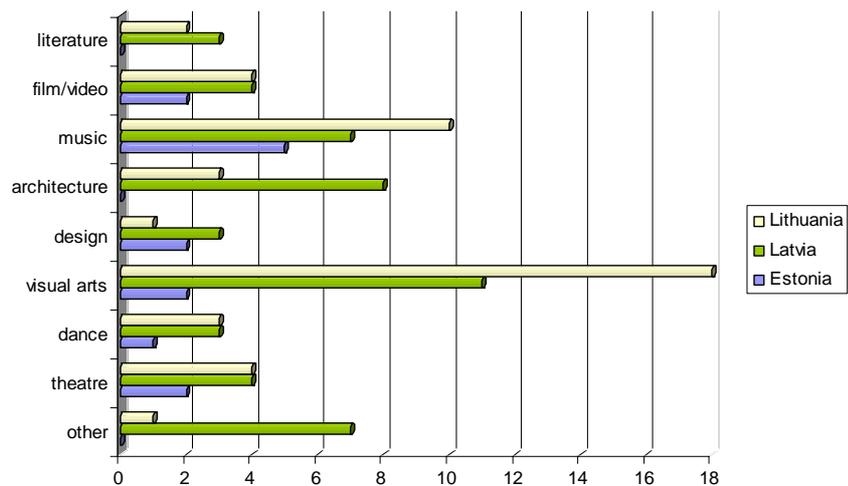


Figure 6. Sphere of culture (number of respondents)

As Figure 6 shows, the biggest number of respondents were from the field of visual arts (together 31 respondents), including 18 from Lithuania, 11 from Latvia and 2 from Estonia. The next biggest group of respondents were musicians (a total of 22 respondents): 10 from Lithuania, 7 from Latvia, and 5 from Estonia.

The majority of the respondents had used the grant once (QA7). Still, 37 respondents out of 111 remarked that they have used it more than once.

Concerning the destination countries, the preferences of the respondents are shown on Figure 7.

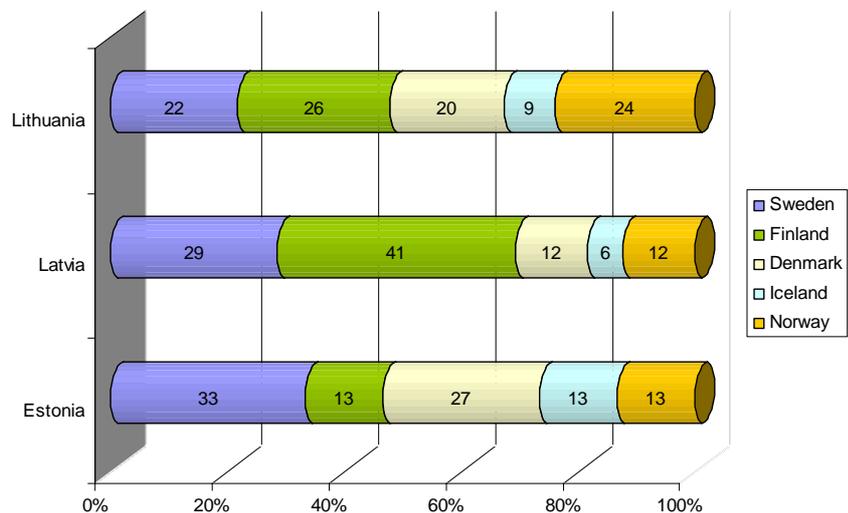


Figure 7. Which country did you choose for the grant? (% of respondents)

According to Figure 7, Estonians went mostly to Sweden, Latvians and Lithuanians to Finland. The least chosen country was Iceland. Hypothetically it can be argued that the reason why Finland was not the first choice among the Estonians could be that Estonians are quite acquainted with Finland and are using the opportunity to go to another Nordic country. As follows the results are analysed by the topics used in the questionnaire.

The awareness of the program and conditions of applying for the grant

The following topics were sought from the respondents: the information channel they used, the sufficiency of the information for the program in general as well as for the conditions of applying for the grant, the clarity of the choice criteria and the support of the NCM Office.

The following Figure shows the main channels the respondents used (QB1) to get information about the programme and for applying conditions (see Figure 8).

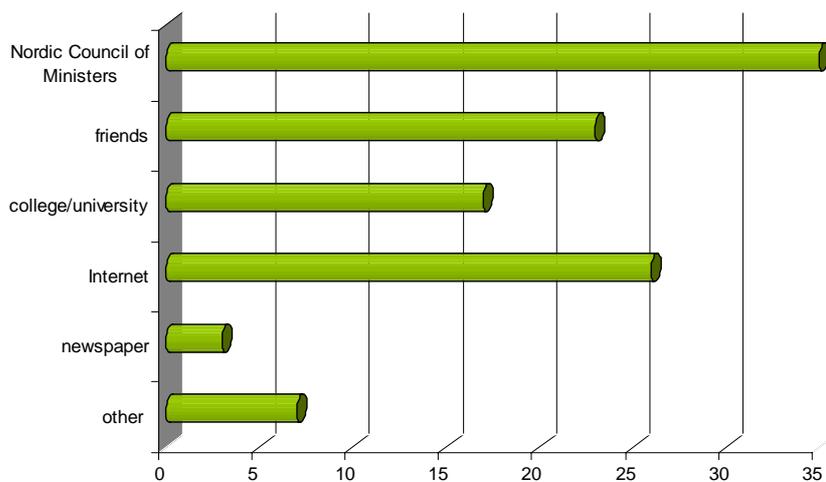


Figure 8. Information channel (number of respondents)

The Figure 8 shows the importance of the NCM Office in informing about the program. The two second channels that were most actively used were internet and friends. Least frequently the respondents used newspapers. Concerning this question, there were no notable differences between the three Baltic countries.

The question about the quality and sufficiency of the information of the program and applying conditions (QB2 and QB3) reveals certain differences between the Baltic countries. The most satisfied with the information offered were Lithuanian respondents and the least satisfied were Estonians.

Concerning the help of the employees of the NCM Office in applying for the grants (QB4), the respondents' found them to be very supportive in all three Baltic States. The positive attitude and the acknowledgment of the good work of the NCM Office by the participants come out also from the question about the clarity of the choice criteria for the participants (QB5). The majority of the respondents found that selection criteria for applications were rather clear or very clear. In Estonia all the respondents had that opinion, in Latvia this percentage was 88% and in Lithuania 87%.

Using of the grant

Under the topic "using of the grant" the respondents were asked to assess their reasons for applying for the grant, the period of using the grant, the importance of different countries in their field of activity point of view as well as the attractiveness of Nordic region as a whole.

First, a question was asked about the attractiveness of the Nordic region regarding the respondent's field (QC4). All the respondents of three Baltic countries found that the Nordic region is attractive: all together 80 respondents found Nordic region being very attractive and inspiring and for 29 respondents it was comparatively attractive. Only one respondent stated that if he/she could have opportunity to choose, he/she would have chosen another country. (See also Box 1 for supporting as well as non-supportive examples¹⁹)

Box 1.

Supportive:

- Literature: Nordic region is very attractive and much more attractive than Southern region. For example, the Swedish Book Fair in Gothenburg is frequently mentioned very positively. (Estonia)
- Visual arts (painting, graphics): Nordic region is extremely attractive. Time of staying is often really short, especially for a painter. (Latvia)

Non-supportive

- Jewelry: Nordic countries are becoming less attractive – Central Europe is much more interesting for this field of art. (Estonia)

Sweden came out to be the most important Nordic country regarding respondents' field of activity for respondents of all three Baltic States (QC5). Sweden was shown to be the most important destination country by every second Estonian respondent and by every third Latvian and Lithuanian respondent (altogether 35 respondents from three countries).

