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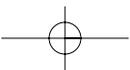
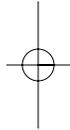
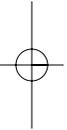
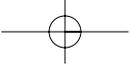
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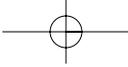


NordForsk Reports: 2

# GOING NORDIC

– A NordForsk  
user survey

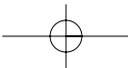
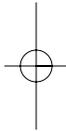
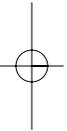




# Going Nordic

- A NordForsk user survey

Aadne Aasland



## NordForsk Reports 2: Going Nordic

Aadne Aasland

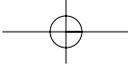
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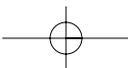
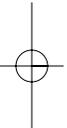
NordForsk Reports: 2

## GOING NORDIC

- A survey among participants in NordForsk and NorFA  
networks and research training courses 1999-2005

Aadne Aasland

NordForsk, Oslo 2006



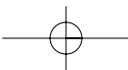
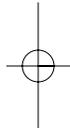
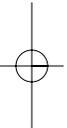
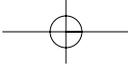


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PREFACE

tekst tekst

Liisa Hakamies-Blomqvist  
NordForsk Director

## NORDFORSK REPORTS 2: Going Nordic



NordForsk is already a well known organisation in the Nordic research community, and NordForsk funding leads to sustainable collaboration and joint EU applications. NordForsk plays an important role in supplying a Nordic dimension to research in the larger Nordic area, including the five Nordic and three Baltic countries, as well as North-West Russia.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A survey conducted among participants in Nordic research network and research training course activities in the 1999-2005 period shows that 90% of the project participants continue collaborating after Nordic funding has ended.

One in five respondents have applied for European (eg., EU) funding as a direct result of the Nordic collaboration, while an additional 37% have applied for such funding with their Nordic partners. Of those who have received the outcome of their application for European funding, one third have obtained such funding, while two thirds have been turned down.

NordForsk activities are not limited to collaboration between the five Nordic countries. More than half the activities included partners from the Baltic countries, 28% involved partners from Russia, while only 12% of the activities were exclusively Nordic. More than three quarters of the activities involved transfer of competence from the Nordic countries to the three Baltic states or Russia, while close to half involved transfer of competence in the other direction.

A full 93% of the networks put much emphasis on research training activities. More than 90% have fulfilled the ambitions they had at the outset. The majority remained equally active throughout the whole funding period of their network; very few (15%) were most active in the initial phases. Most respondents (93%) thought there was a good balance between the different partners in their network. Just over one third of the respondents found the funding from NordForsk to be too small to make a significant contribution. The respondents were almost unanimous

that their network was a successful example of Nordic collaboration.

All those involved in research training courses claimed that the course content of their course was of an excellent standard, including doctoral students attending the course. A large proportion (93%) thought the teachers were the best you can find internationally. Only 3% thought a similar course organised nationally would have yielded similar results. Most research training courses (94%) were thought to be innovative, and nine in ten respondents thought that they had established important networks and contacts through participating in the course.

Eight in ten would find it impossible to carry out their activity without the support from NordForsk (NorFA). A clear majority (84%) claims that it is likely that they will apply for NordForsk funding in the future.

NordForsk has a good reputation in the Nordic scientific community. Most respondents find the application procedures clear and easily accessible. NordForsk is not perceived to be overtly bureaucratic, and most people are satisfied with their communication with the responsible NordForsk staff. Of those expressing an opinion, 62% prefer NordForsk to other research funding organisations. More than half of the respondents are very satisfied with NordForsk, another 34% rather satisfied, while only 2% are rather dissatisfied (6% unsure).

The web-based survey was conducted in May 2006. An invitation to participate was sent to 1102 network and research training course coordinators and participants, and 468 respondents took part in the survey.

## BACKGROUND AND METHODS

### BACKGROUND

NordForsk was established in January 2005 as an institution under the Nordic Council of Ministers responsible for Nordic cooperation within research and research training. It replaced the Nordic Science Policy Council (FPR) and the Nordic Academy for Advanced Study (NorFA), but has a much wider mandate. With its strong links to the research councils in the Nordic countries NordForsk represents a new level of cooperation with the aim to promote research of the highest international quality.

Funding of Nordic research collaboration is one of the main tasks of the new organisation. While NordForsk has already introduced a number of new large research initiatives, it has also retained, although in somewhat altered form, some of the traditional instruments for research collaboration at the Nordic level. The most important are the research training courses and research networks.

NordForsk very much depends on feedback from and communication with the users. The aim of conducting a survey was therefore to obtain feedback on these two traditional instruments in order to refine them in line with the needs of the Nordic research community. NordForsk also wanted to find out how the organisation itself is evaluated by those who have received funding. An additional aim of the survey was to learn more about how researchers engaged in Nordic cooperation perceive the main strengths and weaknesses of collaborating at the Nordic level. Why go Nordic? Insights of active researchers make up important input to the continuing task of developing NordForsk as an organisation and NordForsk's funding instruments.

### METHODS AND RESPONSE RATE

A letter with a link to an on-line questionnaire was sent by e-mail to 1102 network coordinators and group leaders, as well as research training course leaders, for which there were e-mail addresses in NordForsk's data base or application forms. The networks and research training courses had obtained funding in the 1999-2005 period, but there was no limit as to whether the activity should be completed or not. The recipients of the invitation letter were asked to participate in the survey themselves, but also to forward the questionnaire to doctoral students taking part in their network activities or research training courses. Input from doctoral students was considered to provide important feedback about the research training component of the activities. A total of 152 of the e-mail letters bounced, indicating that the e-mail addresses do not exist anymore.

A total of 468 respondents completed the survey (only fully completed cases are reported here). Of these 271 were coordinators or group leaders who received the survey directly from NordForsk, whereas the rest were doctoral students or other participants without a leadership function in the collaboration (in the tables in this report they are referred to as ordinary participants). They are respondents who were forwarded a link to the survey. If we assume that all the 950 e-mail addresses where the e-mail did not bounce actually received the e-mail, the response rate is 28,5%. We do not know the distribution of reasons for non-response. Some addresses are likely to have changed even if the e-mail did not bounce. Others may have changed their job or position and do not see the survey as relevant. There are a number of other likely reasons for non-response, lack of time probably being the most common.

The response rate can be considered satisfactory, taking into account the response rates that are normally achieved for web-based surveys<sup>1</sup>. One cannot, of course, exclude the risk that there are some systematic biases in the sample, but on the other hand, we have no evidence that this might be the case. At least the composition of respondents shows high response rates among all categories of respondents. In the analysis we will, when relevant, provide separate analysis of the various groups of respondents, especially when there are large differences in responses between groups. The following section gives an overview of the distribution of respondents according to some key background variables.

#### DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

The respondents were asked to report in how many different NordForsk/NorFA networks or research training courses they had participated. The majority (53%) of the respondents had participated in only one such activity. However, the proportion having participated in several activities was also substantial, with 38% having participated in two-three, and 9% in four or more activities.

Since some respondents have been involved in several NordForsk/NorFA activities, to avoid misunderstandings the respondents were asked to give information about the most recent such activity, whether it was a research training course or a network. The majority of the respondents referred to a network (64%), while 36% referred to a research training course<sup>2</sup>. As a consequence, there is a bias towards networks in the sample. However, with 167 respondents evaluating research training courses, we are able to give reasonably good estimates for their opinion on various aspects of these activities as well. Table 1.1 gives the distribution of roles of the respondents in the activity, and shows that research training courses and networks differ somewhat.

Table 1.1: Distribution of roles in activity.

	Networks (%)	Research training courses (%)	Total (%)
Main coordinator / Project leader	22	37	27
Group leader (country coordinator)	44	7	30
Ordinary participant	22	11	18
Doctoral student	10	42	22
Other	3	4	3
n	301	167	468

<sup>1</sup> See for example Matthias Schonlau, Ronald D. Fricker, Jr., Marc N. Elliott: *Conducting Research Surveys via E-mail and the Web*, Rand Corporation, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> The NordForsk data base and stored application forms contains e-mail addresses of all network partners, whereas for the research training courses only the main coordinator's e-mail is registered. Therefore, the invitation letter was sent out to 174 course coordinators and 928 network members.

## NORDFORSK REPORTS 2: Going Nordic

The country distribution of respondents is shown in Table 1.2. As the largest Nordic country Sweden has the largest share of the respondents (27%), whereas Norway, Denmark and Finland are evenly distributed.

**Table 1.2: Country distribution of survey respondents.**

Country	n	%
Denmark	86	18
Finland	86	18
Iceland	11	2
Norway	91	19
Sweden	128	27
Estonia	21	4
Latvia	3	1
Lithuania	13	3
Russia	8	2
Other <sup>3</sup>	21	4
Total	468	100

The distribution of men and women was 62% and 38% respectively. However, while men were overrepresented among the project leaders (73%), and country coordinators (76%), women made up the majority of doctoral students (69%). This reflects the well-known fact that the distribution of men and women in science follows a scissors-shaped trend, with the proportion of women being higher than that of men among students, but gradually decreasing for the higher positions.

Most of the respondents represented a university in the NordForsk/NorFA activity, as can be seen from Table 1.3.

**Table 1.3: Type of institution represented by the respondent in project/activity?**

	n	%
University	419	90
Polytechnics (Høgskole)	13	3
Research institute	34	7
Other	2	0
Total	468	100

<sup>3</sup> The category 'other' includes: UK (5), Netherlands (2), Germany (2), France (2), Poland (2), USA (2), Czech Republic, Italy, Japan and Ethiopia.

Table 1.4 shows the distribution of respondents according to the title that corresponds most closely to the one they have at present. The share of professors and senior scientist is large, but doctoral students are also well represented in the survey. This is particularly the case for the research training courses.

