

New learning and teaching environments and practices. A Call for Proposals for a Nordic Centre of Excellence

Application deadline: 13 September 2017 14:00 CEST

Available budget:

The funding available for this call is NOK 25 million, and is intended to establish one Nordic Centre of Excellence.

Project duration:

Applicants should apply for funding for five years, from 1 August 2018 to 31 July 2023.

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Background

NordForsk, in collaboration with the Academy of Finland; the Swedish Research Council; the Research Council of Norway; the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of Iceland; and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science of Denmark, is issuing a call for proposals for a Nordic Centre of Excellence under the Nordic research programme [Education for Tomorrow](#). The programme's main objectives are to strengthen educational research and contribute to a knowledge-based policy for the educational sector through widespread dissemination of the research results.

The aim of the call is to bridge the gap between research and practice in the area of teaching and learning. This may be achieved by focusing on the application of research-based knowledge in practice in genuinely collaborative projects and by focusing on the role of teacher education in research-based development of practice.

The Nordic Centre of Excellence funded under this call should be of high quality, innovative and contribute to Nordic added value. Qualitative, quantitative and mixed method studies are encouraged. Longitudinal, comparative and micro-oriented observation studies as well as collaborative and experimental studies with the participation of teachers, children and students are encouraged to ensure that excellent educational research will be used to promote versatile educational outcomes.

Characteristics of a Nordic Centre of Excellence (NCoE)

A Nordic Centre of Excellence (NCoE) is a collaboration that builds upon already existing national and international excellence and joins Nordic researchers at the forefront of their fields to promote excellence at the Nordic level. It is a high-visibility collaboration that aims to have an international and Nordic impact on research and society.

An NCoE is a research environment with a common research plan and joint researcher training, management, communication and outreach activities. An NCoE facilitates efficient use of resources by gathering people, funding and infrastructure into collaborative entities. An NCoE may include participants from non-Nordic research groups to fulfil the goals of the centre.

The NCoE concept is further elaborated in [Annex 1](#).

Thematic framework

Educational issues belong to the grand societal challenges that Europe and the world are facing today. Societal developments have an effect on the daily lives of families, children and adolescents as well as on schools and local communities. Migration and increasing diversity and digitalisation in society put new issues on the agenda for education. How well early childhood education and care, schools and education in general are able to respond to these challenges has an enormous impact on social cohesion and economic development.

To address these complex issues, there is a need for knowledge of how teaching and learning practices can be developed in innovative ways and in new learning environments. Research proposals are invited to explore these issues in studies of, for example:

- Teaching and learning processes and student engagement;
- Inclusive and multilingual education;
- Adaptive learning, digital technologies and use of media;
- Teacher education and professional development;
- School environment, well-being and interaction with local communities.

The focus of the proposal may be early childhood education and care, primary education or teacher education, or combinations of these contexts.

The different policies and practices applied in the Nordic countries will provide opportunities for fruitful comparative approaches. Since special emphasis is placed on linking research and practice, the involvement of teachers, children and students, and other actors in the schools is encouraged – with the aim of strengthening the knowledge base for practice and for research-informed policy.

Communication and knowledge exchange

The applications must include a detailed communication and knowledge exchange strategy for external and internal communication and dissemination as well as knowledge exchange between research and practice. The strategy must describe the processes by which research-based knowledge will be transformed into practice in collaboration with practitioners. The creation of new models of collaboration between research and practice is encouraged. It is recommended

that the applications include a plan for comprehensive involvement of professional expertise in communication and knowledge-exchange activities.

Financial framework

Applicants are invited to apply for funding to establish a Nordic Centre of Excellence with a budget of NOK 25 million and a duration of five years. The intention is to provide funding for one Nordic Centre of Excellence, subject to quality, under this call.

Funding may be used for:

- Administrative expenses for NCoE management (normally a full-time position);
- PhD and post-doctoral positions;
- Travel/accommodation costs and mobility for the consortium partners;
- Salaries and indirect costs;
- Project-related costs (such as collaboration with practitioners and other relevant costs);
- Travel/accommodation costs for international participants;
- Communication and dissemination activities and knowledge-exchange between research and educational contexts.

The consortium is expected to contribute a significant amount of its own financing in addition to the NordForsk funding it receives. The contribution from the consortium partners must be documented in the budget specified in the application form.

Funding will be granted for Nordic research collaboration, as specified in the proposal. The NCoE funding may also be used for collaboration with non-Nordic researchers and research groups. Partner institutions from non-Nordic countries must fund their own participation, but travel and accommodation costs may be covered.