¹⁹ This and the following boxes reflect the results from the interviews with the participants, which are particularized as case studies.

Finland and Denmark were the second most important destination countries (altogether 24 respondents from three countries).

The results of the question about the main reasons for applying for the grant (QC1) are shown on Table 6.

Table 6. Participants' reasons for applying for the grant (% of respondents)

Please estimate your own reasons for the grant's application regarding the following scale. applied for the grant with the purpose to:					
		Important	←→		Unimportant
Create new contacts	Estonia	40	27	7	27
	Latvia	49	18	18	14
	Lithuania	36	9	29	27
Enlarge field of view	Estonia	60	0	7	33
	Latvia	54	8	6	32
	Lithuania	40	7	16	38
Work together with my foreign partners, colleague	Estonia	40	13	13	33
	Latvia	27	37	12	24
	Lithuania	42	7	22	29
Work in another environment	Estonia	21	29	21	29
	Latvia	33	33	15	20
	Lithuania	19	26	28	28
Acquire new activity models and skills	Estonia	27	33	27	13
	Latvia	43	15	17	24
	Lithuania	27	22	24	27
Develop opportunities in my activity field in my home country are limited	Estonia	40	27	13	20
	Latvia	39	17	17	26
	Lithuania	18	27	20	34

According to Table 6, it can be concluded that Estonians are primarily oriented on cooperation and for broadening their field of view. The three main purposes for applying for the grant were: to work together with many foreign partners, create new contacts, to enlarge their field of view and because developing opportunities in their home country are limited. The same purposes can be seen among Lithuanians. Latvia, on the other hand, attached more importance to developing their field of activity as the two main purposes for them were: to enlarge their field of view, acquiring new activity models and skills. They also valued creating new contacts.

The respondents gave also evaluations for the period of using the grant by different aspects (QC6). See the next table (see Table 7).

Table 7. The evaluation of the period of using the grant in a foreign country (% of respondents)

		Please estimate the period of using the grant in a foreign state by the following aspects			
		Poor	←→		Very good
Readiness of a foreign partner to cooperate	Estonia	14	0	29	57
	Latvia	13	22	33	31
	Lithuania	12	19	31	38
Timing	Estonia	7	13	27	53
	Latvia	7	39	41	14
	Lithuania	8	15	55	23
Amount of received contacts	Estonia	7	27	27	40
	Latvia	9	15	63	13
	Lithuania	5	15	55	25
Quality of received contacts	Estonia	7	20	27	47
	Latvia	16	4	58	22
	Lithuania	10	18	43	30
Received practical knowledge, skills	Estonia	13	13	27	47
	Latvia	9	25	36	30
	Lithuania	12	21	19	48
Received theoretical knowledge, skills	Estonia	7	7	47	40
	Latvia	11	18	42	29
	Lithuania	7	19	40	33
Amount of acquired activity models and methods	Estonia	13	40	33	13
	Latvia	9	25	43	23
	Lithuania	8	20	35	38
Quality of acquired activity models and methods	Estonia	14	29	29	29
	Latvia	5	25	43	27
	Lithuania	10	22	29	39
Attractiveness of environment	Estonia	0	20	20	60
	Latvia	14	11	30	45
	Lithuania	10	8	38	44

Table 7 shows that readiness of a foreign partner to cooperate as well as timing in organizational sense was most positively evaluated by Estonian respondents. The Estonians were slightly more satisfied with the amount and quality of received contacts and received more practical and theoretical knowledge, skills than the respondents from other Baltic countries. The amount of acquired activity models and methods was most highly evaluated by Lithuanian respondents and the quality of acquired activity models and methods by Lithuanian and Latvian respondents. The attractiveness of the environment of the destination country was considered very attractive by respondents of all three countries (the respondents recognized likewise concerning question No C4).

From in-depth interviews with the participants some additional aspects that concern the period of using the grant can be brought out (see Box 2).

Box 2

“Sleipnir does not cover per diems. That was a bit problematic for me because going to the Nordic countries from Eastern Europe – it makes some differences due to the different standards of living.” (Lithuania)

“Iceland is very expensive. They could cover per diems, it is not even so expensive to fly there, than buy food etc.” (Lithuania)

“Denmark was the first country where I got a contact from. Finding an institution was not a problem at all.” (Lithuania)

Benefits from using the grant

The answers to questions about the benefits the respondents got from using the grant can be considered as one of the most important in the evaluation. To find out the respondents attitude towards the benefits from using the grant the following aspects are analysed: the benefits the respondents got by different aspects, the continuity of the communication with the foreign partner, the mutuality of the benefits (benefits for grant holder and for foreign party), and the benefit from getting the grant in a broader sense.

Firstly, the respondents were asked for their opinion about the period of using the grant in general (QD1). Predominantly, the respondents of three Baltic countries stated that the benefits from the grant were equal to their expectations. Especially satisfied were Lithuanian respondents: 40% of respondents marked that this exceeded their expectations; in Latvia and Estonia it was every fifth respondent. Only 4 respondents from Latvia stated that the result of using the grant was below expectations. Table 8 shows the benefits the respondents got in more detail (QD2).

Table 8 shows that the three most important benefits Estonians get during the grant period were the following: getting to know new opportunities of your field of activity, experience of cooperation with foreign colleagues, acquired theoretical knowledge, skills. Latvians and especially Lithuanians attached more value to the cooperation and contacts. The three most important benefits for Latvians were the following: creating new contacts, experience of cooperation with foreign colleagues and the development opportunities of their field; and for Lithuanians: creating new contacts, work experience abroad and experience of cooperation with foreign colleagues. See also Box 3 for opinions of the participants.

Box 3

“I gained painting and printing techniques, received new contacts. It was definitely over my expectations.” (Lithuania)

Table 8. The benefits from using the grant (% of respondents)

		Important	←→	Unimportant
What do you find the most important that the grant offered to you?				
Creating new contacts	Estonia	33	20	27
	Latvia	37	30	17
	Lithuania	40	19	30
Getting to know new opportunities of your field of activity	Estonia	53	7	40
	Latvia	42	15	29
	Lithuania	33	13	24
Acquiring of new activity models and methods	Estonia	27	27	20
	Latvia	32	32	14
	Lithuania	12	34	22
Work experience abroad	Estonia	29	29	36
	Latvia	18	27	27
	Lithuania	42	12	21
Working in a stimulating environment	Estonia	36	7	43
	Latvia	22	38	18
	Lithuania	21	28	21
Experience of cooperation with foreign colleagues	Estonia	43	0	50
	Latvia	32	28	21
	Lithuania	42	19	26
Acquired practical knowledge, skills	Estonia	29	29	36
	Latvia	27	27	20
	Lithuania	26	17	21
Acquired theoretical knowledge, skills	Estonia	40	20	27
	Latvia	30	27	18
	Lithuania	14	36	24

It is important to compare the expectations with the results, i.e. the results brought in Table 6 (the respondents’ main reasons for applying for the grant) with the results from Table 8. The different topics in these two tables are compared as follows:

- create new contacts (Table 6) with creating new contacts (Table 8)
- work together with my foreign partners, colleagues (Table 6) with experience of cooperation with foreign colleagues (Table 8)
- Acquire new activity models and skills (Table 6) with acquired practical and theoretical knowledge, skills (Table 8)
- Work in another environment (Table 6) with work experience abroad and working in a stimulating environment (Table 8)

Comparing these two tables it can be concluded that Latvians were most satisfied with creating new contacts, for Estonians it was slightly below expectations and in case of Lithuanian respondents, it can be said that creating new contacts exceeded their expectations (as they undervalued these compared to Estonians and Latvians).

