

# Strategic stakeholder analysis for the Nordic Culture Fund and evaluation of HANDMADE and puls

## *Executive Summary*

By Oxford Research, June 2018



## Strategic analysis of partners and surrounding world for the Nordic Culture Fond and evaluation of HANDMADE and puls Summary

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**Knowledge for a better society**

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## Introduction

The Nordic Culture Fund (NKF) works on promoting the artistic and cultural cooperation between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden as well as the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. The fund does this by establishing knowledge and networks and by providing financial project support. The fund has worked with art and culture cooperation since 1966 based on an agreement between the Nordic countries. The fund currently has a budget of DKK 36 million, of which the majority is distributed as project support. The core values and vision of the fund are as follows:

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*Together for a new Nordic Region using culture to break down barriers*

*The Nordic Culture Fund works to support an innovative and dynamic artistic and cultural scene in the Nordic Region, one that is diverse, accessible and of high quality.*

The core values and vision of the Nordic Culture Fund

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The core values and vision set the overall direction for the fund's work. However, on a daily basis, the fund's business plan for 2016-2018 has set the strategic and operational direction for the fund's work in the past three years. As the current business plan expires at the end of 2018, the NKF has in 2018 started the work that is going to form the basis of a new business plan for the fund's activities in the next four years. This is the reason that the NKF has asked Oxford Research to carry out a strategic stakeholder and environmental analysis of the NKF. The purpose of the analysis is to give the fund **a well-documented picture of the fund's significance and role** for the artistic and cultural environments in the Nordic countries and to provide **inputs for the future work** on the fund's strategy and instruments. More specifically, the analysis has investigated the following:

- **Which role and significance does the NKF have for the artistic and cultural environments in the Nordic countries?**
  - Which difference does the fund specifically do for the artistic and cultural players?
  - How do the various instruments of the fund work?
- **Which 'type of fund' should the NKF be in the future – which instruments and which approaches would be relevant and in demand?**
  - Which possible needs and potentials are there for strategic adjustments in the work of the fund?
  - Does the fund have the right focus – should it be narrower or broader, are there specific artistic and cultural areas that should have greater focus than others?
  - How will the artistic and cultural environments in the Nordic countries develop in a forward-looking perspective? For example, what do new technologies and society trends mean for artistic and cultural players, and what significance does this have for the fund, its strategy and instruments?

Since the beginning of 1966, the Nordic Culture Fund has had the distribution of project support as its core task. Now, the fund distributes support on three levels: the broad project support pool with three annual deadlines, START-UP and theme ventures (venture pools). The analysis covers all levels and also includes evaluation of the fund’s two 3-year theme ventures HANDMADE and puls, which were initiated in 2016 and 2017 respectively. Oxford Research has carried out the analysis during the period from March to June 2018.

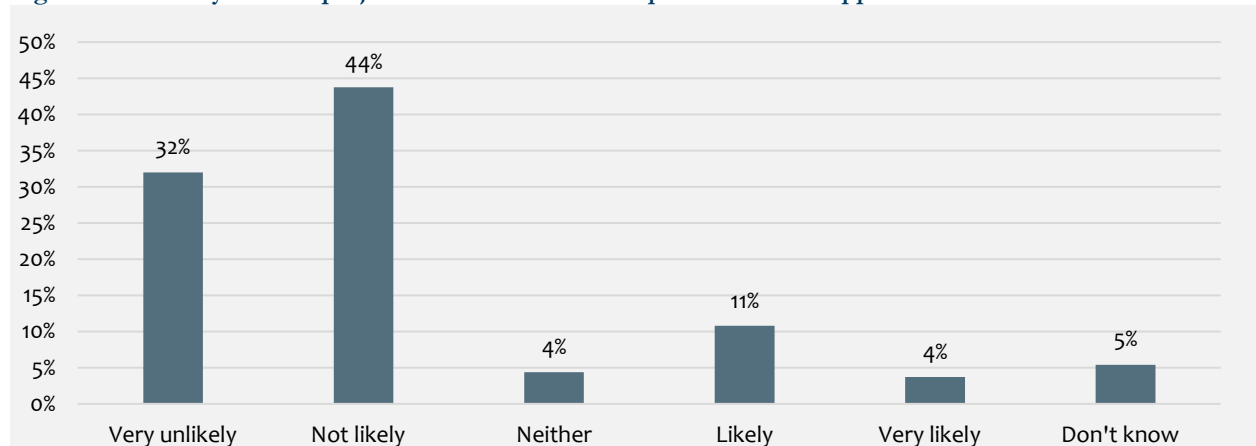
## Main conclusions of the analysis

In the following, we will sum up the main conclusions of the stakeholder and environmental analysis of the NKF and the evaluations of HANDMADE and puls respectively. Finally, Oxford Research's suggestion for forward-looking perspectives in relation to the fund’s future strategic focus and possible focus areas will be presented.

