

Nordic Exchange

The value of exchange programmes at production sites within crafts and design



Colophon

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The Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis is an autonomous and independent institution established by law in 2023 on the basis of a political majority in the Danish Parliament. The purpose of the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis is to create and disseminate knowledge about the importance of culture in society through independent analyses and studies. We work across the cultural sector to collect and disseminate knowledge that can inspire concrete actions and strengthen the dialogue between different actors.

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Preface

In 2023, the Danish Arts Foundation, Norwegian Crafts and the Nordic Culture Fund launched a new Nordic collaboration to explore and develop opportunities for exchange in the Nordic region in the field of crafts and design, which is a central part of Nordic cultural identity and contemporary artistic production. The collaboration is driven by a key question: how can highly specialised knowledge and skills in crafts and design be developed and maintained in a sustainable way that is relevant both now and in the future. With significant changes in the educational landscape in the field, the relocation of production and an undeniable need to work sustainably – culturally, environmentally, socially and financially – in a time of geopolitical and climatic changes, exchange can play a central role in the field of crafts and design. As organisations and funding bodies that support the arts, we are interested in how we can strengthen this through cross-Nordic collaboration in the region.

There are many assumptions about what exchange programmes, understood as programmes that provide opportunities for professional, cultural and/or geographical exchange, can contribute. However, our ambition is to work in a knowledge-based way in our efforts to find answers to the resulting question: How can the understanding of education within crafts and design be expanded? How can a broader framework be created for what a relevant programme can be for crafts and design professionals – practitioners, researchers and promoters – and how can this be done sustainably? How can connections be established between practitioners and production sites so that a programme can develop and challenge the individual's practice and vice versa? And how can visibility be created around the potential that a programme in production sites have for local and regional development and growth?

In an attempt to find answers to these questions, the Danish Arts Foundation and Norwegian Crafts invited applicants to apply for the funding scheme Nordic Exchange Programme, which was offered twice in 2024. This gave crafts and design professionals the opportunity to identify the highly specialised production sites relevant for them. They were able to design a process according to their own needs and with a theme that was relevant to them and their host. The formats have been very different and the themes have ranged broadly, from work with pincers to digital weaving, original cultures, vegetable dyeing, local raw materials and cross-artistic encounters across the Nordic region.

In addition, Norwegian Crafts, the Danish Arts Foundation and the Nordic Culture Fund engaged the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis [Kulturens Analyseinstitut] to analyse data from the funds and interview the residents involved and production sites, in order to learn from them and the needs that exist in the field – both the needs that were met by the supported programmes and the needs that have not yet been addressed. The analysis also includes findings from a questionnaire survey that was sent to members of the

Nordic Network of Crafts Associations (NNCA) to ensure a more comprehensive collection of information in the Nordic region.

We now finally have the insights from the analysis in the form of this report, which contains valuable insights, knowledge, and recommendations. It includes knowledge about the great value and opportunities for development that programmes in production sites in the Nordic region provide – both for crafts and design professionals and for the production sites themselves. The report also emphasises that a stronger collaboration in the Nordic region has great potential for strengthening both practitioners and production sites – and contribute, among other things, to local and regional growth, business and innovation, engagement and cultural tourism: ‘A (...) coordinated effort would be able to increase accessibility and the impact of exchange programmes, benefiting crafts and design professionals, cultural institutions and society as a whole’ p.8. In other words, the Nordic region is a vital resource for the professional field as well as the surrounding society. However, the report also points out that political will and engagement to realise this potential is lacking.

A key issue identified by the report is the lack of overview and coordination around existing exchange opportunities in the Nordic region, which are organised very differently in the field of crafts and design. Precisely because there are very different forms of organisation in the Nordic region, there is valuable knowledge to be gained from the various actors in the field of crafts and design, which can complement the organisations in a fruitful way.

Therefore, the report’s recommendations give rise to an ambition to develop and establish a joint Nordic network for knowledge sharing and collaboration on exchange in production environments within arts, crafts, and design in the Nordic region. A network that could promote artistic development, knowledge exchange and upgrading of skills within the arts and crafts and design field through easier access to exchange in the Nordic region.

We hope that many will want to be involved and use the report to strengthen the obvious potentials the report points out, and thus strengthen the sustainable development of the crafts and design sector in the future through exchange across the Nordic region.

