

Guidance for the mainstreaming of cross- cutting perspectives in the Nordic Council of Ministers



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1. INTRODUCTION

The vision of the Nordic prime ministers is for the Nordic Region to be the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030.

The Nordic Council of Ministers is contributing to the realisation of this vision by working towards a green, competitive, and socially sustainable Nordic Region. The Nordic Council of Ministers has adopted political priorities for how Nordic co-operation will contribute to the vision, which is presented in the Programme for Nordic Co-operation for the period 2025 to 2030.

The Nordic Council of Ministers will mainstream an environmental and climate perspective, a gender equality perspective, and a children's rights and youth perspective. These areas are key to delivering on the vision, which is why the Nordic Council of Ministers is taking a targeted and cross-cutting approach to them. A cross-cutting approach is achieved by mainstreaming the three perspectives into the Nordic Council of Ministers' projects and programme activities.

This guide contains a basic description of the three cross-cutting perspectives and provides advice for analysing how the project/programme relates to the perspectives, and instructions on how to state this in the project/programme description. This guide is intended for those who work for or with the Nordic Council of Ministers' secretariats, institutions, or offices.



2. MODEL FOR INTEGRATION IN THE NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

The Nordic Council of Ministers will integrate the cross-cutting perspectives of environment and climate, gender equality and children and young people. This will be achieved by mainstreaming the three perspectives into project and programme activities, and taking them into account in project design, implementation, and evaluation where relevant.

When writing the Nordic Council of Ministers' *project and programme description* in connection with the design of projects and programmes, the cross-cutting perspectives should be reflected on and explored by asking yourself a set of questions. The questions include asking yourself whether your work has an impact on the environment and climate, gender equality, or children's rights and young people, and whether adjustments can be made in planning and implementing your project or programme in order to mitigate any negative impact and promote any positive effects.

Understanding and exploring whether there is a relevant link between your project or programme and the cross-cutting perspectives may require some specialist knowledge in the three areas. For example, it is not obvious that there may be important links between projects or programmes aimed at improving gender equality in the Nordic Region and environmental impact. It is therefore a good idea to research reports on the topic or discuss with an expert colleague.

Once you have formed an initial idea and if the situation allows, you can go on to conduct a simple analysis. The analysis should be designed with a focus on feasibility. This can be based on your own knowledge and judgement, the questions presented in this guide (see below), or the more comprehensive [analysis tool](#) (in Danish) developed for the Nordic Council of Ministers.



3. THE THREE CROSS-CUTTING PERSPECTIVES

The cross-cutting perspectives of environment and climate, gender equality, and children's rights and young people must be integrated into the Nordic Council of Ministers. Below is a description and more in-depth guidance for mainstreaming the three cross-cutting perspectives in the Nordic Council of Ministers.

3.1 Environment and climate

Description

The cross-cutting perspective relating to the environment and climate is about protecting our planet and ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come. This includes reducing greenhouse gas emissions, conserving biodiversity, and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources.

The Nordic countries have long been at the forefront of environmental and climate work and have ambitious goals to reduce carbon emissions and transition to a green economy. Nordic co-operation has been extensive in this area, contributing to the region being seen as a pioneer in environmental and climate issues. Nevertheless, major challenges remain, including reducing dependence on fossil fuels, protecting ecosystems, and adapting societies to a changing climate.

The Nordic Council of Ministers for the Environment and Climate (MR-MK) has ultimate responsibility for environmental and climate issues in the Nordic Council of Ministers. The [Nordic Co-operation Programme for the Environment and Climate 2025–2030](#) sets the political priorities for the area. The co-operation programme is based on what the UN calls *the triple crisis*. With a focus on climate, biodiversity, and pollution as well as the circular economy, the co-operation programme seeks to strengthen Nordic collaboration where there is a Nordic advantage in doing so.



Guidance for integration

The Nordic Council of Ministers' projects and programmes must take environmental and climate perspectives into account by answering the following question:

How does the project impact the environment and climate, and how will the project's implementation actively promote the green transition?

The following questions may support you in answering this question:

- What are the direct and indirect environmental and climate impacts of the initiative, linked to e.g.:
 - the production of knowledge and solutions?
 - meetings and conferences^[1]?
 - travel and accommodation?
 - the use of materials and resources^[2]?
- How can the initiative contribute to the green transition by e.g.:
 - reducing greenhouse gas emissions?
 - promoting more sustainable resource use and a circular economy?
 - reducing pollution on land and at sea?
 - supporting biodiversity and ecosystem services?

1. When organising meetings and conferences, please use the Nordic Council of Ministers' [guide to sustainable and accessible events](#) (in Danish)

2. When procuring and using products and services, endeavour to choose environmentally and climate-friendly alternatives. Be guided by the Nordic Swan Ecolabel, Fairtrade, and organic labelling such as the EU Ecolabel or KRAV labelling.

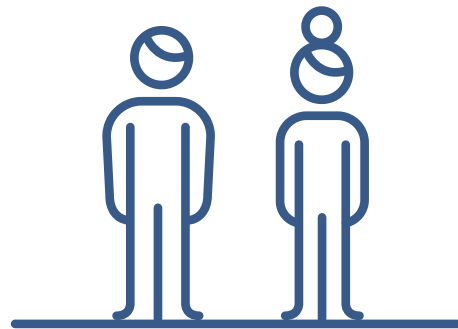
3.2 Gender equality

Description

Gender equality is achieved when all women and all men have the same rights and opportunities. Gender equality relates to the fair distribution of power, influence, and resources.