### The Nordic Culture Fund makes unique cross-Nordic projects possible

The NKF supports unique projects that would not otherwise have been possible without the support from the fund. For three out of four support recipients, it is not likely that their project would have been implemented without the support from the NKF. Furthermore, the NKF fills an important role with regard to making cross-Nordic cooperation possible, as the national art and culture support players have limited focus on Nordic cooperation.

Figure 1: Is it likely that the project would have been completed without support from the Nordic Culture Fund?



Source: Questionnaire survey, Oxford Research, 2018

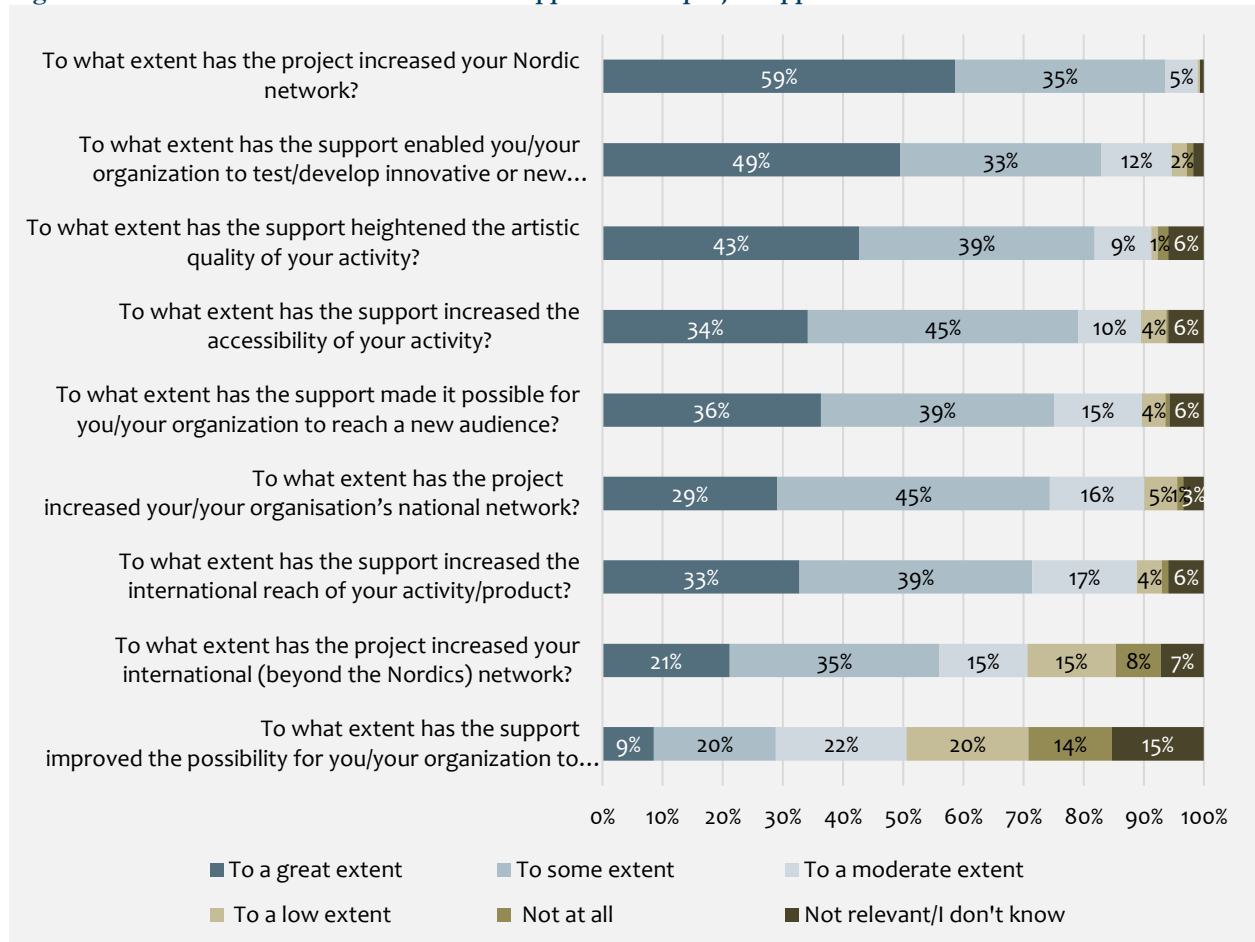
Moreover, the NKF’s funds are often combined with other (national) funds. Three out of four have received financial support from other funds or public institutions for their project. The support from the NKF can work as a ‘seal of approval’ of projects and as a kind of ‘glue money’, where relatively small funds tie together players and other funding across the Nordic countries.