Comparing the aspect “work together with my foreign partners” from Table 6 with the aspect “experience of cooperation with foreign colleagues” from Table 8 the following conclusions can be drawn: for Esto-

nians the expectations were somewhat higher, for Lithuanians the results were equal to the expectations and in case of Latvians the cooperation with foreign colleagues succeeded better than expected.

Comparing the aspect “acquire new activity models and skills” (Table 6) with the aspect “acquired practical and theoretical knowledge skills” it can be concluded that both Estonians and Latvians got the practical and theoretical knowledge they wanted and expected; for Lithuanians this aspect turned out to be slightly below expectations.

And finally, comparing the “work in another environment (Table 6) with “work experience abroad” and “working in a stimulating environment” (Table 8) the following conclusion can be made: for Estonians and Lithuanians the environment abroad turned out to be as stimulating as they expected; Latvians were expecting somewhat more in the environment than it actually transpired.

One of the benefits from using the grant is the range of contacts the participants got during using the grant. The participants were asked how the communication with foreign partners continued after the grant period (QD4) (see Figure 9).

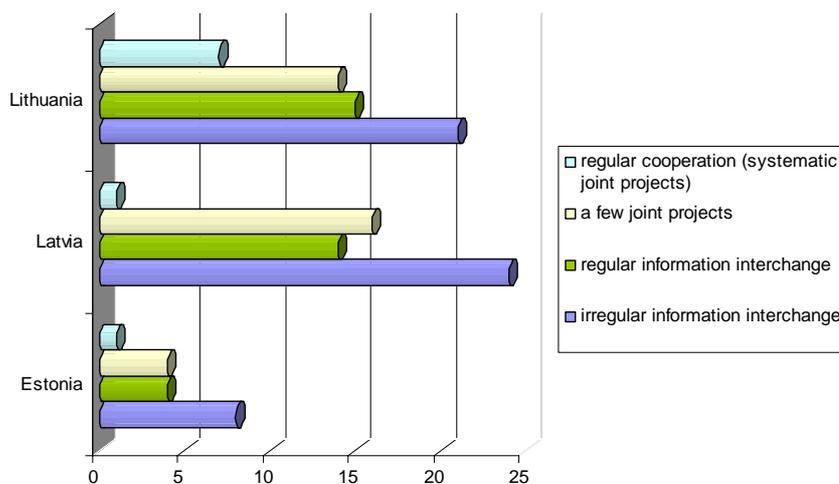


Figure 9. Continuity of communication with foreign colleagues (partners) continued (number of respondents)

* Here the respondents could choose more than one answer

As it can be seen from Figure 9, it is common in all Baltic countries that the participants continue with irregular information interchange with their foreign partners. Positively it can be seen that a few joint projects are taking place. From in-depth interviews with the participants several examples of cooperation were pointed out (see Box 4).

Box 4

- *Jewelry*: very strong partnership with Swedish and Finnish jewelry art schools. (Estonia)
- *Literature*: very active cooperation with foreign colleagues and lots of new joint projects. (Latvia)

There were also separate questions about the grant’s influence on participants’ professional level (QD5) as well as on their activity in their field (QD6). The majority of respondents argued that their professional level increased to some extent (73% of all respondents). 23% of respondents stated that their professional level was significantly increased. Regarding the question about the participants’ activity in their field, 60% of all respondents stated that it increased to some extent. 20% of all respondents were of the opinion that it remained the same and 20% that it increased significantly.

Despite the program functioning only on the basis that artists from Baltic countries go to Nordic countries (in frame of this program Nordic artists are not coming to the Baltic countries), the question about mutual benefits was asked (QD7) (see Figure 10).

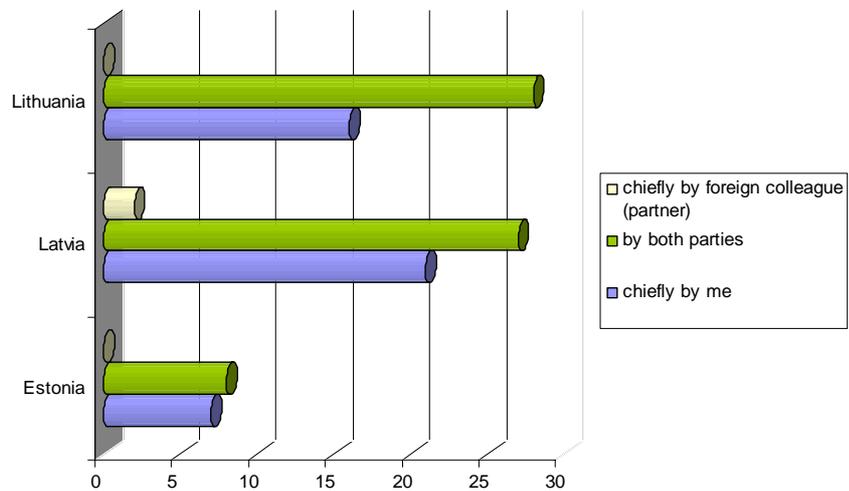


Figure 10. Mutual benefits from using the grant (number of respondents)

As Figure 10 shows the respondents stated overwhelmingly that the benefits were mutual. A point of interest is that one Latvian respondent said that it was foreign partners who chiefly benefited from the grant period. See also Box 5 for illustrative examples.

Box 5

Visual arts: artist have an amazing opportunity to teach each other. Studying and learning something new in Nordic countries is bilateral process. Quoting the respondent (Latvia):

“When I participated in that workshop in Sweden, one person had to teach me a new technique and after some time we discovered that I was actually teaching him.”

One broader aspect in evaluating the benefits is also what kind of impact getting the grant has in general. The participants were asked if the grant helped them with any other application (applying for other grants, jobs, etc.) or not (QD9). The majority of respondents argued that getting the grant has helped them in other applications: 36 respondents stated that it has helped them in submitting project applications, 26 that the grant has helped in applying for other grants and 11 respondents said that the grant has helped to get the job. Altogether 39 respondents noted that the grant did not help them in their other activities.

Future perspective of the program

Almost all respondents (104 respondents) found that the program should continue on the same principles. The respondents who favoured continuing on the same basis listed the following positive attributes: simplicity of applying for the grant, uniqueness of the programs (regarding the fact that many other funds do not support certain art fields), outstanding chance to discover Nordic countries and find support to the projects, increasing notoriety of the programs amongst young people.

*4.2.2 Analysis of the results of Closer Culture Neighbours grant users**General statistics*

The difference in the amount of feedback for Closer Culture Neighbours program was sixfold – only 20 participants from three Baltic countries answered. The number of respondents is divided as following: 1 from Estonia, 11 from Latvia and 8 from Lithuania. The gender differentiation resembles the pattern found with Sleipnir. The majority of the respondents were women – 14 women and 6 men, whose average age was 28–29 in all three countries. The period of using the grant was approximately 25 days in Estonia and Lithuania, and 21 days in Latvia. Obviously, the time period of using the grant is at least twice as long compared to Sleipnir. The reasons for that can be different.