Table 1.4: Title corresponding best to the respondent's present.

	n	%
Professor	236	50
Senior scientist	72	15
Researcher	28	6
Junior researcher	9	2
Post-doc	10	2
Doctoral student	95	20
Other	18	4
Total	468	100

Table 1.5 shows that all scientific areas are well covered in the survey. Not surprisingly, the largest group of respondents work within natural sciences (more than one in three), which is also the research area with the largest share of the NordForsk funding. Humanities and social sciences are also well represented.

Table 1.5: Main research area of NordForsk/NorFA activity.

	n	%
Social sciences	75	16
Humanities	84	18
Natural sciences	175	37
Technical sciences	27	6
Agricultural, forestry, fishery sciences	20	4
Medical sciences	30	6
Other	38	8
Multi- or cross-disciplinary	19	4
Total	468	100

## NORDFORSK REPORTS 2: Going Nordic

Finally, the number of respondents having received funding in different years is shown in Table 1.6. The distribution is quite even, although, as could have been expected, the most recent recipients of funding are the most likely to respond to a survey like this.

Table 1.6 : Year in which the respondent got involved in the NordForsk/NorFA -funded activity.

	n	%
2000 or before	75	16
2001 - 2002	92	20
2003 - 2004	140	30
2005 or later	156	33
Does not remember/not sure	5	1
Total	468	100

The distribution of respondents indicates that we have reached a large group of researchers and research students, without any obvious or disturbing biases in the distribution of respondents according to key background variables. One could, of course, ask whether those who answer a questionnaire like this are those who are most inclined to give positive feedback to the organisation. In our view, there is no reason to suspect that this is the case. It was underlined in the introductory letter to the survey that NordForsk would welcome the true opinion of the respondents, and that constructive critique would be appreciated. Indeed, the open questions contained both critical as well as affirmative statements about the organisation and its activities. It should also be stressed that the respondents were well aware that the responses could not be traced back to them personally, giving no personal advantage to those giving positive compared to negative responses. Therefore, and despite the relatively low response rate, we have no reason to assume that the survey data give an unrealistic picture of behaviour and attitudes among those having received funding from NorFA and NordForsk.

### RELIABILITY OF THE RESULTS

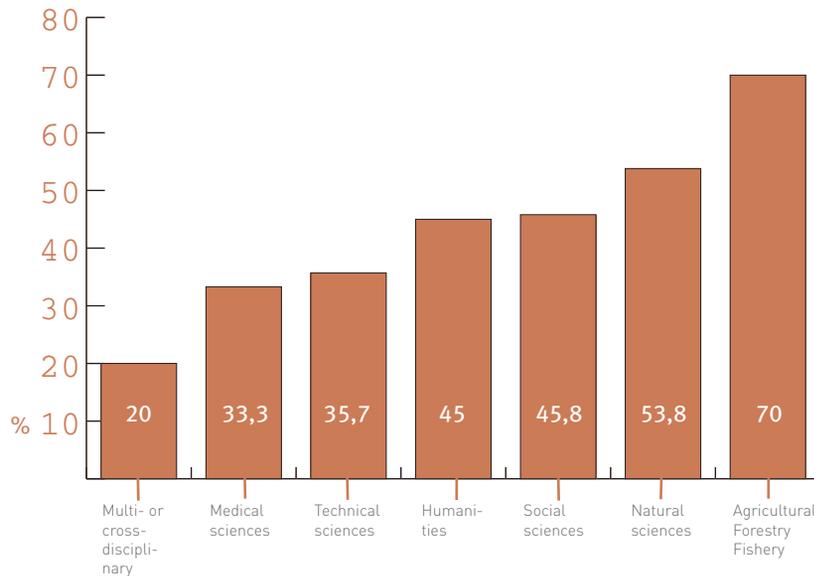
Since the sample is not randomly selected, tests of statistical significance are not quite accurate. Nevertheless, significance tests were performed to give an indication of the robustness of the results in the survey. They are not, however, referred to in the text. Normally only differences between groups that are statistically significant at the 10% level are commented in the text.

## NORDIC COOPERATION AND BEYOND

One of NordForsk's aims is to establish viable and sustainable collaboration between researchers and research institutions in the larger Nordic region, involving not only the five Nordic countries but also the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and North-West Russia. One indicator of success in fulfilling this aim would be that research collaboration initiated through NordForsk activities continues also after funding from the organisation terminates. To what extent does this happen? Almost 50% of the respondents still had funding from NordForsk, and to them this question did not apply. However, among those for whom funding had ended, 47% said that they still actively cooperated with their Nordic partners. Another 43% cooperated but only to a limited extent, while only 10% did not continue the cooperation. There were only minor differences between networks and research training courses in this respect.

Perhaps surprisingly, the more time had passed since the start-up of the project, the more likely the respondent was to say that the cooperation was still active. There were also some differences between research areas, as shown in Figure 2.1. In agricultural, forestry and fishery sciences (they will be referred to as agricultural sciences in the text), as well as natural sciences, the cooperation has a tendency to continue, while the opposite is the case in medical and technical sciences. The multi- and cross-disciplinary activities appear to be the least sustainable: only 20% were still actively involved with their partners from the NordForsk/NorFA activity, while 40% had completely ended their cooperation.

Figure 2.1: Sustainability of NorFA/NordForsk cooperation. Percentage of those without NordForsk funding at present indicating that they still cooperate actively with their Nordic partners (n=171).



## NORDFORSK REPORTS 2: Going Nordic

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However, the cooperation that takes place through funding from NordForsk/NorFA involves not only cooperation between researchers and research students in the Nordic countries. The efforts to encourage involvement from countries outside Norden seem to have paid off: a full 53% of the projects included Baltic partners, 28% included partners from Russia, while 57% involved partners from other countries. Only 12% of the activities were exclusively Nordic<sup>4</sup>.

A closer look at the data, however, shows that the likelihood of an activity including partners from outside the Nordic region has decreased in the 1999-2005 period. While for example 63% of the activities before 2000 had a Baltic partner, the same was true of only 48% starting in 2005 or later. The same downward trend could be discerned for cooperation with Russia and with other countries.

There were some interesting differences in cooperation patterns between various scientific areas. While respondents in the social, technical and agricultural sciences reported cooperation with the three Baltic states and Russia most often, researchers in the humanities, medicine and multi- and cross-disciplinary areas had much less cooperation with these adjacent countries. On the other hand, exactly these latter three research areas most often included researchers from other countries in their networks and research training courses.

It is assumed that the Nordic countries together will have a stronger position in the competition for European research funding than each country would have individually. But to what extent has the network and research training course collaboration through NordForsk and NorFA contributed to applications for European funding? Our survey data indicate that this has been the case, at least to some extent. One in five respondents gave a positive response that networking through NordForsk/NorFA had contributed to joint applications for European (eg., EU) funding. A larger percentage (37%), however, replied that this was partly the case, while less than half (44%) had not applied for such funding with their Nordic partners.

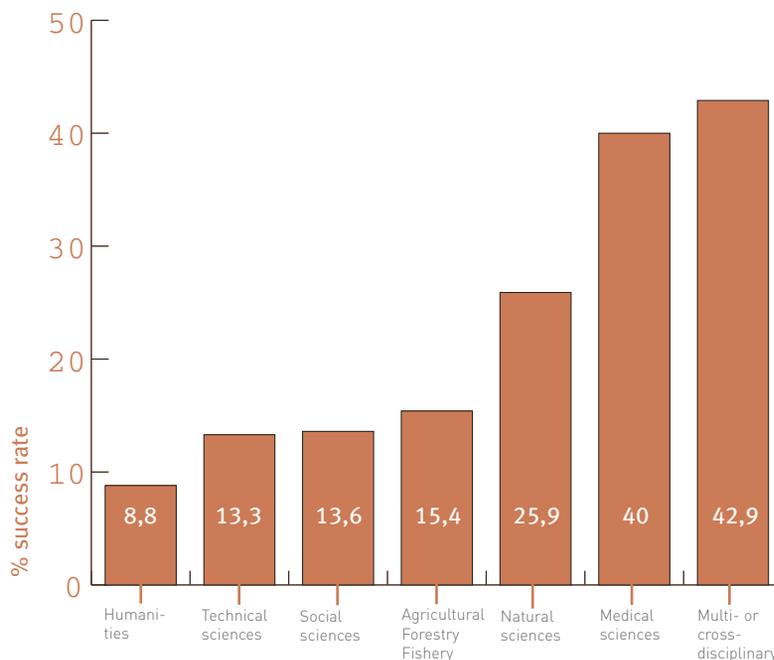
Applications for EU funding were more common among network partners (22%) than among those collaborating on a research training course (12%). Such efforts were most common in the medical and agricultural sciences (28%), while those working in the humanities and social sciences were those who most often reported not having applied for EU funding (53 and 51 per cent respectively).

Of those who had applied for EU funding in the context of a NordForsk or NorFA activity, 21% had obtained such funding, 36% were still waiting for the outcome of the application, while 42% had been turned down. As can be seen from Figure 2.2, the rate of success varies considerably between different research areas. It is worth noting that the success rate is highest for researchers who have been involved in cross- or multi-disciplinary Nordic activities.

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<sup>4</sup> This question was not posed to the doctoral students who were expected not always to have a good overview of the various partners in the project.

Figure 2.2: Success rate of obtaining EU-funding by research area. Percentage of successful applicants among those having applied for such funding.



We have already seen that cooperation with Baltic and Russian partners has been widespread in NordForsk and NorFA activities. It is assumed that this cooperation is useful to both sides. However, there can be no doubt that in the years following the break-up of the Soviet Union assistance from the Nordic countries was particularly welcome in order to build up competence in a number of research fields in Russia and the three Baltic countries. For those projects in which Baltic or Russian partners had been involved, the distribution of responses to a question of the extent to which there had been transfer of competence from the Nordic countries to adjacent area countries is shown in Table 2.1.

	n	%
To a large extent	62	30
To some extent	96	46
To a minor extent	39	19
Not at all	10	5
Total	207	100

Table 2.1: Respondent's evaluation of level of transfer of competence from the Nordic countries to the Baltic countries and Russia<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> The figures are based on those who answered the question, while 'do not know', 'unsure', 'not applicable' and 'no answer' have been omitted.