### The Nordic Culture Fund creates Nordic networks and relations as well as other values

The NKF creates value in Nordic artistic and cultural life in several areas. However, the fund particularly contributes to the creation of Nordic networks and relations according to the majority of the stakeholders. The support from the fund also contributes extensively to making it possible to test and develop new and innovative methods, approaches and/or activities as well as to increasing the artistic

quality of the supported projects specifically and in Nordic artistic and cultural life in general. Moreover, the NKF contributes to increasing the availability of art and culture as well as the artists' international range.

Figure 2: Results and effects of the financial support for the project applicants



Source: Questionnaire survey, Oxford Research, 2018

The qualitative interviews particularly emphasise the relation and network creating part as a significant and positive result of the project support from the NKF. The support recipients also point out that this is one of the corner stones of creating higher artistic quality and working innovatively in the projects, for example by bringing more people with various competences into the projects and by supporting new types of projects.

### The fund's focus and activities are generally perceived as relevant

*"The Nordic Culture Fund has a key role with regard to connecting cultural organisations. Furthermore, the fund has a key role with regard to engaging oneself in important topics and by supporting various types of work that need support. There is no organisation like the Nordic Cul-*

*ture Fund that really tries to have all the Nordic countries represented and get the smaller countries involved. This is really needed. At the same time, they are progressive and not afraid of supporting new projects.”*

Support recipient

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The NKF's focus and activities are generally perceived as relevant. There is a lot of agreement between support recipients, experts and other stakeholders that the NKF's objective and programmes are relevant. Furthermore, there is generally high praise to the NKF for being good at spotting where there are special needs and potentials for cross-Nordic programmes, which is exemplified by HANDMADE and puls.

### HANDMADE – a Nordic boost for an overlooked area

Many stakeholders indicate that it was ‘well spotted’ by the NKF to establish a programme for handcraft products, which are otherwise usually overlooked in the art and culture support. However, HANDMADE has also had a lot of significance for the support recipients. 90% of the support recipients state that the projects would not have happened without support from HANDMADE. Furthermore, the majority of the support recipients have also received support from other sources, where in many cases, precisely the support from HANDMADE is estimated to be vital to the further support. With regard to value, project support from HANDMADE has to a great extent created increased Nordic networks and relations, and has made it possible to test and develop new or innovative methods and increased artistic quality. With regard to HANDMADE, it is also important to point out that typically, relatively small players have received support. For many of them, working internationally is something completely new. Thus, HANDMADE has also contributed significantly to increasing the participants’ Nordic networks and given them the first experiences with international cooperation.

**HANDMADE** is a three-year funding programme run by the Nordic Culture Fund, 2016-2018.

Applications are welcome from all art and culture fields that would benefit from working with partners in the Nordic countries - on projects that explore the theme HANDMADE from a variety of angles. HANDMADE supports also projects that contribute to understanding and reflecting the handmade and that produce and communicate editorial content about what's new.

### Puls has created new Nordic cooperation and placed more focus on Nordic music

While HANDMADE has very much worked as targeted project support for small players, puls is more about established players that the Nordic Culture Fund have influenced regarding working across Nordic borders for an extended period of time. In spite of the fact that puls supports players within a well-established sector that are already working internationally, puls has generally still been received with open arms and is considered a welcome venture. Puls has had a positive effect for the

**puls** is The Nordic Culture Fund's three-year music initiative 2017-2019 aiming to strengthen the Nordic live music scene.

In 2017, puls has granted DKK 4.1 million to 43 music venues and festivals in the Nordic countries. The support is aimed at concert organisers, who seek to bring Nordic musical experiences of high artistic quality to a wider Nordic audience.

majority of the support recipients, whose Nordic project would most likely not have happened without the support from puls. There are actually relatively few that have received support for their applied project from other players than the Nordic Culture Fund. With regard to value, the support from puls has contributed particularly to Nordic networks and increased quality and has provided the opportunity to try out new, innovative methods and activities. However, it is not possible to assess the final results and effects of the venture, as puls has only existed for about a year.