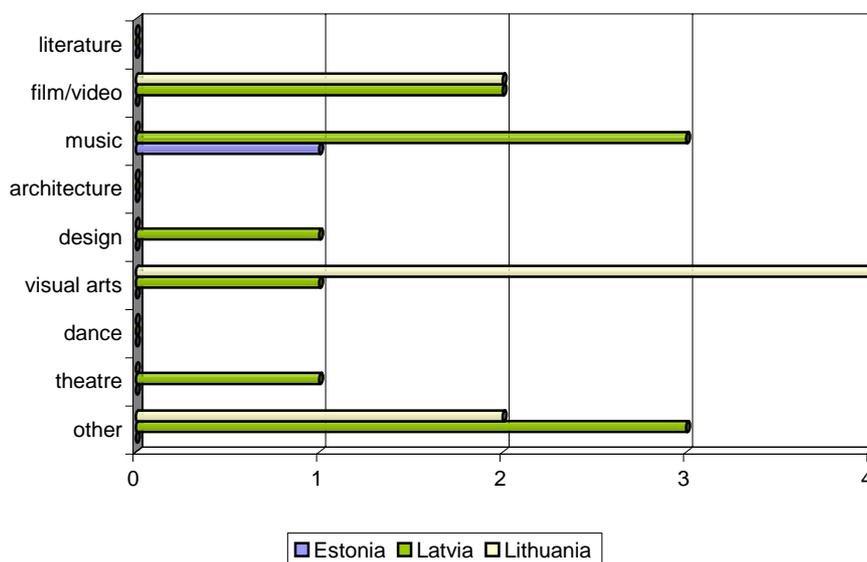


Figure 11. Sphere of culture (number of respondents)

It is worth mentioning that the respondent from Estonia belongs to music industry, which can be also stated about Latvia where the majority of respondents were from the same field of art (see figure 11). In Lithuania the biggest group of those who responded were managers from visual arts.

Table 9. Which country did you choose for the grant? (number of respondents)

	Sweden	Finland	Denmark	Iceland	Norway
Estonia	1	0	0	0	0
Latvia	2	3	2	3	1
Lithuania	0	3	2	0	3

The most popular destination countries amongst the participants of Latvia were Finland and Iceland. Finland and Norway were the countries that most attracted Lithuanians; Sweden was preferred by Estonians. Attractiveness of the Nordic region regarding the field of activity was estimated as comparatively attractive by 3, 16 respondents found that the country they visited was very attractive and inspiring (see box 6). One respondent would have chosen another region (England), which also explains why the choice of the participant for “benefit from using the grant” was “under expectations”.

Box 6

Nordic region is attractive due to both similarities and fundamental differences in culture:

“General picture about Southern countries is more dispersed, Nordic countries are closer to us by many aspects” (Dance, Estonia)

“Crucial aspects about the attractiveness of the country are history of certain field of culture and geographical location” (Photography, Latvia)

“Exchange of experience with the Nordic countries is extremely interesting and especially important for the Post-Soviet countries” (Visual arts, Lithuania)

The awareness of the program and conditions of applying for the grant

As follows, there is a list of information channels the respondents used to get information about the program and conditions about the grant (see Figure 12).

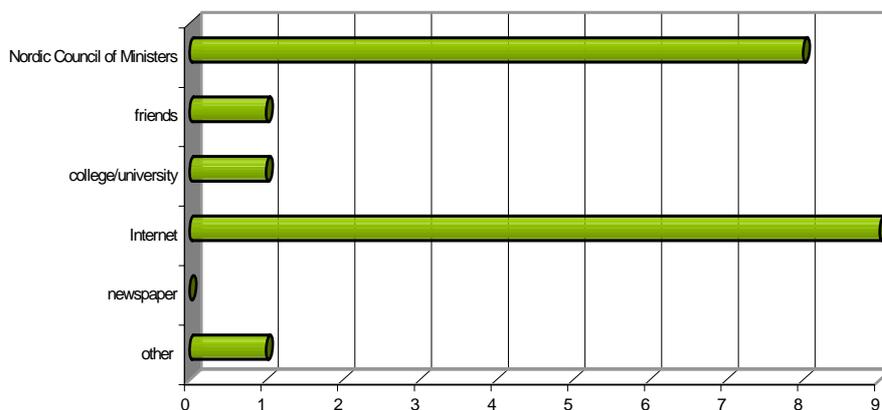


Figure 12. Information channels (number of respondents)

As the figure shows, the most efficient source of transmitting the information was Internet which was also very well supported by the good work of NCM offices. As for newspapers, this information channel did not fulfil its purpose. On the other hand, two thirds of the respondents thought that received information was sufficient, and one third of those who responded described the information as very detailed.

These results are supported by the answers to the questions about information quality and applying conditions (QB2 and QB3). Participants most satisfied with the information were from Latvia, 4 Lithuanian respondents thought that information was enough and another 4 – very detailed.

According to the answers on the question about help of employees of the NCM Office (QB4), it is concluded that each and every one of the

respondents was satisfied – 3 of them were generally satisfied, 15 respondents found this help very supportive and 2 did not need help at all as the information was superbly understood. Also, the question about the criteria used for deciding selection among applications (QB5) gave a confident overview of the situation – 11 respondents claimed those criteria rather clear, 8 respondents – very clear and only 1 participant was not sure enough how his/or her application was chosen²⁰.

Use of the grant

The first question concerning the attractiveness of the Nordic region (QC4) did not give surprising results. The majority of the respondents (16) estimated it as a very attractive and inspiring, 3 participants voted for the region as rather attractive and only 1 respondent (the same person who would have chosen another country as mentioned before) was not very interested in this region. Sweden and Denmark turned out to be the most important Nordic countries for the participants (QC5). Latvians would prefer Sweden (5) more than Denmark (3) and other Nordic countries; Lithuanians, on the other hand, estimated equally important the countries Denmark (2), Finland (2) and Norway (2). As a matter of fact, none of the respondents chose Iceland.

The results of the question regarding the main reason for applying for Closer Culture Neighbours grant are shown on the Table 10:

Table 10. Participants' reasons for applying for the grant (number of respondents)

Please estimate your own reasons for the grant's application regarding the following scale. I applied for the grant with the purpose to:

		Important	←	→	Unimportant
Create new contacts	Estland	0	0	0	1
	Lettland	6	0	2	3
	Litauen	1	0	0	7
Enlarge field of view	Estland	0	0	0	1
	Lettland	6	0	2	2
	Litauen	1	0	1	6
Work together with my foreign partners, colleagues	Estland	0	0	0	1
	Lettland	4	3	1	2
	Litauen	2	0	5	1
Work in another environment	Estland	0	0	0	1
	Lettland	3	4	2	1
	Litauen	0	4	0	4
Acquire new activity models and skills	Estland	0	0	0	1
	Lettland	5	2	2	1
	Litauen	0	1	2	5
Develop opportunities in my activity field in my home country are limited	Estland	0	0	0	1
	Lettland	2	1	3	4
	Litauen	4	0	1	1

²⁰ This and the following boxes reflect the results from the interviews with the participants, which are particularized as case studies.

According to Table 10, it shows that Latvians are mostly interested in widening their field of view, receiving new contacts and acquiring new skills while visiting Nordic countries. As a matter of fact, the last aspect proved is only important for Latvians. On the other hand, Lithuanians represent counterweight to Latvians by choosing developing opportunities in their activity field and cooperation with foreign colleagues (see box 7) as the most important reasons for application for the grant (although the last factor is also mentioned as an important factor for Latvians). Opportunity of working in another environment seems to be interesting only for Latvians.

Box 7

Grant holders are very interested about acquiring new skills and communication with foreign colleagues, but they accentuate on necessity of high level of trust:

„Visiting an institution in a foreign country assumes very high trust level regarding a participant, so it takes time” (Dance, Estonia)

„It is rather problematic to find time and trust activity to the foreigner in this field” (Visual arts/film, Latvia)

On the other hand, some of the grant holders have commented on very high level of organizational skills of the foreign colleague:

„Everything was thought through. Never thought that making a press conference is so serious – every detail was on proper time and in a proper place.” (Dance, Estonia)

As follows, the respondents estimated the period of using the grant (QC6) which is shown on Table 11.