## NORDFORSK REPORTS 2: Going Nordic

There were no major differences between scientific areas, neither did competence transfer from west to east appear to be reduced in the 1999-2005 period.

The survey also contained data on transfer of competence from Russia and the three Baltic states to the Nordic countries. The percentage indicating extensive transfer of competence in this direction was significantly lower than the other way around, but only one in five projects reported no such transfer of competence at all. The distribution for activities in which Russian or Baltic partners had been involved is shown in Table 2.2:

**Table 2.2: Respondent's evaluation of level of transfer of competence from Russia and the Baltic countries to the Nordic countries<sup>6</sup>.**

	n	%
To a large extent	18	9
To some extent	75	37
To a minor extent	66	33
Not at all	42	21
Total	201	100

Transfer of competence from East to West was most common in the humanities, social and natural sciences, but least common in medicine, in which only 10% held that such competence transfer had happened at least to some extent (the average was 44%).

<sup>6</sup> The figures are based on those who answered the question, while 'do not know', 'unsure', 'not applicable' and 'no answer' have been omitted.

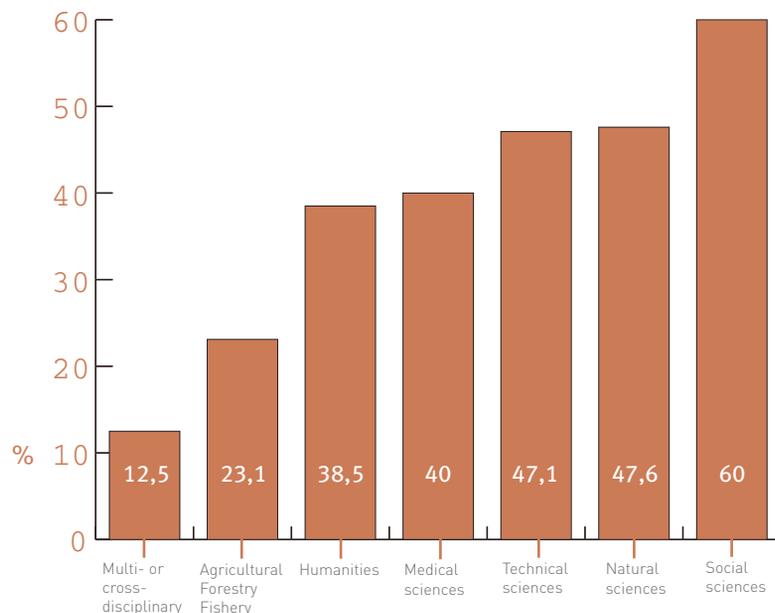
## NETWORKS

The instrument of research networks has developed to become one of the most important instruments of cooperation in research and research training supported by NordForsk. The competition to obtain funding is fierce, and recently new forms of networks were introduced. The survey has given us the opportunity to listen to the voices of those who have obtained funding for this instrument, whether they are the main network leaders, group leaders, ordinary participants or doctoral students involved in the network activities.

The quality of the network depends to a large extent on the scientific level of the network participants. A vast majority of the respondents agree with the statement that their own network has had top class researchers involved, either fully (71%) or partially (26%). No respondents fully disagree with the statement, but 3% tend to disagree. There are only small differences between research areas, but least likely to give a high estimation of the standard of the researchers in the network are respondents in the technical and agricultural sciences.

Originally, the networks were designed in order to promote research training activities. The NordForsk guidelines for network applications still emphasise research training as a major component of the networks. The survey data show that research training is indeed an important aspect of the network activities. Close to half (45%) of the respondents fully agree that the network puts very much emphasis on research training, and another 48% tend to agree with the statement. Only 8% disagree, and most of them only partially. However, there is considerable variation in the responses of different segments of the respondents. For example, in multi- or crossdisciplinary networks, the emphasis on research training appears to be less prominent than in the social sciences, as shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Percentage of respondents who fully agree with the statement: "The network puts very much emphasis on research training", by research area (n=292).



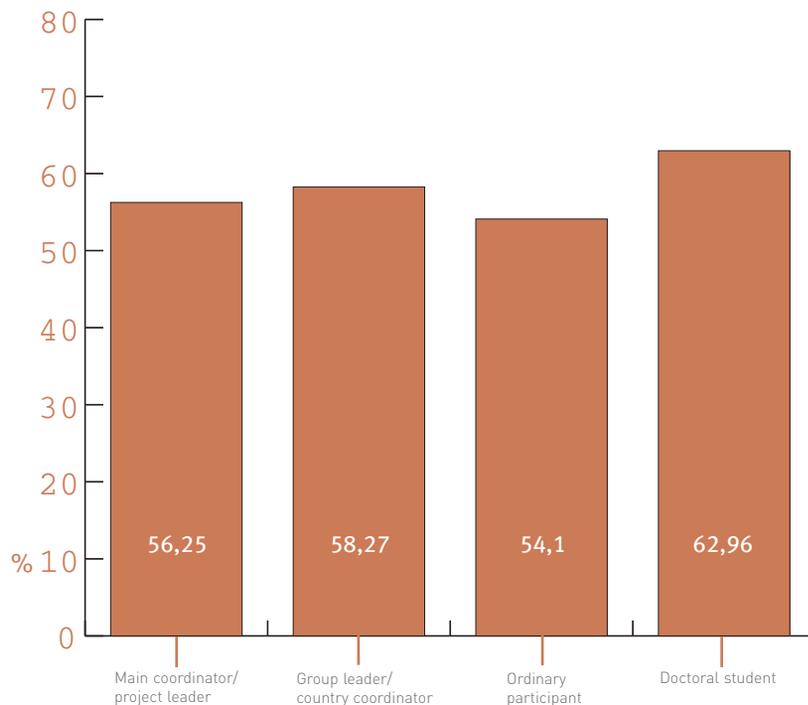
The next issue relates to the ambitions of the network at the outset and the degree to which they have been fulfilled. Very few of the respondents agree with a statement saying that their ambitions have not been fulfilled: 6% tend to agree and 1% fully agrees with this statement. Six in ten (60%) fully disagree and one in three (33%) tends to disagree with the statement. It is noteworthy that doctoral students are even more satisfied than the main coordinators in terms of the fulfilment of the ambitions of the networks. Ordinary network participants, however, are somewhat less satisfied with this aspect of their collaboration.

A related question is whether the networks are most active in their initial phases after their establishment. Networks receive funding for three years, with a possibility of an extension up to five years, which has been the most common for networks with a normal progression. Do networks tend to reduce their activity levels after the first initial honeymoon period? This does not appear to happen, according to the survey data. Only few fully (1%) or tend to (14%) agree with a statement saying that the network was most active in the initial period after its establishment. The majority either fully (50%) or partly (35%) disagrees with this statement.

Although NordForsk emphasises that there should be a good balance between the partners in the networks receiving funding, without any undue dominance of one core group over the others, one could, perhaps expect that the research group which receives the funding would have a tendency to dominate the others. However, there is no complaint that this is the case found in the survey responses. Only 6% fully or tend to disagree with a statement saying that there has been a good balance between in the network between the coordinator/core group and the rest of the par-

ticipants. The largest share fully agrees with the statement (56%), while 37% tend to agree. It is also noteworthy that the main coordinators and other participants in the networks have rather similar views on this question, as illustrated in Figure 3.2.

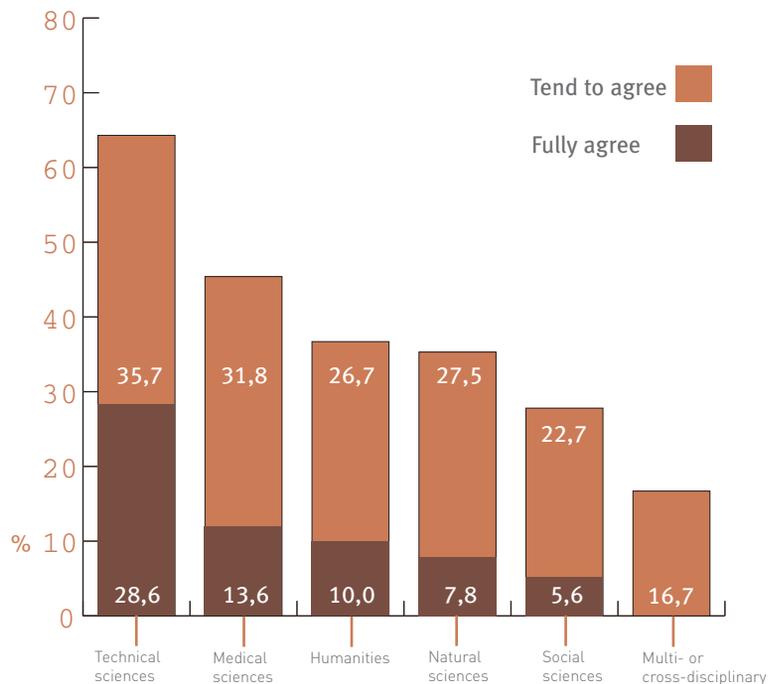
Figure 3.2: Percentage of respondents who fully agree with the statement: “There has been a good balance in the network between the coordinator/core group and the rest of the participants”, by respondent’s role in the network (n=288).