On behalf of the project group

Anni Nørskov Mørch, Chair of the Danish Arts Foundation’s Committee for Craft and Design
Project Funding 2022-2025

Hege Veronica Henriksen, Director, Norwegian Crafts

**Norwegian
Crafts**

K:
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Kunstfond

**NORDISK
KULTURFOND**

Motivation for the collaboration

The initiative's interest in exploring and developing opportunities for exchange in the field of crafts and design in the Nordic region is part of the Danish Arts Foundation's strategic focus on artistic development through exchange, encouraged by the current Committee for Craft and Design Project Funding (2022-2025). Norwegian Crafts' involvement is based on the experience of the Nordic region as an important resource and means of promotion for crafts professionals in Norway and as a natural extension of previous Nordic collaborations, among others, the Nordic Network of Crafts Associations. The Nordic Culture Fund's engagement in the collaboration is an extension of the fund's previous work and efforts within the field of crafts and design in the Nordic region and the opportunity to strengthen this in the future.

Arabia Art Department Society. Photo: Chikako Harada



Summary

This report, prepared by the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis for Norwegian Crafts and the Danish Arts Foundation, investigates the value, barriers and development potential for exchange programmes in production sites across the Nordic region. Based on in-depth interviews and a questionnaire among Nordic crafts and design professionals, the analysis documents how these programmes create valuable synergies between artistic development and the preservation of cultural heritage.

Exchange programmes in production sites where crafts and design professionals have access to specialised production facilities and crafts traditions have proven to be valuable at many levels simultaneously. For crafts and design professionals, the programmes provide the opportunity to strengthen technical competence, carry out intensive experiments and expand the network, where 86% report that they have achieved artistic development and 74% produce new works or prototypes. For the production sites, exchange programmes contribute to the continuation of renewed professional inspiration, crafts traditions and increased public interest, which strengthens their long-term relevance and survival.

The task has been set up so that all aspects of the study focus on sustainability in the broadest sense: A development that fulfils the needs of the current generation without endangering opportunities for future generations to fulfil their needs. This concerns the environment, cultural and social aspects, and financial aspects in society. Evaluation of how exchange programmes influence the artists' professional development and the sustainability of the production sites in the role of hosts, and the capacity to accommodate the needs of the artists is key to the focus of the study.

In the field of sustainability, the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis assesses that exchange programmes in production sites concretely contribute to all four dimensions of sustainability. Environmentally through experiments with greener production methods and use of local materials. Culturally by maintaining immaterial cultural heritage through active practice. Financially by creating new business models and products that can be commercialised. Socially through engagement in the local society and increased inclusion. This places the field of crafts and design in the intersection between culture, business, education and regional development. This potential is also shown in the report in that development potential related to the exchange programmes can contribute to financial growth, especially in local areas. The analysis shows a significant potential for strengthened Nordic collaboration. The Nordic countries possess complementary strengths within different crafts traditions and traditions for production, and coordinated collaboration can position the Nordic region internationally as a pioneering region for exchange programmes within the field of crafts and design. The study documents a concrete desire to have joint Nordic platforms for information, experience exchange and mobility between the countries.

Based on these findings, the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis summarises a number of strategic recommendations to strengthen the field:

For crafts and design professionals a more proactive approach is recommended for exchange programmes, thorough preparation, clear agreements on practical conditions and active knowledge sharing after the programme.

For production sites a formalisation of exchange programmes is recommended for addressing the greatest barriers, clear frameworks, network development with other production sites and systematic documentation of results.

For funding bodies and organisations recommendations include prioritisation of exchange programmes for crafts and design in support schemes, simplification of application processes, support for network development and capacity building, integration of sustainability requirements and development of flexible formats for residencies to meet different needs.

For politicians and decision takers recommendations include integration of production sites in culture political strategies, improved framework conditions through legislation and incentives, cross-sector coordination and active promotion of successful exchange programmes and production sites.

The Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis recommends the establishment of a joint Nordic digital platform that combines information on possibilities for exchange programmes for potential users of the scheme, development of more varied and flexible formats for exchange programmes, systematic integration of sustainability perspectives and strengthened documentation and knowledge sharing across the countries. Such a coordinated strengthening would be able to increase accessibility and the effect of exchange programmes, benefiting crafts and design professionals, cultural institutions and society as a whole.

With strategic prioritisation and coordinated efforts across actors and countries, exchange programmes in production sites can be a powerful tool for promoting cultural, social and financial sustainability in the Nordic region, while, at the same time, specialised knowledge, production methods and unique design and crafts traditions can be kept alive through current artistic practice.

The Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis, August 2025

Introduction

This report presents an analysis of crafts and design professionals' exchange programmes in production sites in the Nordic region. An exchange programme is often called, for example, residency, artist-in-residence, work stay, fellowship programme, etc. The report uses the term *exchange programme* in production sites, because this is about both geographic and professional exchange. The analysis was initiated by Norwegian Crafts and the Danish Arts Foundation as part of a broader Nordic collaboration project between the parties, as well as the Nordic Cultural Fund on strengthening crafts and design professionals' mobility and access to production sites across the Nordic countries. The Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis has prepared the report with the intention of creating a knowledge-based basis for future efforts in the field.

Background for the analysis

Crafts and design comprise a key part of Nordic cultural identity and current artistic production. Exchange programmes in production sites, for example, ceramics workshops, textile factories and other design and crafts-oriented facilities offer unique opportunities for professional immersion, knowledge sharing, artistic development and upgrading technical skills for practitioners. At the same time, these exchange programmes ensure the continuation of Nordic production and crafts traditions in a modern context, which contributes to cultural sustainability and preservation of material and immaterial cultural heritage. Despite the potentials, there is limited knowledge about what the value of these exchange programmes creates for both crafts and design professionals and for production sites, as well as which barriers limit access. This report attempts to clarify these questions and identify possible ways to strengthen the possibilities for exchange programmes sustainably in the Nordic countries.

Guldagergaard - International Ceramic Research Centre. Photo: Guldagergaard, 2025



Purpose and focus fields

The purpose of the report is divided into three main parts:

- **Firstly**, to identify key possibilities and potentials for exchange programmes in production sites and how they promote artistic development, strengthening technical competence, knowledge sharing and network creation across generations and professional fields.
- **Secondly**, to identify barriers and challenges that currently prevent crafts and design professionals from participating or that make residencies difficult in the production sites, for example, financial, practical and structural conditions.
- **Thirdly**, to formulate perspectives and development possibilities that can improve accessibility and the benefits of these exchange programmes in the future. The analysis addresses both the practitioners' professional benefits and the production sites' capacity and sustainability, with a special focus on integration with regard to the environment, cultural heritage, finances and inclusion in practice.

As stated in the report's summary, the task has been set up so that all of its parts focus on sustainability. Here, sustainability is understood as being a development that accommodates the needs of the current generation without endangering opportunities for future generations to fulfil their needs. Sustainability is broadly defined and concerns the environment, the cultural and social aspects and financial aspects in society. Evaluation of how exchange programmes influence the artists' professional development and the sustainability of the production sites in the role of hosts, and the capacity to accommodate the needs of the artists is key to the focus of the study.

Delimitations in the study

It is important to note the study's delimitations:

Geographical focus: The study primarily deals with exchange programmes in the eight Nordic countries: Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Åland. International examples are included to provide perspective, but are not the main focus of the study.

Professional delimitation: The study focuses specifically on crafts and design, not other forms of art such as visual art, literature or music, etc., although these fields have also developed practices for exchange programmes.

Period of time: The analysis provides an assessment of the status in 2024-2025 and does not include a systematic historical identification of the field or previous initiatives.

Methodical limitations: As described in the section on ‘Methodical approach and study design’, the study has certain geographical imbalances in the data basis with a predominance of Danish and Norwegian cases.

Purpose: The report is not an exhaustive identification of all possibilities for exchange programmes in the Nordic region, but is primarily a qualitative analysis of potentials, barriers and development possibilities based on selected cases and experiences.

Target groups

The study is primarily intended for the following target groups:

- **Crafts and design professionals**, who are considering or planning an exchange programme, and who can use the insights in the report for career development.
- **Production sites** (for example, workshops, factories and cultural institutions) that offer or want to establish residencies, and that can gain inspiration for organisation and business models.
- **Funding bodies and organisations** that work for crafts, design, sustainability, cultural heritage and businesses that have an interest in developing the field through support, networks and knowledge.
- **Political decision takers and authorities in the Nordic region** that design strategies and support schemes in the field of crafts and design, as well as political fields such as culture and business.

Definitions

The following terms are defined as follows:

- **Exchange programme:** A temporary programme, where a crafts or design professional is given time, space and access to specialised facilities to investigate techniques and traditions, and acquire knowledge and skills. Here, programme is understood to be anchored in a production site with access to special equipment, machines and/or professional expertise. ‘Exchange’, as a concept, thus regards both a geographic exchange and/or a professional exchange. Other places, an exchange programme may be referred to as, for example, residency, artist-in-residence, work stay, fellowship programme, etc.
- **Production site:** An institution, business or workshop with active production within crafts or design that offers or wants exchange programmes. This may, for example, be a ceramics centre, a textile factory, a museum with workshop facilities, a glassworks, an industrial factory or a similar site where there is unique material know-how and equipment. It can also be fields where previous production sites have dominated and

where there are still sources and location-specific experience to work with. This also includes individual practitioners or collectives with specific professional knowledge or competence, which offer or are open to exchange programmes.