According to the results, it is concluded that the estimations are very positive. In particular, the amount of received contacts and attractiveness of environment seemed to be the factors which respondents were satisfied about. Half of the respondents estimated different aspects during the period of being abroad as “very good”.

Box 8

Despite the fact that the feedback from the questionnaire concerning period of using the grant were positive, there have appeared rather negative experiences amongst the participants of this grant (based on the interviews). Mostly readiness of foreign partner to cooperate was named as a problem:

“Slight scepticism and feeling of unreliability towards cultural managers”
(Dance, Estonia)

“avoidance of other participants by purpose, wish to achieve something personally” (Visual arts, Lithuania)

“Instead of being there for 3 weeks, I had an opportunity to spend only 3 days there. Time of stay in the host institution was sevenfold (!)” (Visual arts/film, Latvia)

Table 11. The evaluation of the period of using the grant in a foreign country (% of respondents)

Please estimate the period of using the grant in a foreign state by the following aspects (number of respondents)

		Poor	←————→		Very good
Readiness of a foreign partner to cooperate	Estland	0	0	0	1
	Lettland	1	2	3	4
	Litauen	0	0	4	4
Timing	Estland	0	0	0	1
	Lettland	1	2	4	3
	Litauen	0	0	3	5
Amount of received contacts	Estland	0	0	1	0
	Lettland	1	1	4	5
	Litauen	0	1	2	5
Quality of received contacts	Estland	0	0	1	0
	Lettland	1	3	2	4
	Litauen	0	0	3	5
Received practical knowledge, skills	Estland	0	1	0	0
	Lettland	2	2	4	2
	Litauen	0	0	4	4
Received theoretical knowledge, skills	Estland	0	1	0	0
	Lettland	2	1	5	2
	Litauen	0	0	2	6
Amount of acquired activity models and methods	Estland	0	0	1	0
	Lettland	1	2	4	3
	Litauen	0	0	5	3
Quality of acquired activity models and methods	Estland	0	0	1	0
	Lettland	1	2	5	2
	Litauen	0	0	5	3
Attractiveness of environment	Estland	0	0	0	1
	Lettland	1	1	4	4
	Litauen	0	1	2	5

Benefits from using the grant

The table 12 (see below) gives an overview of those important and less important aspects which were gained during grant holders' stay in the Nordic countries. At first, the respondents were asked to give a general evaluation to the benefits received from using the grant – the majority of them acknowledged that the results were equal to their expectations and only 2 persons did not receive the expected benefit. Nevertheless, it is positive to note that 8 respondents claimed that their benefit from using the grant was bigger than expected (see more in QD2).

Table 12 The benefits from using the grant (number of respondents)

		What do you find the most important that the grant offered to You?			
		Important	←————→		Unimportant
Creating new contacts	Estland	0	0	1	0
	Lettland	4	1	3	3
	Litauen	3	0	1	4
Getting to know new opportunities of your field of activity	Estland	0	1	0	0
	Lettland	2	4	3	1
	Litauen	1	1	3	3
Acquiring of new activity models and methods	Estland	0	1	0	0
	Lettland	2	2	4	2
	Litauen	1	2	1	4
Work experience abroad	Estland	0	0	0	1
	Lettland	3	3	4	0
	Litauen	2	1	3	2
Working in a stimulating environment	Estland	0	0	1	0
	Lettland	2	3	3	2
	Litauen	1	2	3	2
Experience of cooperation with foreign colleagues	Estland	0	0	0	1
	Lettland	5	1	4	0
	Litauen	1	1	3	3
Acquired practical knowledge, skills	Estland	0	0	1	0
	Lettland	3	1	5	1
	Litauen	1	1	3	3
Acquired theoretical knowledge, skills	Estland	0	1	0	0
	Lettland	3	2	4	1
	Litauen	1	1	3	3

Table 12 shows that the most important benefits for Latvians were cooperation with foreign colleagues, creating new contacts and new opportunities in the field of activity. Lithuanians determined creating new contacts and experience of work abroad as the most important factors.

Comparing the benefit results analogically with the results of the respondents of Sleipnir (Table 11 and Table 12), it is concluded that comparison to different topics of the survey (like purpose to “create new contacts” versus “receiving new contacts”, or wish to “work with foreign partners” versus “experience of cooperation” with them etc) gives us similar results for Closer Culture Neighbours.

In fact, Latvian and Lithuanian participants of *Closer Culture Neighbours* were most satisfied with the prospect of creating new contacts, while Estonian participants estimated it as rather unimportant.

Comparing the factor “working together with my foreign partners” from Table 10 with the aspect “experience of cooperation with foreign colleagues” from Table 12 the following conclusion was made: expectations of Latvian participants were slightly under their expectations; the same situation was with Lithuanians.

Comparing the aspect “acquire new activity models and skills” (Table 10) with the aspect “acquired theoretical knowledge and practical skills” (Table 12), Latvians had a slight disappointment, while benefits of one of Lithuanian participants were bigger than expected.

Lastly, comparing the “work in another environment” (Table 10) with the aspect “working in a stimulating environment” (Table 12), there was concluded that expectations of Latvians were again slightly under their expectation. On the other hand, one Lithuanian participant has received more benefits from working in another environment than he/or had expected.

As for the last question, the table 13 below shows that almost all respondents (18) agreed to continue with the grant basing on the same principles. The main reason for that was the uniqueness of *Closer Culture Neighbours* program. Quoting one of the respondents, *Closer Culture Neighbours* “is a good opportunity for a culture manager from a Baltic country as there aren't many funds for this field”.

Table 13. Level of cooperation with foreign colleagues

By expiration of the grant, ... with foreign colleagues (partners) continued (number of respondents)

	irregular information interchange	Regular information interchange	A few joint projects	Regular cooperation (systematic joint projects)
Estland	0	0	1	0
Lettland	4	3	3	1
Litauen	5	2	4	2

*The respondents could choose more than one answer

As the number of respondents is not very big, it is hard to estimate or differentiate one choice from another. However, it is clear that the exchange of information is more or less active and generally participants have some joint projects with the foreign colleagues by expiration of the grant.

Taking the results of the survey of both cultural programs into account, it is concluded that in general balance between set purposes and received benefits of the respondents has been successfully achieved.

5. Main conclusions and proposals

The two schemes: Sleipnir (that is travel grant programme for young professional artists and Closer Culture Neighbours (CCN) (that is an exchange programme for practitioners in cultural management) have been going on for several years and have included a substantial number of creative persons (especially Sleipnir) in all three Baltic States. The analysis of the results of the in-depth interviews and web-based survey enables us to give a general evaluation for these programs' essential and organizational aspects.

By summarising the responses of the interviews and the web-based survey, it can be concluded that the respondents tend to share the overall attitude and agree in principle questions regarding the different aspects of the programs. The next important conclusion that could be made is that the biggest differences appear by countries and not between the different parties inside the country. Therefore, it can be concluded that persons in one country share views about the programs; and such unanimity inside the country can definitely be considered as positive. As for differences by the field of culture, the general trend was similar by countries. The most represented spheres of culture were visual arts, music and dance.

As follows, the comparison of the opinions of the responses of different parties is given. In order to compare the results of the interviews and the survey, the authors would first highlight the main major similarities and discrepancies in opinions of organizational parties (representatives of the NCM Offices and Ministries of Culture) on the one side and the participants of the programs on the other; and secondly to the similarities and differences between the three Baltic countries.