A network receives on average 300,000 NOK per year, and the funding is mainly aimed at covering mobility, research training courses and other expenses directly connected with the costs of the cooperation. The funding does not cover the research activities themselves, which have to be financed from other sources. Still, the majority of the survey respondents find the funding from NordForsk useful. Even though 9% fully agree and 28% tend to agree with the statement that funding from NordForsk is too small to make a significant contribution, larger proportions either fully or tend to disagree with this statement (23% and 41% respectively). There is considerable variation between research areas, as shown in Figure 3.3. In some research areas where expenses for infrastructure tend to be particularly large, notably technical, agricultural and medical sciences, the respondents are least satisfied with the size of funding from NordForsk. In the other end of the scale we find the multi and cross-disciplinary sciences as well as the social sciences.

## NORDFORSK REPORTS 2: Going Nordic

Figure 3.3: Percentage of respondents who fully or tend to agree with the statement: “The amount of funding for the networks is too small to make a significant contribution”, by research area (n=264).



Based on all this feedback from the network participants, can we say that the networks are successful examples of Nordic research collaboration? According to the respondents themselves, this appears to be the case, at least for their own network. Virtually all respondents agree with this statement about the networks either fully or partially, while only 1% (tend to) disagree (Table 3.1). Moreover, the positive evaluation is reflected among all the segments of the network participants.

Table 3.1: Extent of agreement with the statement: “The network is a successful example of Nordic research collaboration.”

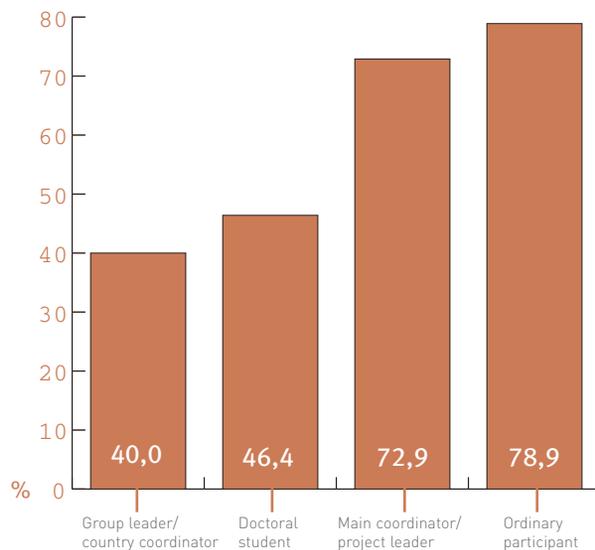
	n	%
Fully agree	203	70
Tend to agree	83	29
Tend to disagree	4	1
Fully disagree	1	0
Total	291	100

## RESEARCH TRAINING COURSES

The Nordic research training courses have an even longer history than the networks, and the concept was well known even before NorFA was established in 1991. Respondents who had taken part in a research training course in the capacity of a coordinator, group/country leader, doctoral student or ordinary participant were presented with a battery of statements about the research training courses to which they could agree or disagree (fully or partly).

The first statement read as follows: “The course content was of an excellent standard”, and no respondents disagreed with this statement. The only variation in responses was between fully agree (61%) and tend to agree (39%). The best evaluation of the course quality was given by the ordinary participants and the main course coordinators, as shown in Figure 4.1. Country group leaders and doctoral students were somewhat less positive in their evaluation of the quality. Most satisfied with the course content were respondents in the humanities.

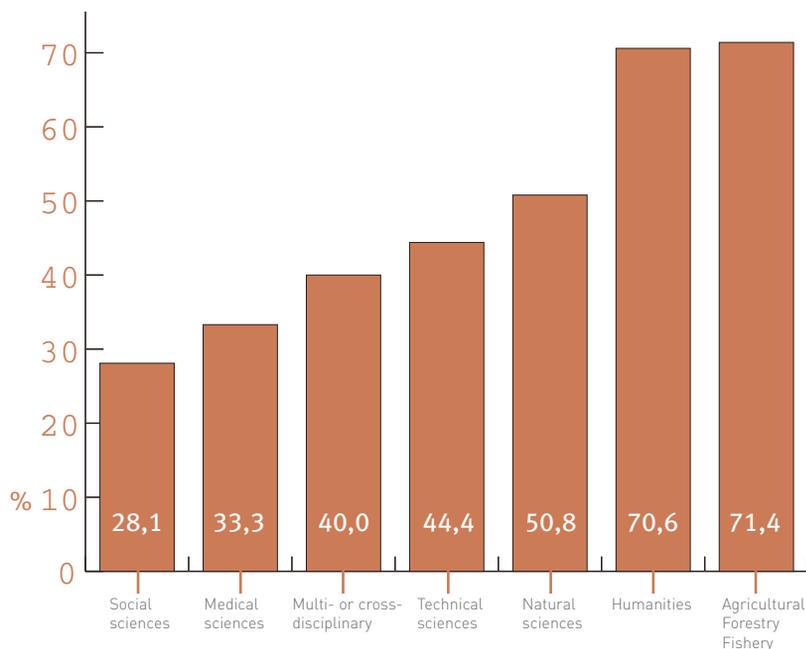
Figure 4.1: Percentage of respondents who fully agree with the statement: “The course content was of an excellent standard”, by respondent’s role in the course. (n=162).



A clear majority of respondents in the survey either fully (48%) or partially (45%) agreed that those teaching at the course were the best you can find internationally. Only 6% tended to disagree, and no respondents fully disagreed with the statement. Some variation could be found between different segments of respondents. Particularly, the variation between different research areas was quite significant, as shown in Figure 4.2. The least impressed by the teachers were those representing the social sciences, while respondents in the humanities and agricultural sciences were much more likely to give a positive evaluation of the standard of the teachers.

## NORDFORSK REPORTS 2: Going Nordic

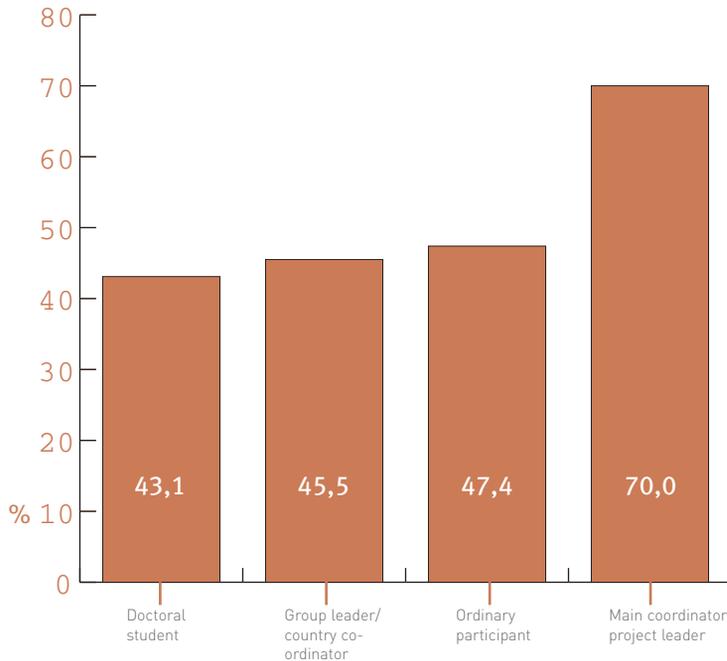
Figure 4.2: Percentage of respondents who fully agree with the statement: “The teachers were the best you can find internationally”, by research area of respondents. (n=161).



To organise a research training course at a Nordic level ideally should give additional value compared to organising it nationally. Among the respondents in the survey there was no hesitation that this had been the case. As many as 81% fully agreed that they did not think a similar course organised nationally would have been equally or more beneficial. Only 3% tended to or fully disagreed with this statement. Moreover, the positive attitude towards organising the course at the Nordic level was reflected in the responses of all the various groups of respondents.

As is the case with networks, the guidelines for the NordForsk research training courses stress that priority is given to courses that present their topics in a new and innovative way. The survey gives us the opportunity to assess how various types of respondents believe this aim has been fulfilled regarding their own course. In general, most respondents are inclined to support the statement that their course was innovative in the coverage of the course topics, as 55% of the respondents fully agreed, and another 39% tended to agree with this statement. Only 6% tended to disagree, and no respondents fully disagreed. However, we did find some variation between various segments of the respondents, and particularly between main coordinators and project leaders, on the one hand, who were the most eager to give full support to the statement, while ordinary participants, doctoral students and group leaders were a bit more skeptical, as shown in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: Percentage of respondents who fully agree with the statement: "The course covered the research topics in an innovative way", by respondent's role in the course. (n=162).



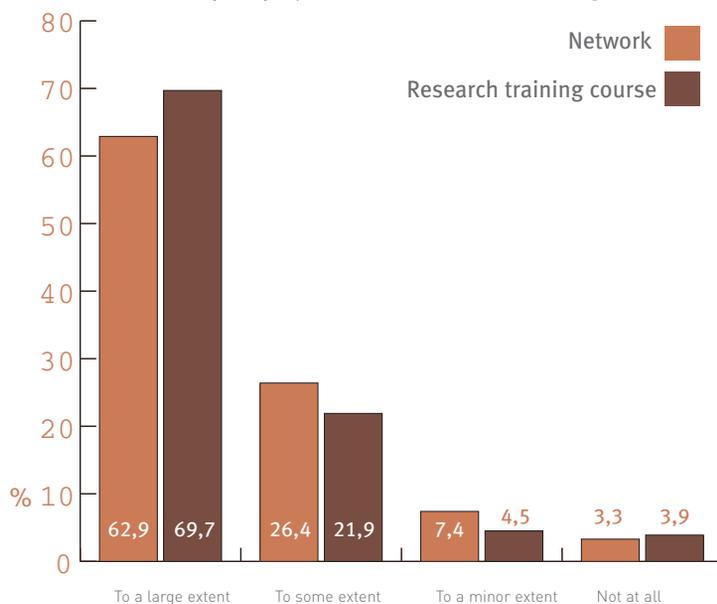
One aspect which is very important for research training courses is that networks and research contacts are established and developed, between the organisers as well as the doctoral students. At least this appears to be the case according to the survey data. Close to three in four (73%) fully disagree with a statement saying that their course did not help to develop research contacts of networks for the future. Only one in ten agree with this statement, most of them only partially.

