

Mobilizing the Nordics

Outcome sketch, mission group 2: Open Nordic University for Continuing Education

Background

The challenges and lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis have been discussed at a series of webinars during Fall 2020 with a combined total of 70 top leaders from all the Nordic countries supported by Mobilize Strategy Consulting. Top leader from universities, research institutes, private organizations, innovation agencies, private research-financing funds, public research councils, and ministries gathered in these webinars to explore how Nordic potentials may be unleashed to deal with societal challenges and global crises.

During the discussions, many valuable insights, experiences, reflections, ideas, and proposals were shared concerning how the Nordic countries can benefit from a strengthened Nordic collaboration to stand stronger in the handling of the pandemic. Even more important it was discussed how we in the future can develop a stronger ability to handle other crises and societal transformations – like the green transition – by mobilizing our joint potential.

To follow up on the conclusions from the webinar series it has been decided that the webinars should continue and that 4 mission groups are to be established. NordForsk decided to take responsibility for this and fund the activities. The 4 mission groups will revolve around the following themes:

1. *Leadership development program*

Develop and design a leadership development program that spans across the Nordic countries and can develop (young) top leaders both professionally and personally.

Chair: Nikolaj Malchow-Møller (President at Copenhagen Business School)

2. *Open Nordic University*

Create more cohesion across the Nordic countries and hereby bundle and utilize the collective skills and resources from the national universities and educational institutions.

Primary focus on continuing education as the driver for national competence development.

Chair: Anne Borg (Rector at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology)

3. *Nordic digital green transition program*

Contribute to the green transition agenda as a strong intersectoral and Nordic region instead of individual countries, sectors, and institutions.

Chair: Ingrid Petersson (Director General at FORMAS – A Swedish Research Council for sustainable development)

4. *Uncovering Nordic clusters of research & innovation*

Gain a better understanding of the current strengths and potentials in the Nordic region and mobilize innovation with and around the universities.

Chair: Nina Kopola (Director General of Business Finland)

Mobilizing the Nordics

Aim for mission group 2

The aim for mission group 2 is to lift lifelong learning across the Nordic countries to the next level. Further the aim is to bundle and utilize the collective skills and resources at the national universities and educational institutions. However, the aim is not solely to focus on continuing education from an educational institution perspective, but also to look at how public providers of continuing education and private providers and corporations represent an ecosystem of continuing education. In this perspective public providers have an obligation to create value in a much broader perspective. This can be achieved by developing and maturing the concept for an Open Nordic University for Continuing Education that is digitally accessible to all citizens in the Nordic region with a *primary focus on continuing education* – starting with a pilot project that can be scaled in the long run.

Core values and assumptions for the mission group's work on the mission

- Continuing education is not for the elites in society and those who are already privileged with educational capital. Education is of democratic phenomenon value and a cornerstone in a Nordic Welfare society
- Continuing education has a transformative power, both at the individual level as well as the societal level (career support) to support fundamental changes in modern society (social and system innovation)
- Continuing education is a complex phenomenon that should be understood as an ecosystem with different zones of value creation inhabited by both public and private providers.
- Continuing education is part of life long learning.
- Developing continuing education should broadly be about institutional development and innovation, rather than on creating new business opportunities for providers.

Core topics for mission group 2

To unfold the potential of the group members and their insights and perspectives into the mission there will be a process with a kickoff meeting (online) and 3 online workshops during the spring 2021 to get and share inspiration and work with the topic. The workshops will be structured and facilitated by Mobilize Strategy Consulting appointed by NordForsk.

Topics that could be of focus are:

- A shared understanding of the national agendas within continuing education in the different Nordic countries, and an understanding of the institutional drivers in the Nordic countries that supports the development of continuing education. The aim is to get an overall understanding of the issues that are addressed.
- A shared understanding of the fundamental drivers that globally seems to change how we think and design continuing education, i.e. technology, alliances/partnerships, delivery models.
- Identifying core design parameters that are important in the design of an Open University for continuing education.
- The development of prototypes (business cases) within the idea of an Open Nordic University for Continuing Education that has the potential to deploy together and to gain collective experience from.

Outcome sketch

By summer, the mission group is expected to deliver the following outcomes (first draft):

1. A suggestion of a concept for an Open Nordic University for Continuing Education (design, values and purpose) as a strategic measure to drive competence development in the Nordic region.
2. 2-4 prototypes of models for continuing education activities that should be tested.