The following vital coinciding opinions of the representatives of NCM Offices and Ministries of Culture and the participants of the programs can be firmly determined:

- Both parties shared the opinion of the attractiveness of the Nordic countries for the participants of the programs. The reason for attractiveness was explained in terms of good cooperation and shared mentality as well as highly developed fields of culture that offer good experience and knowledge for the creative persons
- It was a shared opinion that the awareness of the program is rather good – the information about the programs is well spread
- The respondents of both sides found (despite that there are different practices among countries) that choice criteria of participants is clear

and works well. The participants nor the representatives from the NCM Office and Ministries of Culture did not see the need to change that

- The main benefits from the programs that were valued by both sides were the following: creation of new contacts, getting new knowledge, getting practical experiences, etc. It is worth mentioning that these aspects also coincide with the aims set for the programs.

There were also some contrasts in the opinions of the participants and the employees of the NCM offices and Ministries of Culture. One of these aspects was the mutuality of the profit the parties get from these programs – whether it was unilateral or bilateral. All representatives of the NCM offices and Ministries of Culture admitted that the profit was rather unilateral and in favour of Baltic participants. On the other hand, a majority of the participants claimed that both parties gained a lot – information about different fields of Baltic art, new contacts and even new theoretical and practical skills. Such fundamental difference between sensing the impact can be considered relatively important.

It is concluded that the focus in the development of Baltic-Nordic cooperation should be on strengthening mutual cooperation. The representatives of the NCM offices and Ministries of Culture have admitted that the programs could be more efficient if the Nordic countries will gain more from these programs (this will increase their interest in getting to know the practices of creative persons in Baltic countries).

Another aspect worth mentioning is the choice criteria of the applicants for the grant programs. Based on the interviews (results presented in the form of case studies), it is clear that understanding of choice criteria from the side of the participants is controversial. On the one hand, the majority of them affirmed rather clear or very clear understanding of how they have been chosen – chiefly due to their previous works. On the other hand, it occurred that choice criteria were not that simple, as far as both employees of the NCM offices and Ministries of Culture have confirmed the existence of a certain choice ideology. Therefore, it was concluded that the grant holders have slightly hazy idea of how they have been chosen for participation in these programs.

Comparing the results of the respondents of three Baltic countries the following differences in opinions can be brought out:

- The importance of cooperation and the cultural exchange between the Baltic and Nordic countries seems somewhat more important for the Estonians and Latvians than for Lithuanians (as far as Lithuanians consider the acquisition of practical skills as more important). This can be explained via the differences in communication patterns as well as the differences in practices in field of cultures

- Continuing with the previous: representatives of Estonian and Latvian NCM Offices and Ministries of Culture as well as Estonian and Latvian participants pointed more to a shared mentality with the Nordic countries than their Lithuanian colleagues. One indicator that supports the previous argument is also that Lithuanians found more frequently that they would favour some other region or country
- The interpretation of the financial support from Nordic countries regarding these programs: despite the fact that strengthening of cultural cooperation is hard or even can not be measured by money, the respondents from Latvia and Lithuania (unlike respondents from Estonia) found that the amount of money with which the Nordic countries support the program annually is not a lot. Still, it has to be stressed that compared to other countries and regions the sum of money that comes from Nordic countries is significantly large
- The participants' evaluation about the period of using the grant: analysing the participants responses it can be concluded that certain differences among countries appear in evaluating the cooperation and organizational aspects on the one side, and acquired experiences and skills on the other. Estonian respondents gave higher value to cooperation with foreign partners and the creation of contacts as well as on organizational aspects (timing, etc.) in general. Latvians and Lithuanians on the other hand, gave a higher evaluation to professional experience and the activity models and methods acquired. These conclusions apply for both *Sleipnir* and CCN program;
- Comparison of expectations and benefits of the participants. Concerning this topic there were also differences between the participants of *Sleipnir* and CCN program. Interpreting the results, the expectations of Estonian respondents of the *Sleipnir* program were somewhat higher than their Latvian and Lithuanian colleagues. Resultingly, their opinions about the benefits they got were somewhat lower. Among the respondents of the CCN program the expectations of Latvians were higher compared to Lithuanians²¹. As an overall opinion it has to be concluded that the benefits from the grant were equal to participants' expectation.

Having due regard to the goals that has been set to the programs (to promote cultural cooperation and interchange between Nordic and Baltic countries), these conclusions drawn can be considered relatively important. It is worth mentioning that achieving the aims of the programs tend to be easier for Estonia and Latvia, the shared background and mentality support the cooperation and sharing of experience and knowledge in cultural pursuits.

²¹ As there was 1 respondent of the CCN program from Estonia, the comparison with Estonia is not made.

Before making conclusive proposals the authors consider it important to pay attention to the following:

- First, the base of making the proposals is that the general attitude of the respondents (interviewees as well as respondents of the web-based survey) towards the programs is clearly positive. This can be concluded for both programs and for all three Baltic countries
- Secondly, as a result the changes they have offered cannot be considered as fundamental, the proposal proposals offered are to improve the existing programs
- Thirdly, and thus the majority of the proposals have administrative character: in order to improve the performance of the programs.

The authors base their proposals mainly on the opinions of the respondents. The proposals for the programs (incl. what aspects could be changed or added) are divided into two groups:

1. the proposals concerning principle or substantial topics
2. the proposals that touch upon the procedural or administrative details

On the whole, there are no clear proposals for the general conception of the programs, as no serious complications have occurred. Still, there are some observations that might be construed as useful material for discussion in the near future.

Proposals concerning principle or substantial topics

Pimarily, the age limit needs attention. As it occurred, age limit issue has been the most reflected problem on the background of general feedback. Basically, there were no differences among fields of arts, countries, interviewees or any other criteria concerning this problem. With reference to the interviews with the representatives of the NCM offices and Ministries of Culture in the Baltic countries, the main priorities and criteria of Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbours assume that artists and cultural managers will have achieved a lot before the age of 36. However, interviews with the participants of Closer Culture Neighbours program showed that majority of professionals start their activity in their early 30's. Such statements have been also received from the participants of the Sleipnir program.

Secondly, several participants highlighted territorial limit of the programs. Therefore, an additional solution might be involving more neighbour countries in the programs with the purpose of intensifying the mobility and partnership amongst young artists and cultural managers.

Finally: it was also highlighted that the language barrier is a stumbling block for those participants whose field of art includes direct communication with the audience (especially theatre and literature). According to the

interview with the Estonian NCM office, it occurred that in the very beginning of these programs there was a language study provided but it did not last very long. That is why one proposal is to revive language study for the groups interested in cultural cooperation with Nordic countries.

Proposals concerning the procedural or administrative details

First, several interviewees pointed out certain problems concerning the amount of information and its quality. Several participants of the programs proposed launching of more active information exchange by way of e-mailing lists. Moreover, there were different thoughts about making a web-environment containing all possible information about Nordic countries (city guides, accommodation opportunities, art galleries, museums, other institutions etc).

Secondly, the majority of interviewees highlighted a strong need for post-visit networking and communication with other participants from their home country and the participants from other Baltic countries. All NCM offices and Ministries of Culture mentioned that more advertisement and promotion of the programs might influence their popularity among young artists and professionals in different fields of art.

One rather practical proposal was made regarding information exchange between the participants of both programs – making presentations in NCM offices and sharing thoughts about gained experiences of visiting Nordic countries. The two named issues and proposals concerned the majority of persons involved in these scholarship programs. However, there are some specific issues related to the core aspects of the programs.