It is a requirement for obtaining funding for research training courses from NordForsk that the courses give credit for the doctoral programmes in which the students are enrolled. In addition, many doctoral students find the courses useful for the completion of their doctoral thesis. Out of the 74 respondents to whom this question was applicable, equal shares (42%) fully and tended to agree that this had been the case for them personally. Only 1% fully disagreed with the statement, while the remaining 15% tended to disagree.

## THE CONTENT OF THE ACTIVITIES

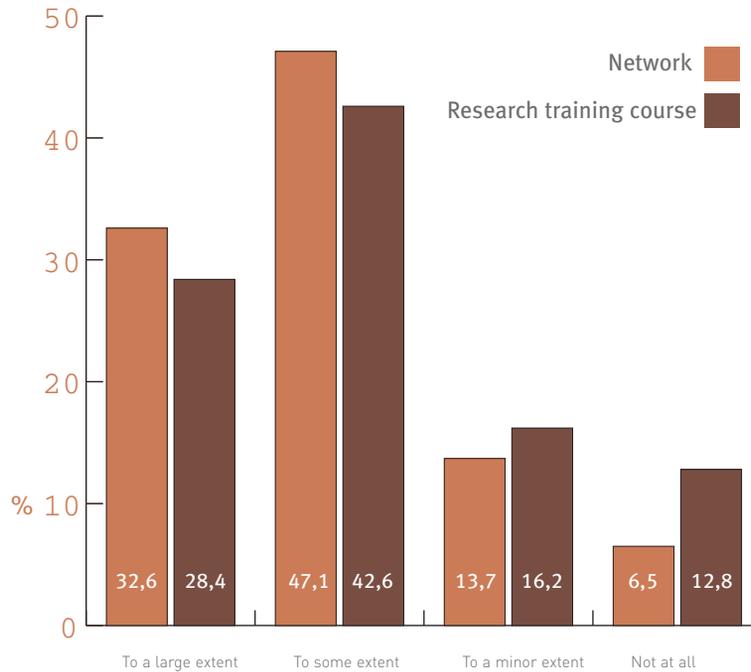
While NordForsk combines collaboration in research with emphasis on research training, NorFA's primary objective was to promote research training activities. The networks and the research training courses were the major instruments towards this end. In the survey respondents were asked to what extent their network or research training course involved research training of doctoral students or young researchers, as well as cooperation between senior scientists. Responses differ only slightly between research training courses and networks, as can be seen from Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1.: Distribution of responses to question: "To what extent has your project involved research training of doctoral students/young researchers?" (n=454)



Research training of a high quality can only take place within strong research environments, and cooperation between senior researchers has also been encouraged. A clear majority of activities involve such collaboration, at least to some extent, as shown in Figure 5.2. Such collaboration is slightly more common for networks than for research training courses.

Figure 5.2: Distribution of responses to question: "To what extent has your project involved cooperation between senior scientists?" (n=439)

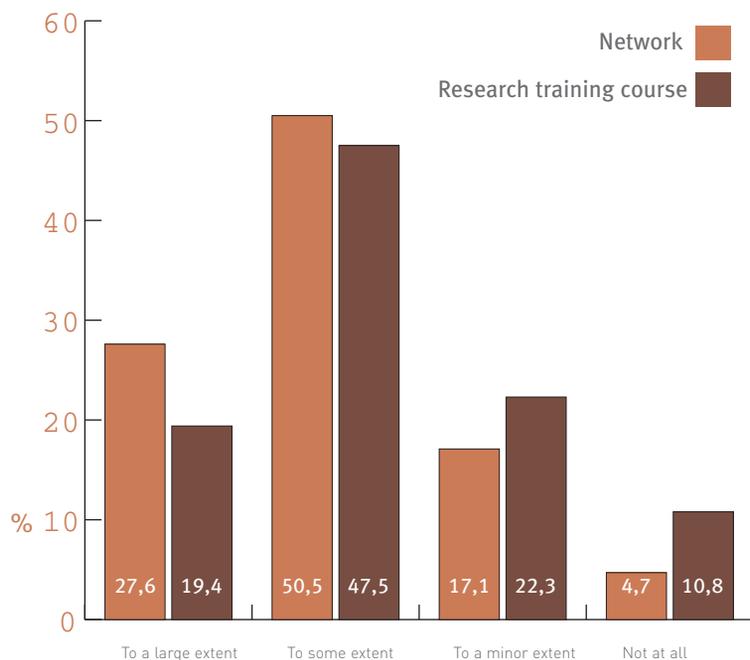


The network and research training activities are open to collaboration with partners outside the academic world. One in ten projects involved collaboration with business at least to some extent, but only 1% of the respondents reported that such collaboration took place to a large extent. This collaboration was more common for research training courses than for networks, and was most widespread within the technical sciences.

NordForsk and NorFA networks and research training courses are only moderately active in disseminating results from their activities in the form of joint scientific publications, according to the findings from the survey. One quarter of the activities had not resulted in any scientific publications, while one in five reported joint publications as a major element in their collaboration. Networks were naturally more likely than research training courses to include joint scientific publications as an important element in their activities, and while 36% of the research training courses did not include work with joint scientific publications, the same was true of only 18% of the networks. The research areas that show the highest activity in publishing joint scientific publications are humanities and natural sciences, while researchers in the multi- and cross-disciplinary activities are the least active.

Other types of dissemination from the activities are more common than joint scientific publications as can be seen from Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3: Distribution of responses to question:  
 “To what extent has your project involved other types of dissemination from the activities?” (n=414)



Eight in ten networks and close to seven in ten research training courses have disseminated results from their activities at least to some extent. Similar patterns are found in most research areas, but the responses indicate that most attention to other types of dissemination is paid by researchers in the technical sciences.

According to the NordForsk (and NorFA) guidelines to applicants for research training courses and networks, priority is given to projects that can display an innovative or new approach to their research field. No less than 86% of the respondents hold the opinion that the project or activity that they were involved lives up to this aim, to some (49%) or to a large (37%) extent. There is no major difference between networks and research training courses in this regard.

Another aspect which has been strongly emphasised in NordForsk and NorFA guidelines has been to give priority to projects with a multi- or cross-disciplinary approach. This is well reflected in the survey responses: only 4% of the respondents claim that their project did not involve any cross- or multi-disciplinary perspectives. There is virtually no difference between respondents representing networks and research training courses.

## A LIFE WITHOUT NORDFORSK?

NordForsk is only one out of many organisations funding research collaboration at an international level. At the same time the specifics of the funding instruments and the geographical scope are quite unique for this organisation. It is therefore interesting to find out to which extent the collaboration that has taken place through NordForsk (or NorFA) would have been possible without Nordic funding.

The respondents (main coordinators and group leaders) were asked if they would have been able to carry out the activity without the support from NordForsk. Responses are shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1. Would you have been able to carry out the activity without the support from NordForsk/NorFA?

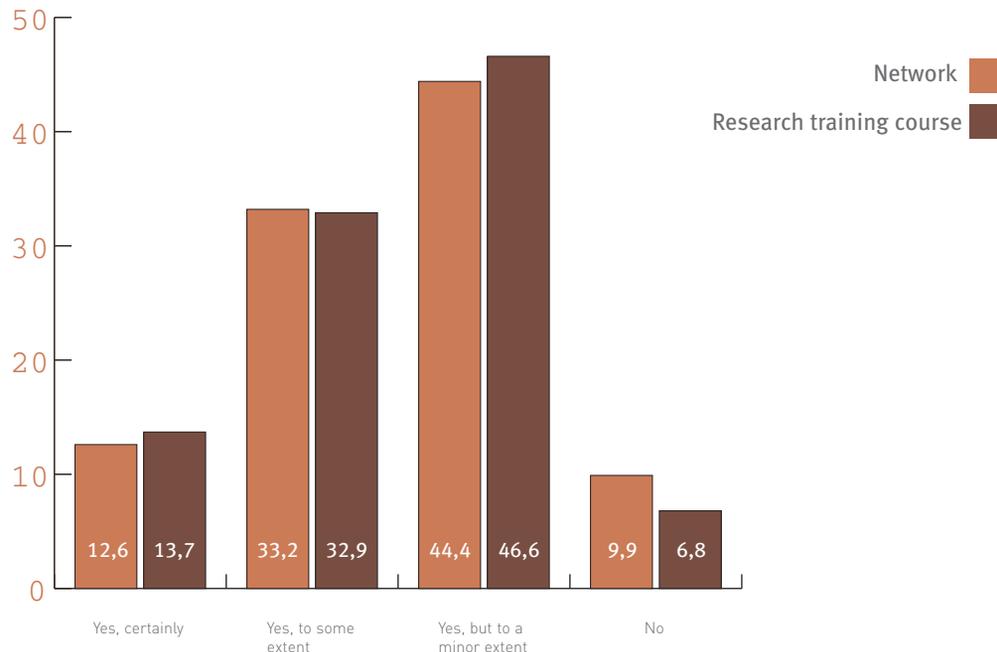
	n	%
Yes, fully	1	1
Yes, but at a reduced level	10	8
Perhaps, with great difficulty	35	28
No, that would have been impossible	79	63
Total	125	100

It appears that NordForsk indeed fills a niche reflected by the fact that nearly two thirds of the respondents would not have been able to create a network or organise a research training course without the support from NordForsk. Almost one third might have done so but with great difficulty. Danish and Norwegian researchers are the most optimistic about alternative means of funding for organising the Nordic activities, while for respondents in the other countries the activity would have been virtually impossible without NordForsk or NorFA support.