## FORWARD-LOOKING PERSPECTIVES

### The fund creates added value and is on the right track

Overall, there is a lot of praise for and satisfaction with the NKF's work, focus and instruments from most stakeholders. The support programmes, including the theme ventures, are of significance, create value and are praised across stakeholders. The communication and dissemination effort is generally also considered important, but there are more divided opinions among the stakeholders regarding the fund's role as a cultural political player. Therefore, the NKF should generally continue along the same lines, although the NKF's role as a cultural political player should be clarified further, including what the mandate is.

### Possible future focus areas

Based on the analysis, Oxford Research has identified a number of trends and circumstances that the NKF should discuss and relate to regarding its work in the future. Oxford Research has identified the following matters to be considered and possible focus areas:

- **The NKF should continue to have a broad and flexible approach to art and culture.** The broad and flexible approach is precisely one of the strengths of the NKF and makes it possible for the fund to 'keep up with the times' and not become 'paralysed', which means that the NKF can support new art forms as well as new Nordic approaches and expressions within art and culture. However, this approach places demands on continuous discussions, reflection and a high level of professional competence in the board of directors and the secretariat.



- **With the NKF's relatively limited financial means, strategic cooperation with other stakeholders that support artistic and cultural life could be worth exploring** and cultivating. Particularly the possibilities of strengthened cooperation with private and philanthropic art and culture funds in the Nordic countries should be examined. Typically, they do not have the network or competences to lift their programmes and the projects that they support on a Nordic/international level, which is something with which the NKF can contribute. Strategic cooperation on for example theme ventures can increase the volume of the ventures and can also solidify the ventures locally/nationally and potentially give ventures a longer life if the parties are interested in continuing the valuable parts of the ventures.
- **The NKF should define, specify and clarify its network-facilitating role regarding the national artistic and cultural institutions.** The analysis shows that there is a demand for a player that gathers the national artistic and cultural institutions across the Nordic countries and ensures that they meet and exchange experiences, for example regarding management and operation of artistic and cultural institutions. The NKF is partly already doing this. However, it is not clearly described how the NKF sees its role and task regarding this coordinating and gathering function, and how this kind of role is connected to the NKF's strategy, vision and objectives. Therefore, it is necessary for the NKF to define, specify and clarify its role as a network-creating player in relation to the national artistic and cultural institutions.
- **One of the NKF's most important roles in the artistic and cultural life of the Nordic countries is to strengthen networks and relations.** The construction of lasting relations takes time, and sometimes, it is also necessary to test various cooperation constellations until you find out what works and who you work well with. In principle, the NKF currently mainly supports projects of a one-time nature. Thus, paragraph 3 of the fund's agreement includes the following description: *From the resources of the fund, subsidies can be granted to Nordic projects of a one-time nature. Subsidies can also be granted to Nordic projects of a more lasting nature, but preferably for a period determined by the board, in part in special cases for regularly returning purposes.* In the future, it might be a good idea to rethink this principle, making it easier to support lasting creation of relations and networks – for example by supporting projects in several phases, by supporting more long-term projects or extend the support to existing projects.
- Internationalisation, digitalisation and 'grand challenges' (such as migration and climate) are **trends that the NKF should be aware of** with regard to the fund's activities and support programmes in the future. Among other things, the fund should be aware of the new opportunities that digitalisation provides with regard to existing and established art and culture forms, but also of the fact that digitalisation creates completely new expressions and art forms that change the existing perceptions of what art and culture are.

## Method and data

The analysis is based on a number of different methods and data sources, which have been used to support conclusions and recommendations. The collection of data has been carried out in the period from April to May 2018. The methods and data sources of the analysis are:

- **An e-mail-based questionnaire survey** involving NKF support recipients and experts. The questionnaire survey resulted in 311 responses, of which 291 have completed the whole questionnaire. The 311 responses correspond to a response rate of 42% and is distributed on:
  - 171 project support recipients
  - 99 START-UP support recipients
  - 16 puls support recipients
  - 11 HANDMADE support recipients
  - 14 experts
  
- **Qualitative interviews with 40 players** distributed on:
  - 2 from the NKF's secretariat
  - 6 current and previous members of the board of directors
  - 3 current and previous experts
  - 3 project ambassadors (one pul)
  - 12 support recipients (three from pul and five from HANDMADE)
  - 4 national cultural support agencies
  - 9 other cultural organisations
  - 2 from the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council
  
- **Desk research**, such as review of fund materials and websites.

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