Thirdly, several of the interviewees who participated in *Closer Culture Neighbours* informed the evaluators that the program could be more flexible regarding the time limit of staying in one country. The main viewpoint was to cancel the obligatory condition of being at least one week in one country whilst using the grant. In particular, cultural managers paid attention to the fact that mobility for them is of equal importance as for the artists. On the other hand, the time limit for *Sleipnir* grant holders did not seem a big issue. The primary thrust of comments taken on this topic was based on emotional background i.e. mostly concerning the pressure of time limit on the inspiration of an artist.

Lastly, on the financial side of the scholarship programs, different opinions have been submitted. Some interviewees stressed the importance of their applications and the sum for which they apply. In some cases the granted sum of money does not accord with the plans of the applied project, which sometimes results in the misfortune of poor attendance in the foreign country and even in a failure (partial achievement of set aims) in worst cases. As far as the feedback concerning the financial side was partially negative, evaluators propose to consider an opportunity of dividing the budget by short-term and long-term projects.

Regarding the evaluation it is also important to remember that evaluations should be systematic. On the one hand, evaluation comprises the

element of regularity by definition. On the other hand, it should be stressed that the conclusions and proposals made, are based on the understandings (of the interviewees, respondents of the survey, the authors, etc.) at the given moment. The overall situation is constantly changing, the needs and aims are also altering, and therefore, in order to rely on the results on evaluation, making the evaluation systematic is critically significant.

The evaluation of the two schemes Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbours enables us to conclude that the models of these two programs have been functioning properly. As a result of the clearly positive feedback from the participants of the programs coupled with those of the interviewees from NCM offices and Ministries of Culture in the three Baltic countries additionally stressed the programs' positive influence on cultural life in general, it can be stated that there is a clear need for such kind of programs. Continuing with such species of programs (and changing them in certain details discussed above) can be considered a positive move.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Web-based survey "Questionnaire for the applicants of Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbours"

PERSONAL INFORMATION (TOPIC A)

(A1) *Gender:*

- female
- male

(A2) *Your age at the stage of the grant's application:*

(A3) *Please mark the year of using the grant:*

(A4) *At the stage of getting grant You (several answers allowed):*

- studied
- worked
- other (please specify)

(A5) *Did you receive:*

- *Sleipnir* grant or
- Closer Culture Neighbours grant

(A6) *Please mark what sphere of culture You represent:*

- theatre
- dance
- visual arts
- design
- architecture
- music
- film and video
- literature
- other (please specify)

(A7) *I have used the grant:*

- once
- more than once. Please mark how many times:

AWARENESS OF EXISTENCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND CONDITIONS FOR THE GRANT APPLICATION (TOPIC B)

(B1) Which information channel did you use to get information about the programme and apply for the grant:

- newspaper
- Internet
- college/university
- friends
- Nordic Council of Ministers
- other (please specify):

(B2) In your opinion, information about the programme and apply for the grant was:

- not enough
- enough/sufficient
- very detailed

(B3) Information about conditions for the grant application was:

- not enough
- enough/sufficient
- very detailed

(B4) Was the information regarding application conditions of the grant:

- not enough
- enough/sufficient
- very detailed

(B5) How clear for You were those parameters that You have been chosen by as a grant holder?

- unclear
- rather unclear
- rather clear
- absolutely clear

(B6) Please check the level of ministrations/helping of employees of Nordic Council of Ministers during application for the grant:

- not enough
- enough/sufficient
- very supportive
- did not need any additional help (all needed information was included)

(B7) Would you and/or how would you improve information about availability of a grant and its conditions for application:

GRANT USING (TOPIC C)

(C1) Please estimate your own reasons for the grant's application regarding the following scale. I applied for the grant with the purpose to:

	Important	←→		Unimportant
	1	2	3	4
Create new contacts				
Enlarge field of view				
Work together with my foreign partners, colleagues				
Work in another environment				
Acquire new activity models and skills				
Develop opportunities in my activity field in my home country are limited				
Other (please specify):				

(C2) Which country did you choose for the grant?

- Sweden
- Finland
- Denmark
- Island
- Norway

(C3) How long was the period of using the grant? (number of days)

(C4) Please estimate attractiveness of the Nordic region regarding your field of activity in general?

- comparatively attractive
- very attractive and inspiring
- if I could, I would have chosen another country. Please specify which one:

(C5) Which one of the Nordic countries is the most important regarding your field of activity:

- Sweden
- Finland
- Denmark
- Island
- Norway

(C6) Please estimate the period of using the grant in a foreign state by the following aspects:

	poor	←————→	————→	very good
	1	2	3	4
readiness of a foreign partner to cooperate				
timing				
amount of received contacts				
quality of received contacts				
received practical knowledge, skills				
received theoretical knowledge, skills				
amount of acquired activity models and methods				
quality of acquired activity models and methods				
attractiveness of environment				
other (please specify):				

BENEFIT FROM USING THE GRANT (TOPIC D)

(D1) Giving general estimation to the period of using the grant (regarding what you hoped to achieve during its using), the result of using the grant:

- exceeded your expectations
- was equal to the expectations
- was below the expectations

Please explain your answer:

(D2) What do you find the most important that the grant offered to You:

	Important	\longleftrightarrow	Unimportant	
	1	2	3	4
creating new contacts				
new/alternative opportunities				
vision/exploring of your field of activity				
acquiring of new activity models and methods				
work experience abroad				
working in a stimulating environment				
experience of cooperation with foreign colleagues				
acquired practical knowledge, skills				
acquired theoretical knowledge, skills				
other (please specify):				

(D3) Please estimate the contacts created during the period of using the grant:

- rather long-term
- rather short-term

(D4) By expiration of the grant, ... with foreign colleagues (partners) continued:

- irregular information interchange
- regular information interchange
- a few joint projects
- regular cooperation (systematic joint projects)

(D5) By expiration of the grant, my professional level:

- remained the same
- increased to some extent

- increased significantly

(D6) By expiration of the grant, my activity in this field:

- remained the same
- increased to some extent
- increased significantly
- In case if your activity has become more intensive, please clarify how:

(D7) Please estimate benefits of the parties from this programme.

Benefits from using the grant were received:

- chiefly by me
- by both parties
- chiefly by foreign colleague (partner)

(D8) Have you done / arranged anything together with other participants of this programme?

- yes
- no
- If "yes", please specify:

(D9) Has your grant as an acknowledgement helped you with any other application?:

- yes, it has helped at:
 - application for other grants
 - submitting project applications
 - applying a post (job)
 - other (please specify)
- no, it has not helped

**FUTURE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PROGRAMME
(TOPIC E)**

(E1) Do you think the programme should continue basing on the same principles?

- yes
- no
- Please explain if reply is "yes" or "no":

(E2) Do you think the programme needs any additional opportunities (to achieve the purpose better)? Please explain how you would improve it:

(E3) You are welcome to write below any important information you would like to add!

Thank you very much for your feedback!

Appendix 2. Questionnaire for the participants of Sleipnir program

General information

1. What was the time you applied for the grant (which year)? Was it once or did you participate in this programme several times?
2. What is your sphere of culture?
3. Which information channel did you use to get information about the programme and application for the grant?
4. Was the information about the programme and application for the grant enough or rather poor? What about the conditions of application for the grant?
5. Were you aware of how you have been chosen for receiving the grant?
6. Would you or how would you change the availability of the information about the conditions of applying for the grant

Using the grant

1. What were the most important purposes of applying for the grant?
2. Which country have you chosen to participate in the programme?
3. How long have you been there?
4. What do you think about the attractiveness of the Nordic region taking into account your personal field of cultural activity?
5. In your opinion, which Nordic country is the most important regarding your field of activity?
6. Please give some positive example of your experience in the Nordic country where you have participated during using the grant?
7. Has there been anything negative?