To NordForsk it is important that the research networks and activities that are initiated through funding from the organisation are sustainable and continue also after funding from NordForsk ends. However, many respondents appear to find it difficult to obtain funding for their Nordic activities after the Nordic funding has ended. This is the case both for networks and research training courses, as shown in Figure 6.1. On the other hand, the proportion indicating that they will not continue any co-operation without NordForsk support is relatively low. Icelandic respondents are the most pessimistic about their prospects for further collaboration without NordForsk support. There are no large differences between research areas, with the exception of respondents from the technical sciences, who are the most optimistic about the prospects of continuing the collaboration even without funding from NordForsk.

## NORDFORSK REPORTS 2: Going Nordic

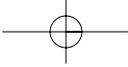
Figure 6.1. Distribution of responses to question of whether the respondents will be able to continue the Nordic collaboration without the support from NordForsk, in per cent (n=361).



When asked how likely it is that they will apply for NordForsk funding in the future, four in five respondents say that it is very likely or likely, as shown in Table 6.2. It is worth noting that only 1% of the respondents find it unlikely that they will apply.

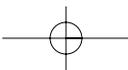
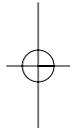
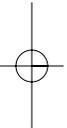
Table 6.2: How likely is it that you will apply for NordForsk funding in the future?

	n	%
Very likely	188	41
Quite likely	197	43
Not so likely	25	5
Very unlikely	5	1
Not sure / do not know	48	10
Total	463	100



## A life without NordForsk?

Icelandic respondents showed a greater interest in future funding than respondents from the other Nordic countries, with Swedish respondents in the opposite end of the scale. There was no marked difference between those who had been involved in a network and those who had received funding for a research training course.



## HOW NORDFORSK IS PERCEIVED

One bloc of the survey contained questions about NordForsk as an organisation: its reputation, performance and the respondents' experiences from direct contact.

Although NordForsk is still a young organisation, established as it was in January 2005, a majority of respondents believe NordForsk is well known for potential users in their own country, as shown in Table 7.1. There were no marked differences between countries, including even the three Baltic states and Russia. In an open question at the end of the survey where respondents were free to give more general feedback to NordForsk<sup>7</sup>, some respondents called for more information about the organisation in the light of its recent establishment.

Table 7.1: To what extent do you agree with the statement: "NordForsk is a well known institution for potential users in my country/region."

	n	%
Fully agree	61	17
Tend to agree	163	46
Tend to disagree	99	28
Fully disagree	17	5
Do not know/not relevant	17	5
Total	357	100

A majority of the respondents are satisfied with the level of information about funding opportunities from NordForsk. They either fully (18%) or tend to disagree (40%) with the statement "It is too hard to find out who can apply and what one can apply for from NordForsk". One third of the respondents express some concern in this regard, while the rest (12%) are unsure or the question is not relevant to them. The main coordinators of the activities find it easier to find out what they can apply for than group leaders and ordinary participants. This may be due to the fact that they, as a rule, have better access to information about NordForsk's activities.

Despite of the general contentment, in the open question some respondents wrote that NordForsk should pay more attention to, or improve, the announcement of funding opportunities. Others suggested that more and better information should be given about application deadlines, and they were usually respondents who were accustomed to the old NorFA deadlines.

<sup>7</sup> The respondents were asked if they felt that the survey had missed something important and to give their comments and views on NordForsk activities not covered by the other parts of the questionnaire.

Most respondents find the application procedures in NordForsk clear and easily accessible, as shown in Table 7.2. The large proportion (22%) saying that they do not know may reflect a lack of familiarity with the application procedures of the new organisation. Only 13% of the respondents either fully or tend to disagree that the application procedures of NordForsk are clear and easily accessible. In the open question some of them stressed their wish for clearer instructions. Another suggestion given by a few respondents was that better feedback should be given to unsuccessful applicants so that it would be easier to improve the applications for a new competition for funding.

**Table 7.2: The extent to which respondents agree with the statement: “The application procedures of NordForsk are clear and easily accessible.”**

	n	%
Fully agree	66	18
Tend to agree	168	47
Tend to disagree	40	11
Fully disagree	6	2
Do not know/not relevant	79	22
Total	359	100

The majority (58%) do not believe that there is excessive bureaucracy and paper work in connection with NordForsk. Only 18% of the respondents either fully or tend to agree with a statement saying that there is too much bureaucracy and paper work in connection with this organisation. The rest (24%) are not sure. Those who found NordForsk most bureaucratic were group leaders/country coordinators, whereas those who had the main responsibility for the networks and research training courses were less likely to think so. Those involved in networks are less prone to think of NordForsk as overtly bureaucratic compared to coordinators and participants in research training courses.

Rather few of the respondents had experienced serious problems in dealing with the responsible NordForsk staff. Of the 78% who had an opinion on this question (22% did not know, probably mostly due to lack of direct contact), 58% fully agreed that they had not experienced any such problems, while another 34% tended to agree. The rest either tended to disagree (6%) or fully disagreed (3%) with the statement. Again the main coordinators (who are most in contact with the organisation) are the most satisfied with the performance of NordForsk on this issue, while country coordinators and ordinary participants are slightly more critical.

In the open question the majority of those who touched upon this issue were satisfied with the NordForsk staff. A few respondents nevertheless expressed a lack of communication with NordForsk, and some were dissatisfied with alleged delays in or lack of feedback, especially concerning their submitted reports from their activities. Others were concerned with the reviewing process of applications, a few questioned the criteria used for the selection of projects, and a few suggested more transparency.

## NORDFORSK REPORTS 2: Going Nordic

The respondents were also asked if NordForsk funding is too small to make a significant contribution, and the distribution of responses is shown in Table 7.3. The majority is inclined to disagree with this statement, while about one third tend to or fully agree. There is considerable difference between respondents participating in networks and research training courses. While 40% of the former at least tend to agree with the statement, the same is true of only 20% of the latter. Moreover, group leaders are less impressed with the level of funding than the main coordinators of the activities.

**Table 7.3: Extent of agreement with statement:  
“Funding from NordForsk is too small to make a significant contribution.”**

	n	%
Fully agree	19	5
Tend to agree	96	27
Tend to disagree	154	43
Fully disagree	53	15
Do not know/not relevant	36	10
Total	358	100

There were quite a few remarks and suggestions in the open question about the type of funding provided by NordForsk. Some found the “economical muscles” of NordForsk to be too small in general, and the funding they received to be small or modest. Quite a few respondents commented on the principles and types of funding adhered to by NordForsk. Several of them argued that it is a problem that NordForsk does not provide funding for salary for those coordinating and administrating networks and research training courses. Others asked for more support to administration.

Still others had more specific suggestions as to what types of activities NordForsk should support:

I think it would be a huge advantage if e.g., frames could be used for lab consumables in connection with exchange of students etc. Occasionally we had problems persuading students to go, because some labs required bench fee.

There would be a need for funds (3000-5000 €) for small collaborative projects between Nordic labs. These kinds of funds would allow funding of the 2-3 week lab visits, collaborative experimentation, transfer of the materials etc. The application procedure should be fast and simple.

It's a pity NordForsk does not fund publications (although we are actually bound to make at least one publication – i.e. the web page). To do all this networking and not having the resources to publish the results is kind of frustrating.

There were concerns expressed that too much emphasis tends to be put on larger projects:

It is sad if NordForsk starts to concentrate the rather small sum it has on only a handful of actors. Most of us who participate actively in this network already have enough project funds (the participants are leading in the field) but the network money both funds and legitimizes our collaboration around supporting both post-docs and doctoral students and build a stronger Nordic presence in this area. We have already gained complementary support from several participating institutions because of the NordForsk "stamp of quality."

While NordForsk has tended to support new initiatives, some respondents find it hard to obtain funding for the continuation of their collaboration, and others seek ideas for ways to continue. For example:

There should be more transparent instructions (as to) how an existing network can be re-established as a new one. New coordinator? New theme? What proportion of partners can continue? How many new partners need to be recruited?

Several supported held the opinion that NordForsk should retain some of the traditional instruments of research training collaboration, such as the research training courses. However, respondents expressed diverging views regarding the emphasis on multi- and cross-disciplinary activities:

Please keep up your support to inter-, multi- and interdisciplinary research in areas that have social relevance, but do not go after the most fashionable areas like so many other supporters tend to do.

Like most other administrative research organisations, you are using terms such as "cross-disciplinary" (...) and "multi-disciplinary". There really is not a good definition of these terms; they are used opportunistically by bureaucrats and applicants. I think these terms should be defined or omitted. This is bureaucratic bla bla.

As for a question asking respondents to rate NordForsk in comparison with other research funding organisations, one quarter found it difficult to answer. Among those answering, the tendency was clearly leaning towards a positive evaluation of the organisation: 62% thought NordForsk is better than the average, 36% did not see any difference, while the remaining 3% thought NordForsk is below the average. Representatives of research training course activities were slightly more positive than those with experience from networks (68% vs. 58% giving the most positive evaluation). Doctoral students stand out as the group most positive to NordForsk, with 80% giving the most positive score.

The need for coordination of NordForsk activities with other research funding organisations was mentioned by several respondents:

(The p)rogram should be coordinated with EU Framework Program VII.

It would be good if NordForsk could integrate somewhat with the national Science Foundations. E.g., money could be set aside by national foundations to support larger network activities granted by NordForsk, e.g., in the form of PhD-scholarships.

Finally, the respondents were asked to give their overall general assessment of NordForsk as an organisation. The very positive evaluation given is provided in Table 7.4. A high level of general satisfaction was found among all categories of respondents. However, main coordinators and doctoral students had a higher percentage of very satisfied respondents than other categories. Moreover, respondents who had received funding in 2005 or later were the most satisfied (69% very satisfied). Russia and Iceland stand out as the countries with most satisfied respondents (85% and 80% very satisfied respectively), while the other countries have almost even distributions on this question.