- **Sustainability:** Sustainability is defined broadly as development that fulfils current needs without compromising the possibilities for future generations. In this context, sustainability comprises environmental, cultural, social and financial dimensions, climate impact, the continuation of cultural heritage, inclusion and financial viability.
- **Practitioner:** The term is used as a neutral definition of carrying out a practice, where the terms crafts and design professionals or other specified profession description or title is not used. 'Practitioner' as a concept includes different forms of practice, skills, professionalism, profession descriptions and titles within the broad field of crafts and design, including their artistic dimensions.

Methodical approach and study design

The study is based on a mixed-methods design, which combines qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure a nuanced understanding. The core of the analysis is 19 in-depth interviews, of which nine are interviews with crafts and design professionals who have participated in production site-oriented exchange programmes and 10 interviews with representatives from the production sites where their residencies were, as well as two other production sites that also operate with work stays for practitioners. The production sites are located across the Nordic countries, Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Åland. These interviews follow a semi-structured guide and were carried out in 2024 using recorded online meetings. In addition, secondary data is included, such as application material and evaluations from the funding scheme Nordic Exchange Programme. This funding scheme was initiated by the Danish Arts Foundation and Norwegian Crafts, which was offered twice in 2024. The funding scheme gave crafts and design professionals the opportunity to identify which highly specialised production sites were relevant for them to visit and to design a process themselves according to their own needs. Among other things, the Nordic Exchange Programme has financed the nine interviewed crafts and design professionals' exchange programmes, as well as a questionnaire sent to members of Nordic crafts and design organisations on their general experience with exchange programmes. The combination of first-hand accounts and supplementary data makes triangulation of findings and anchorage in the analysis possible in both practice and theory. Examples and quotes in the report are from the semi-structured interviews and are not exhaustive for types of production sites or representative for practitioners' professionalism or work field across the Nordic region. There is a predominance of ceramics and porcelain, and textile and graphic printing among the examples, which is due to the fact that it is these production sites and participants in exchange programmes that have participated in interviews.

The mixed-methods design of the study combines in-depth interviews, questionnaires and secondary data will hereinafter be referred to in the report simply as ‘the study’.

Analytic approach and use of AI

All interview material has been transcribed and analysed using thematic coding. In order to render the coding more efficient, user-controlled artificial intelligence (AI) is used as a supporting tool, which has been used to review the comprehensive transcriptions and preliminarily identify common and recurrent quotes, themes and patterns across interviews. Application and evaluation materials were also analysed in the same manner. This machine sorting was subsequently reviewed manually and the quality was assured by two analysts independently of each other to ensure the validity and avoid bias.

Method considerations

It is worth noting certain limitations in the data basis. Geographically, a number of the eight Nordic countries, Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Åland are represented, but there is a certain predominance of Danish and Norwegian interviewees, while, for example, Greenland and Åland are not included with their own production site cases. This is probably due to the fact that this report is primarily based on data from applications and interviews related to the crafts and design funding scheme Nordic Exchange Programme (implemented by Norwegian Crafts and the Danish Arts Foundation), which were only available for applications from Norwegian and Danish practitioners or practitioners staying in Norway and Denmark. Therefore, the results must be viewed in the light of the respondents’ and cases’ framework conditions rather than in a cultural or geographic context. In addition, the studied exchange programmes vary in terms of duration, format and professional focus (ceramics, textiles, paper, etc.), which may make it difficult to generalise across them, although they have a number of tendencies in common. Finally, the field is being developed, a number of initiatives are new and this analysis provides an assessment of the status in 2024-2025, but new practices or solutions may occur, which are not included in this report. We have attempted to take these conditions into account by including as broad a spectrum of sources as possible and by focusing on general patterns instead of specific details in each individual case.

Arabia Art Department Society, Helsinki, Finland. Photo: Chikako Harada



Findings in the questionnaire

In the following, the material from the questionnaire is presented, which, together with the 19 in-depth interviews that have taken place and secondary data, creates the background for the study. For visuals of the data of the questionnaire, see the annexes on pp. 61-65.