The Nordic countries' conscious efforts to improve gender equality are a cornerstone of the modern Nordic welfare societies. There has been extensive co-operation within the Nordic Region in this area, which has made it the most gender-equal region in the world. However, much remains to be done to improve gender equality in the labour market, in the home, and in decision-making bodies.

The Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI (MR-JÄM) has ultimate responsibility for gender equality matters in the Nordic Council of Ministers. The [Nordic Co-operation Programme for Gender Equality and LGBTI 2025–2030](#) sets the political priorities for the area. [Nordic Information on Gender \(NIKK\)](#) is the gender equality sector's co-operative body. It gathers and disseminates knowledge about policies and practice, facts, and research in the field of gender equality.



Guidance for integration

Taking a gender equality perspective into account in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers is about understanding how women and men are affected by your initiatives and the decisions you make. In your work, this means that you must help to empower women, men, girls, and boys equally so that they can shape society and their own lives.

The Nordic Council of Ministers' projects and programmes must take gender equality perspectives into account by answering the following question:

How does the project affect individuals of different genders in different ways, and how will the project's implementation actively promote gender equality?

The following questions may support you in answering this question:

- Is the area characterised by gender stereotypes? Does the initiative help to challenge or reinforce these stereotypes?
- Are there gender-disaggregated statistics in this area? Can we use these statistics to make the project relevant to more people?
- How can we achieve a good gender balance between participants in the initiative?

3.3 Children and young people

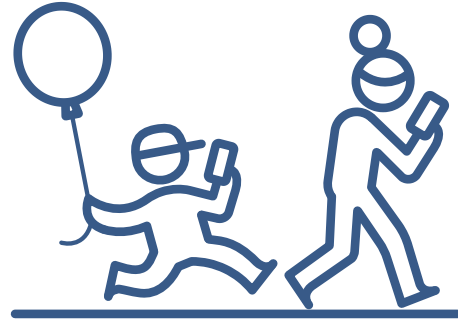
Description

The Nordic Council of Ministers' definition of children and young people is those aged 0 to 25.^[3] Children and young people are far from being a homogenous group. Characteristics such as disability, gender, gender identity or expression, ethnic background, religion or other expression of faith, sexual orientation, or age can all influence children and young people's experiences, circumstances, and needs. A children's rights and youth perspective involves protecting children's rights by ensuring an emphasis on the best interests of the child. This also means involving children and young people in various ways and giving them a say in our activities.

The Nordic countries have long been pioneers in strengthening the rights of children and young people through legislation, welfare systems, and education. Nordic co-operation has led to significant progress in establishing safe and inclusive conditions for young people to grow up in, as well as opportunities for young people to participate in societal development. Nevertheless, challenges remain, such as ensuring equal access to education and health, improving young people's influence in decision-making, and combating vulnerability and mental illness.

The Ministers for Nordic Co-operation (MR-SAM) have overall responsibility for co-ordinating matters relating to children and young people in the Nordic Council of Ministers. The Nordic Committee for Children and Young People (NORDBUK) is the Nordic Council of Ministers' advisory and co-ordinating body for issues relating to children and young people.

3. The Nordic Council of Ministers' definition of children and young people is therefore somewhat broader than the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, for example, which covers individuals up to the age of 18.



Guidance for integration

Integrating a children's rights and youth perspective into the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers is about understanding and considering how children and young people think about and are affected by your initiatives and the decisions you make, and involving children and young people directly in the processes that significantly affect them.

The Nordic Council of Ministers' projects and programmes must take gender equality perspectives into account by answering the following question:

How does the project affect children and young people, and how will the project's implementation actively promote the rights and living conditions of children and young people?

The following questions may support you in answering this question:

- How are children and young people affected by the issues we work with?
- Which children and young people are or are not affected?
- How does the work help to facilitate children's rights?
- Are there plans to involve children and young people?

Where children and young people are involved in the work, we must adhere to the Nordic Council of Ministers' [guiding principles and approaches for the involvement of children and young people](#).



4. OTHER REFERENCE MATERIAL

For more information and inspiration for the integration of the three cross-cutting perspectives, please familiarise yourself with the below.

4.1 Environment and climate:

- [Nordic Council of Ministers' Co-operation Programme for the Environment and Climate 2025–2030](#)
- [Guide: Sustainable and accessible events in the Nordic Council of Ministers](#)
- [Nordic Nutrition Recommendations 2023 – Integrating Environmental Aspects](#)

4.2 Gender equality

- [Nordic Council of Ministers Co-operation Programme for Gender Equality and LGBTI 2025–2030](#)

4.3 Children and young people

- [The Nordic Council of Ministers involves children and young people in its work. Principles and approaches](#) (in Swedish)
- [Do rights! Nordic perspectives on child and youth participation.](#)

About this publication

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Nordic co-operation

Nordic co-operation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

Nordic co-operation has firm traditions in politics, economics and culture and plays an important role in European and international forums. The Nordic community strives for a strong Nordic Region in a strong Europe.

Nordic co-operation promotes regional interests and values in a global world. The values shared by the Nordic countries help make the region one of the most innovative and competitive in the world.

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