## NORDFORSK REPORTS 2: Going Nordic

Table 7.4: General satisfaction with NordForsk

	n	%
Very satisfied	265	58
Rather satisfied	158	34
Rather dissatisfied	9	2
Very dissatisfied	1	-
Not sure/do not know	28	6
Total	461	100

## ADDED VALUE OF NORDIC COOPERATION

In NordForsk's strategy 2006-2009 the mission and values of NordForsk are described: "The mission of NordForsk is to strengthen and further develop the Nordic region as one of the most dynamic regions in the world for research and innovation and, thereby, enhance the international competitiveness of the Nordic countries and the living conditions of the populations in the region." (...) "NordForsk seeks to identify and promote activities where Nordic research collaboration will produce added value and continuously seeks to identify and cultivate new sources of such added value. These can be general in nature, in terms of critical mass, or venture specific, such as joint access to unique common empiric materials or comparative research settings of high scientific relevance."

The way in which Nordic research collaboration yields added value may be described in different ways by different people, dependent, among others, on their role in the research environment (active researcher, research administrator, policy-maker, research council agent, etc.). The opinions and views of those who have been actively engaged in Nordic research collaboration were thought to be particularly relevant in order to define what added value from Nordic collaboration means at the practical level. Therefore, the respondents were asked in an open question to describe the added value of doing the activity on the Nordic level and not on a national arena. A large number of respondents gave an answer to this question, and the following summary gives an overview of the most common – and sometimes most inspiring – answers provided.

### CRITICAL MASS

The clearly most common response to the open question was that the national arenas were too small and that through Nordic collaboration one was able to reach a "critical mass". As put by one of the respondents, the Nordic collaboration provided

a sufficient number of interested doctoral candidates, supervisors and activities in order to create a functioning community.

Many mentioned that there were not enough researchers or doctoral students in their own country who were interested in the field of research and therefore the Nordic arena was seen as useful:

My country is too small and there are only few scientists in my field of study, so a wider context is of much help.

And

We organise research training courses, and the "national market" is simply too small. At Nordic level there are plenty of PhD students, and our courses are always full.

A typical response is represented by the following statement:

The national arena is often too small, the Nordic level offers a medium sized arena that works very well.

It was mentioned that each of the Nordic countries in an international perspective has a population as a single city, and that this makes it difficult to organise focused courses and research at the national level. By increasing the number of participants and collaboration across borders, it became possible to exchange ideas, to plan new projects, and to achieve groups of students large enough for qualified and specialised courses.

## NORDFORSK REPORTS 2: Going Nordic

### EASY TO ORGANISE AND SIMILAR COUNTRIES

Nordic collaboration is by many seen as the easiest collaboration to organise:

All international networking is important. Of course it is easiest to cooperate within the Nordic countries.

Geographic (including cheap travel) and cultural proximity, providing “easy communication and mutual understanding”, were mentioned by a large number of respondents as reasons why Nordic collaboration is more ‘natural’ than collaboration with other countries. A few examples:

Because of the similar scientific cultures, close distances and similar natural habitats (...) it is very logical to cooperate at a Nordic basis.

The environmental, legal and cultural frameworks are quite similar in the Nordic countries and therefore it gives great added value to share experiences and research knowledge.

The following statement is also representative for a substantial number of responses:

Good relations are good for research. The atmosphere between Nordic people is often very positive, and undoubtedly this can stimulate research activities.

### ...BUT ALSO DIFFERENCES

While most respondents looked to Nordic similarities, others mentioned the important differences between the Nordic countries, both in terms of theoretical and methodological approaches, as positive for collaboration, since they increase the variety and breadth of the subjects studied:

We developed a package of doctoral courses in a field (...) where research perspectives and traditions differ somewhat across the Nordic countries. By pooling resources we were able to provide a much more comprehensive coverage of topics, theories, and approaches.

Things that are often taken for granted in a national setting need to be explained to a larger Nordic audience:

(N)ew dimensions and ideas seem to be better at hand in international seminars than in the domestic ones – where everyone more or less knows in beforehand what the others will present.

And, according to another respondent, one added value from the cooperation was

(l)earning not to take knowledge, “canonical” literature and theoretical perspectives within a given research area “for granted”.

### IS THE NORDIC LEVEL NEEDED?

While most respondents who offered their view on the issue were clearly in favour of Nordic collaboration, there were also a few respondents who did not subscribe to the idea that smaller-scale collaboration necessarily needs to be Nordic:

There may some value linked to acting on a smaller scale than through the European COST networks. I like the NordForsk set-up, although I often ask myself why we need to define something as a “Nordic” level. Principally, there is no point in doing this.

There were even a few who considered NordForsk first and foremost as yet another funding body:

There is so limited funding available for research by now that you apply wherever you can.

Others are in principle in favour of Nordic collaboration but believe practical issues should be resolved before it can function properly. For example:

(...A) major drawback in view of these quasi-parallel applications is the highly asynchronous application deadlines across the Nordic countries. They could be more harmonized than they are now.

### ENHANCED QUALITY AND ECONOMIES OF SCALE

Enhanced quality of the PhD training and “a much higher level of expertise when all five countries are involved” were also quite common responses to the open question on added value from Nordic collaboration. The discussion among Nordic scientists often contributed to “new ideas, innovation and possibilities for joint international research projects”. It was thought to be positive that one could utilise an “essentially richer intellectual resource pool than in national courses (...and) network activities.”

For many research topics the best researchers are to be found in the Nordic countries, and there is no need to go to other parts of Europe in order to find collaborating partners. By pooling resources together the Nordic research environments would get access to first-class international researchers which it would otherwise have been expensive for one group to invite and/or who finds it more stimulating to meet with a larger Nordic audience:

(There was a s)ignificant increase in quality, since more expert workers could participate. This, in turn, helped (to) attract outstanding international figures.

The economic aspects (“economies of scale and scope”) for organising networks and research training courses at a Nordic level were stressed by several respondents. When resources are scattered in the Nordic countries, to pool joint Nordic resources was considered to have

(s)ometimes easier to co-operate with Nordic partners than with partners from own country: (It is e)asier to cooperate over the borders, since we are not competing for the same national research funding.

### IMPORTANCE FOR YOUNG RESEARCHERS AND RESEARCH TRAINING

Some of the respondents mentioned research training activities as an area where Nordic collaboration continues to be important. NordForsk funding has stimulated this focus in research groups in which less attention has been paid to doctoral studies:

(A)s doctoral training was not a priority for all of our original partners, the creation of the Network has managed to promote a change in priorities. (...E)ven at the institutions where doctoral training was a priority, the Network has given a boost to making that a reality.

The networking of young scholars was mentioned by a number of respondents, and these young scholars can “stimulate and learn from one another tremendously”. Nordic collaboration also opens up for joint supervision of student projects, which by many was considered to be particularly positive.

## NORDFORSK REPORTS 2: Going Nordic

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The students' exposure to international collaboration at an early age was by many seen as a crucial added value gained from the NordForsk activities. A few respondents even mentioned that the language training from presentation to a larger Nordic audience in English was an important part of the introduction to international collaboration for young researchers.

### GLOBAL PROMOTION OF NORDIC RESEARCH

The fact that Nordic research takes place within an international context was not forgotten by the respondents. Several mentioned the promotion of Nordic research globally as an added value of their activity:

NordForsk presents some of the few instruments that are left to promote the Nordic awareness and significant scientific power of the Nordic countries.

Another statement in the same direction is the following:

Norden is a home turf that, despite certain differences, has much in common, and together we are able to voice out the Nordic perspective in a field dominated by American experience and scholarship, and thus make a wider contribution.

Nordic collaboration is perceived as increasing the competitiveness of the Nordic researchers internationally:

Exploiting our cultural background has been instrumental for many joint European initiatives. United the Nordic Countries stand as a major scientific area. Many European projects and networks have sprung from just our small Nordic network (...).

Some respondents could point out examples of this having taken place:

The participating universities could probably not alone become significant international centres in our field of study but the network has helped us form a research and training unit which has taken many steps on the way to becoming one of the important centres in our field in the whole world.

### COLLABORATION BEYOND THE FIVE NORDIC COUNTRIES

The broadening of the Nordic region also to include the three Baltic states and/or Russia was highlighted by a few respondents, such as:

The activity on the Nordic level enables to present the research done in the Baltic countries in a better way, and it also helps to widen the geographical and interdisciplinary boundaries of research done in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

Others saw the opening up of collaboration with countries even outside of the broader Nordic region as favourable:

It was also very valuable that groups outside the Nordic countries could participate to some extent.

### JOINT INFRASTRUCTURE

Nordic added value can be the common use or development of joint Nordic infrastructure:

This network (...) plays an important role in the efforts to create a new (...) laboratory on Nordic base at [xx, Sweden]. The performance and existence of the network has had a decisive influence on the work to define the facility to create the scientific case and to push it forward.

### COMPLIMENTARY TO EU FUNDING, BUT LESS BUREAUCRATIC

A number of respondents compared Nordic collaboration through NordForsk with (more bureaucratic) EU funding. Thus, through NordForsk researchers get a

(s)ignificantly broader scientific coverage without the annoying bureaucratic overhead of EU actions.

And:

(...) many of us feel presently that EU is too bureaucratic and requires too much effort for the rewards. Our purpose is to make science and teach, not just write applications.

However, the importance of EU funding and the contribution of Nordic collaboration to reach this end was stressed by several respondents, such as the following:

Undoubtedly the activities have also helped in becoming involved in EU-funded research projects, although these are hard to measure.

While some researchers have found it difficult to involve most or all the Nordic countries in EU networks, NordForsk was considered to have “some of the few instruments that are left to promote the Nordic awareness and significant scientific power of Nordic countries.”

### BROADER NETWORKING

When researchers meet each other personally through the networks and courses, they also find it easier to contact each other for scientific purposes or projects that are not directly linked to the task for which they obtained the funding in the first place, and such research contacts tend to be valuable for many years, often throughout their career. The network members often open up their broader ‘personal networks’ to other members:

We have been able to draw from our respective nets of international contacts. My “personal network” has expanded to a large extent as a result of my participation in the network.