Eligibility criteria

- The scheme is open to researchers based at universities, university colleges, universities of applied sciences and research institutes in the Nordic countries.
- The consortium must involve partner institutions from at least three Nordic countries.
- The host institution for the NCoE (Project Manager) must be a research institution based in one of the Nordic countries. Rights and obligations of the Project Manager are defined by the contract with NordForsk.
- The Project Leader of the consortium must be a senior researcher at the host institution. The Project Leader is responsible on behalf of the Project Manager for the professional implementation, progress, and completion of the project in accordance with the contract.
- All participating institutions are requested to send a Letter of Commitment stating the contribution in cash or in kind from the institution. The Letter of Commitment must be signed by a person authorised to take on financial

commitments on behalf of the institution for the entire duration of the project.

- Individual researchers may only participate in one proposal under this call. However, universities, university colleges, universities of applied sciences and research institutes may be affiliated with more than one application.
- Proposals must be submitted in English via the [NordForsk Call and Application Portal](#).

In addition, the application must include:

- a description of how gender perspectives will be incorporated into the research and the organisation of the NCoE. Please consult the [NordForsk Gender Policy](#);
- a plan for open access to publications and data in accordance with [Science Europe's Principles on Open Access to Research Publications](#);
- a description of legal and ethical issues of relevance to the proposed research at the NCoE. Projects involving research with children are required to obtain approval of relevant ethical committees within their own institution and in accordance with national laws and regulations.

Assessment criteria

An international expert panel will assess the proposals on the basis of the following four components:

- Excellence of research plan (relevance to the content of the call, scientific quality, originality and novelty of research, feasibility and expected results, appropriateness of budget, potential for knowledge transfer and use of knowledge to other areas, contribution to open science, potential for long-term cooperation beyond the funding period);
- Excellence of people (scientific merits, leadership, experience and skills related to management and operation);
- Excellence of environment (inclusion of relevant environments, cohesion, possibilities for specialisation, economy of scale, international strategy and profile, plan for researcher mobility, demonstrated skills and plans for researcher training, organisation of the centre of excellence);
- Excellence of communication and knowledge-exchange strategy (dissemination plan, knowledge exchange between research and practitioners, inclusion of practitioners and potential to create new models of collaboration, internal communication within the centre of excellence).

The Programme Committee will assess:

- the relevance relative to the call for proposals;
- the Nordic added value (including justification for why the NCoE should be carried out as a joint Nordic effort);
- how gender perspectives will be incorporated into the research and the organisation of the NCoE in line with the [NordForsk Gender Policy](#);
- the plan for open access to publications and data in accordance with [Science Europe's Principles on Open Access to Research Publications](#).

Processing of proposals

[NordForsk's guidelines on impartiality](#) will be applied to handle possible conflicts of interest.

Applicants must submit their proposals electronically through the NordForsk application portal no later than 14.00 CET on 13 September 2017. To access the application form, you must register as a user at the NordForsk Call and Application Portal.

An international expert panel and the Programme Committee will assess the proposals based on the stipulated assessment criteria. In addition, the programme committee will assess the relevance to the call, the Nordic added value and the overall strategic value of the proposals.

The NordForsk Board is expected to take the final funding decision in early 2018 based on the assessments of the international expert panel and the recommendation by the Programme Committee.

All applicants will receive written feedback from the expert panel.

NordForsk will initiate contract negotiations with the host organisations for the proposal selected for funding.

Submission of applications

All proposals must be written in English and follow the structure set out in the application form available on the NordForsk application portal.

The Project Leader must submit the application form and the annexes on behalf of the research consortium.

Only one application form per proposal may be submitted. It must contain all supporting documents as requested below.

1. NordForsk proposal form (must be based on the template)
2. Research plan (ten pages max)
3. Management plan (two pages max)
4. Communication and knowledge-exchange strategy (two pages max)
5. Financial forms
6. CV (three pages max for Project leader and one page max for each Team Leader)
7. Presentation of research teams (standard template)
8. Letters of Commitment

Monitoring of the NCoEs

NordForsk is responsible for the administrative follow-up of the NCoEs.

NordForsk negotiates and signs the contract with the NCoE host institution. This contract will set out the specific funding rates and details in accordance with [NordForsk Standard Terms and Conditions of Contract](#). A consortium agreement

regulates the relationships between the NCoE host institution and the other institutions involved in the individual NCoE.

The NCoEs are monitored through annual reporting consisting of a scientific progress report and a financial report. NordForsk will fund the NCoEs on a yearly basis based on the recommendation by the Programme Committee.

NordForsk may appoint an international Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) with core competence in the thematic area of the NCoE. The SAB will advise the Programme Committee regarding the scientific progress of the NCoE.

The funding decision will be announced in early 2018. NordForsk will contact the main applicants regarding the outcome.