Benefits from using the grant

1. What was your "profit" from using this grant? Has participating in this programme increased your expectations or vice versa?
2. What is the most important thing you have acquired during using the grant?
3. What was the type of the contacts after the programme: long-term or short-term?
4. Has your communication with the foreign colleagues, partners continued after the programme? How active is it?
5. How would you estimate your professional level and activity in your cultural field after using this grant?
6. Please describe the profit of the parties in this programme. Was it unilateral or bilateral?
7. Have you done any joint projects with the participants?
8. Has this grant as an acknowledgement helped you with any other application or applying a post for example?

9. Do you think the programme should continue basing on the same principles?
10. Do you think the programme needs any additional opportunities (to achieve the purpose better)? Please explain how you would improve it.

Appendix 3. Questionnaire for the representatives of Nordic Council of Ministers in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

Brief description of the programmes

*Exchange programme for practitioners in cultural management:
Closer Culture Neighbours*

Scope of the programmes: all culture spheres – theatre, visual arts, dance, architecture, music, film and video, literature etc.

General aim: To create a platform for development of new cultural projects between the Nordic countries and the Baltic States and to promote long-term co-operation between cultural organizations in the countries.

Secondary aim (and activity): The aim of the programme has been to give young professional cultural managers from the Baltic States an opportunity to spend one month in a cultural organization in a Nordic country and participate in the process of organizing cultural events and festivals, or to become a temporary member of a cultural institution, i.e. finalize for instance a co-operation project together with an institution.

Target group: young professional cultural managers up to 36 years old. In addition, 2-year experience in the cultural field is required. The programme is not meant for the students.

Duration: Since 2003 in the Baltic countries (as a pilot project).

The grant covers: travel and accommodation costs + daily allowance. No need in extra financing.

Applications are submitted once a year (include certain differences).

*Grant programme for professional creative persons in cultural activity: Sleipnir*²².

General aim: to give young Baltic professionals in cultural field an opportunity to participate in artistic processes in the Nordic countries with the purpose to increase the mobility, to encourage creation of contacts, conducting creative persons to cooperate, to give them an opportunity to participate at the music festivals, seminars, visit concerts and exhibitions and more.

Target group: young professional cultural practitioners up to 36 years old. Applying for the programme is only allowed to the persons, not the groups, organizations or institutions. The programme is not meant for the students.

Duration of the programme: since 1997 in the Baltic countries.

The grant covers: travel and accommodation costs + daily allowance. No need in extra financing.

There are 2–3 deadlines a year for the applications.

Aim of the programmes, managing and cooperation questions

Basic aims of Sleipnir and Closer Culture Neighbours programmes are to intensify/strengthen cooperation between Baltic and Nordic countries. Regarding the aim:

1. How beneficial is the programme in your opinion? Which role does it play for the cultural cooperation between Baltic and Nordic countries?
2. Do you see any differences by spheres of activity: has this programmed helped another field of activity in any way? Where do the differences come from?
3. What are the biggest advantages and disadvantages of the programme (if the aim is to strengthen cooperation)?
4. (to continue the previous question:) Do these advantages and disadvantages apply to both programmes? If not, what differences do you see?
5. How would you estimate the sum of money that the Baltic countries receive from Nordic countries in the framework of programmes?

²² The programme is named after the Old Norse - i.e. collective myths of the Scandinavians - god Odin's magical eight-legged horse, a steed whose name means smooth or gliding.

6. What is the "throughout" of the programmes: how many participants, which sum of money do they get on average etc to go to the Nordic countries and get some experience?
7. How would you evaluate the attractiveness of the Nordic region (for the Baltic countries)? Has it changed during some period of time? Do you agree that creative persons prefer farther countries to the Nordic ones? How do your Nordic colleagues estimate the success of these programmes?
8. Let's talk about organizational part: could you describe the effectiveness of cooperation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania with Nordic partners?: does their cooperation adapt to the aims of cultural cooperation?

Awareness of the programme

1. Which information channels were chosen for promoting these programmes? Please name the most popular channels that have been used.
2. Is this enough (about the channels, sources)? If not, what else should be done?
3. How do you estimate the awareness of the programme (amongst the participants)? How many people know about such grant opportunity?
4. What do you think about the awareness of the participants? Specifically speaking, are the participants aware of the general information about the programme and conditions for the grant application?
5. Has the number of participants changed during the last years (increased, probably)?
6. (to continue the previous:) Why do you estimate your competitiveness: could the number of participants be smaller or bigger? If you think it is not enough, then how this number (of participants) could be increased?
7. Are there any differences in the number of participants by field of activity (talking about Sleipnir first and foremost)? Which sphere is the most popular amongst the participants (and which one is less popular)? What could cause such difference?
8. What is your (personal) opinion – which one of the Nordic countries is (would be) the most attractive country for the participants to go to?
9. Do you agree that one or the other Nordic country is more attractive from the point of view of the participants? What could be the cause of such difference?

Choice criteria of the participants

1. Who are the deciders (jury, committee) while accepting or rejecting the applications for the grant? What are the main principles for the

- activity of the jury if such exists? How would you estimate their co-operation with the Ministry of Culture?
2. What are the main choice criteria of the applicants? (What are the evaluation principles)?
 3. Do you agree that keeping/achieving the balance between the fields of activity belongs to the number of choice criteria?
 4. How important is influence on Estonian/Latvian/Lithuanian culture in the role of the choice criterion? Such keywords as "cultural enrichment": how important is that?
 5. Are the choice principles of the applicants being effective (taking into account the aim of the programme? If not, what would you change?
 6. How big proportion is formed by those participants, who have taken part in this programme more than once? How would you comment on the results?

Influence of the programmes (on Nordic-Baltic cultural cooperation)

1. Please describe the influence of the programme on the cultural cooperation (cultural communication and interchange) between Nordic and Baltic countries? Have you noticed any improving marks?
2. Please give an example (any positive illustration) of the "profit" made by this programme that played an important role for Estonian/Latvian/Lithuanian culture?
3. What would be the index for measuring the effectiveness of cultural cooperation? How would it be possible to measure that some part of culture has been "brought together"?
4. By comparing the periods of time, before the programme and during the programme, has the amount of joint cultural projects increase? Please give an example of how specifically those programmes have improved cultural communication?
5. Taking into account that the programmes have been functioning for many years (Sleipnir ca 10 and Closer Cultural Neighbours ca 4), how would you estimate the strengthening of cultural communication between Nordic and Baltic countries, including the increase of joint projects?
6. Is the character of the contacts more long-term or is it short-term?: which type of contacts is dominating?
7. Please give some examples of the most spectacular or just interesting cooperation results and long-term relations? Could you name some specific example of cultural enrichment in your country that has been the result of one of these programmes?
8. Comparing the "benefit" received from this programme, who is the "winner" – Baltic or Nordic countries?
9. (to continue the previous:) In your opinion, has the situation changed during some period of time?

Feedback and future perspective

1. How intensive is your communication with the participants after the programme? What channels do you use?
2. Do you have any follow-ups: is it common for you to invite the participants again? Is there created any network amongst the participants or something like that?
3. How do you use the reports/the feedback of the participants in the end of the programme? How have you been using them?
4. How much positive or negative feedback have you received from the participants?
5. Have you received any comments from the participants about changing conditions of the programme? Please give an example.
6. Has NCM shown any signals of changing the principles or updates of the programme?
7. Do you agree that the main principles of the programmes are fine as they are in the moment? Or should anything be changed? Please explain.
8. What opportunities, specific aspects or conditions would you add in the programmes to achieve the aim even better? Please explain.

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