Some more specific benefits were gained through the collaboration, as described by the following statements:

In the academic world, we very much rely on various procedures for peer review, e.g., when appointing professors and senior lectures and in evaluation committees for PhD exams. Here a broader network is very valuable.

### INFORMAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

The social dimension (fun, friendship) of the collaboration was mentioned by many of the respondents. One Danish researcher put it this way:

It's a paradox, but going to Tampere for a week allowed me invaluable time to get to know my fellow PhD students at my own institution in Denmark.

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While the social aspects are important in themselves, a good social environment is also stimulating for the promotion of research. The informal set-up of the networks and research training courses has contributed to a free scientific exchange of ideas:

It is important to note that a lot of “informal” scientific exchange has occurred, the kind of information that is created from discussions between young and ambitious PhD students and senior researchers. This kind of scientific results is difficult to substantiate. It originates from the meetings of people with related research topics and results in a scientific and personal development of all the participants in the network.

### MISCELLANEOUS

A variety of additional topics were also raised in the open question on Nordic Added Value. The stress on cross- and multi-disciplinarity of NordForsk activities was reviewed positively by a considerable number of respondents, but how it contributed to Nordic Added Value was not explained in any detail.

Others were concerned with the amount of funding available and saw NordForsk first of all as a first step to obtain such funding:

It's also probably valuable for generating other – and real/proper! – research funding from national and other funding bodies.

Insights into the educational and research systems of the other countries were also seen as valuable by a few, and one respondent even argued that the Nordic cooperation “has added much insight into the respective national research policies”.

The location of the activity was mentioned as a positive aspect of the Nordic co-operation:

The courses were located in different countries (Finland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and Iceland), which gave the participants the opportunity to visit research sites abroad and get acquainted with different scientific traditions and facilities.

Some respondents work with themes that are particularly relevant in a Nordic context, and thought this was a motivation for such Nordic collaboration – also when defined broadly:

As the network (...) explicitly addressed comparative issues in the Nordic plus Russian and Canadian region, national activities would not have worked.

## APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE (ENGLISH VERSION)

*Please note: Not all questions were asked of all respondents, and the order of questions may have appeared differently to the respondents due to the survey being web-based so that skip-patterns could vary for different categories of respondents.*

Thank you for participating in the survey concerning networks and research training courses. First we would like to ask if you have been involved in only one, or in several such NordForsk / NorFA activities.

One

Two-three different activities

Four or more

Not sure

Was it a network or a research training course?

Network

Research training course

Neither / Do not know / do not remember

The questions in this survey will relate to the most recent NordForsk / NorFA-funded network or research training course that you participated in. What type of activity was it?

Network

Research training course

Other activity / Do not know / do not remember

What is / was your role in this NordForsk / NorFA project or activity?

Main coordinator / project leader

Group leader / country coordinator

Ordinary participant

Doctoral student

Other

In which year did you get involved in this NordForsk / NorFA -funded activity?

2000 or before

2001 - 2002

2003 - 2004

2005 or later

Do not remember / not sure

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the (most recent) research training course that you were involved in or attended? (Answer categories: To a large extent, To some extent, To a minor extent, Not at all, Not sure / do not know)

- 1) The course content was of an excellent standard.
- 2) The teachers were the best you can find internationally.
- 3) I don't think a similar course organised nationally would have been equally or more beneficial.

And to what extent do you agree with the following statements about the (most recent) research training course that you were involved in or attended? (Answer categories: To a large extent, To some extent, To a minor extent, Not at all, Not sure / do not know)

- 1) The course covered the research topics in an innovative way.
- 2) The course did NOT help to develop research contacts or networks for the future.
- 3) The course was helpful for the completion of my doctoral thesis.

To what extent would you agree with the following statements about the network that you have been participating in? (Answer categories: To a large extent, To some extent, To a minor extent, Not at all, Not sure / do not know)

- 1) The network has (had) top-class researchers involved.
- 2) The network puts very much emphasis on research training.
- 3) The amount of funding for the network is too small to make a substantial contribution.

And to what extent would you agree with the following statements about the network that you have been participating in? (Answer categories: To a large extent, To some extent, To a minor extent, Not at all, Not sure / do not know)

- 1) There has been a good balance in the network between the co-ordinator / core group and the rest of the participants.
- 2) The ambitions of the network have NOT been reached.
- 3) The network was most active in the initial phases after its establishment.
- 4) The network is a successful example of Nordic research collaboration.

To what extent has your project / activity involved the following components?

(Answer categories: To a large extent, To some extent, To a minor extent, Not at all, Not sure / do not know)

- 1) Research cooperation between senior researchers.
- 2) Research training of doctoral students / young researchers.
- 3) Transfer of competence from Nordic countries to Baltic countries / Russia.
- 4) Transfer of competence from Russia / Baltic countries to Nordic countries.
- 5) Cooperation with business / industry.

To what extent has your project / activity involved the following components? (Answer categories: To a large extent, To some extent, To a minor extent, Not at all, Not sure / do not know)

- 1) Joint scientific publications.
- 2) Other dissemination of the results of the activity.

- 3) Cross- or multidisciplinary perspectives.
- 4) Innovative or new approaches to the research field.

**Do you still cooperate with the Nordic partners?**

- Yes, NordForsk funding is still available
- Yes, actively, although funding from NordForsk has ended
- Yes, but to a limited extent
- No, the cooperation has ended
- Not sure / not relevant

**Has networking through NordForsk / NorFA contributed to joint applications for European (e.g., EU) funding?**

- Yes
- Possibly / partly
- No

**Have any of these initiatives resulted in European (e.g., EU) funding?**

- Yes
- Results still pending
- No

**What was the added value of doing the activity on the Nordic level and not on a national arena? (up to 1024 characters)**

**Has your NordForsk / NorFA activity included partners or research students from outside the Nordic countries?**

**Please tick all answers that apply.**

- Yes, from the Baltic countries
- Yes, from Russia
- Yes from other country (-ies)
- No, only Nordic participants
- Do not know

**Would you have been able to carry out the activity without the support from NorFA / NordForsk?**

- Yes, fully
- Yes, almost at the same level
- Yes, but at a reduced level
- Perhaps, with great difficulty
- No, that would have been impossible
- Do not know

Are you – or will you be – able to continue the Nordic collaboration without further support from NordForsk / NorFA?

- Yes, certainly
- Yes, to some extent
- Yes, but to a minor extent
- Not sure / do not know
- No

The next questions relate only to NordForsk. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?  
(Answer categories: Fully agree, Tend to agree, Tend to disagree, Fully disagree, Do not know / not relevant)

- 1) NordForsk is a well known institution for potential users in my country / region.
- 2) It is too hard to find out who can apply and what one can apply for from NordForsk.
- 3) I have not experienced any problems dealing with the responsible staff of NordForsk.

And to what extent do you agree with the following statements about NordForsk?  
(Answer categories: Fully agree, Tend to agree, Tend to disagree, Fully disagree, Do not know / not relevant)

- 1) Funding from NordForsk is too small to make a significant contribution.
- 2) The application procedures of NordForsk are clear and easily accessible.
- 3) There is too much bureaucracy and paper work in connection with NordForsk.

In general, how satisfied have you been with NordForsk?

- Very satisfied
- Rather satisfied
- Rather dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Not sure / do not know

Compared to other research funding agencies that you have experience with, what is your general impression of NordForsk?

- NordForsk is better than the average
- The same, no big difference
- NordForsk is below the average
- Not relevant / it varies / not sure

How likely is it that you will apply for NordForsk funding in the future?

- Very likely
- Quite likely
- Not so likely
- Very unlikely
- Not sure / do not know

Finally, we would like to ask you a few questions about yourself. Are you a man or a woman?

Man

Woman

What is your year of birth?

Which country or autonomous region do (did) you represent in the NordForsk / NorFA collaboration?

Denmark

Finland

Iceland

Norway

Sweden

Estonia

Latvia

Lithuania

Russia

Greenland

Faroe Islands

Åland

Other (please specify):

What type of institution do (did) you represent in this project / activity?

University

Polytechnics (Høgskole)

Research institute

Business sector

Other (please specify):

Which title corresponds best to yours at present?

Professor

Senior scientist

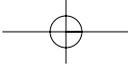
Researcher

Junior researcher

Post-doc

Doctoral student

Other



What is the main research area of your NordForsk / NorFA activity?

Social sciences

Humanities

Natural sciences

Technical sciences

Agricultural, forestry, fishery sciences

Medical sciences

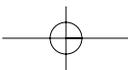
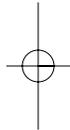
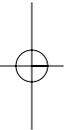
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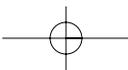
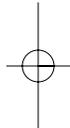
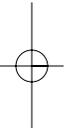
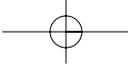
Multi- or cross-disciplinary

Do you feel that we have missed asking something important? Please give us any comments and views on our activities not covered by the questions posed above. (up to 1024 characters)

You have reached the end of the survey. Thank you very much for participating!

If you want to know more about NordForsk and Nordic research, please visit our web-site: [www.nordforsk.org](http://www.nordforsk.org) .





This survey conducted among participants in Nordic research network and research training course activities in the 1999-2005 period shows that 90% of the project participants continue collaborating after Nordic funding has ended.

One in five respondents have applied for EU funding as a direct result of the Nordic collaboration.

More than half the activities included partners from the Baltic countries, 28% involved partners from Russia.

Eight in ten would find it impossible to carry out their activity without the support from NordForsk (or former NorFA).

Most respondents find the application procedures clear and easily accessible. NordForsk is not perceived to be overtly bureaucratic, and most people are satisfied with their communication with the responsible NordForsk staff.

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