Data basis

The questionnaire was sent to members of the Nordic Network of Crafts Associations (NNCA), which is comprised of the Nordic organisations Danish Crafts & Design Association, CRAFTS AND DESIGN / HANDVERK OG HÖNNUN, the Swedish Crafts Centre, the Artists' Association of Sweden, the Norwegian Association for Craft Artists and ORNAMO Art and Design Finland. Across these organisations there are approximately 9,000 associated members, but we do not have the precise figure. The questionnaire was also sent to subscribers to the Danish Arts Foundation's newsletter, which targets the field of crafts and design. According to the Danish Arts Foundation, there are approximately 5,800 subscribers to the newsletter.

The questionnaire had 242 responders with sufficient data. It is important to note that the responders' understanding of the exchange programme concept was not necessarily completely the same as the more specific definition that the report uses. While the report focuses specifically on exchange programmes in production sites, the respondents' answers included a broader spectrum of experience with various stays.

Respondent profile

The gender distribution shows a strong predominance of women, who comprise 86% of the respondents, while men comprise 11% and 3% identify themselves as non-binary or prefer not to provide information about their gender.

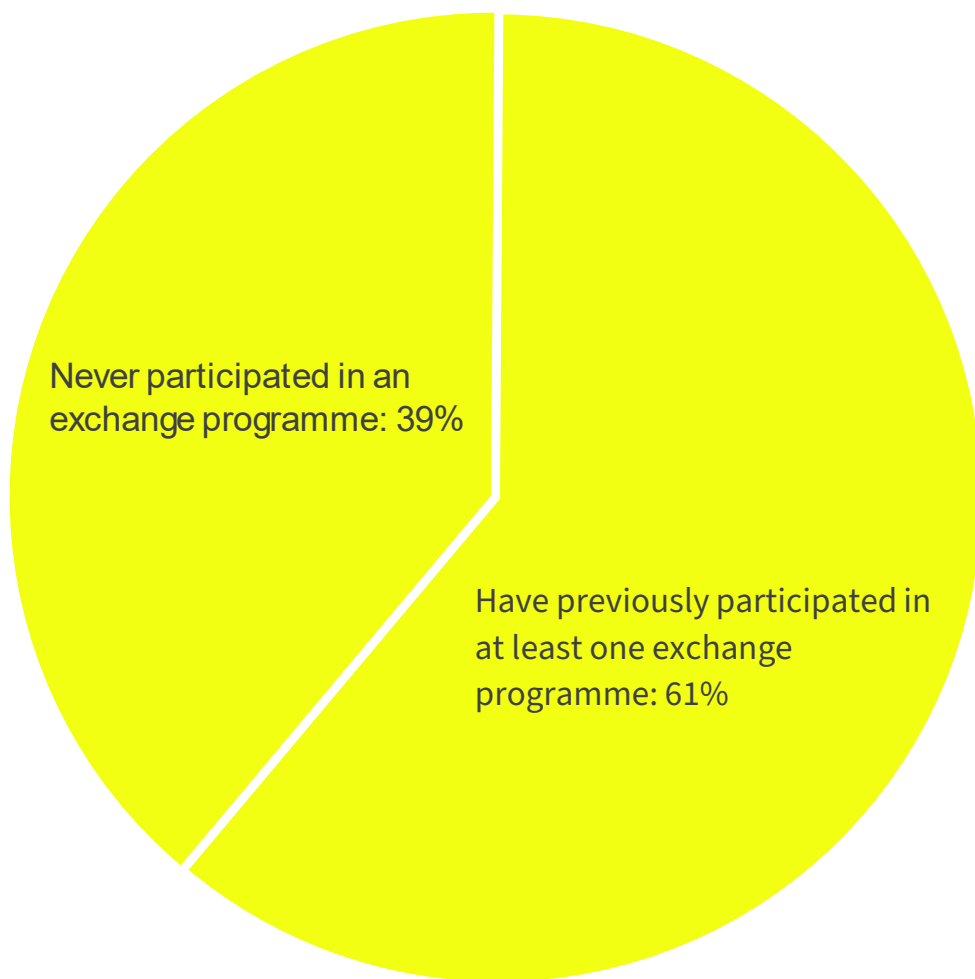
The geographic distribution of the respondents reflects a certain unbalance with 45% from Sweden, 31% from Denmark, 12% from Norway, 10% from Iceland and only 2% from Finland. This distribution means that the results of the study must be presented with reservations regarding precision with regard to geographic assessments, particularly for Finland.

With regard to career stages, the distribution of the respondents shows that 41% are well-established crafts and design professionals, 32% are established, 24% are recent graduates and 3% are students.

The respondents represent a broad spectrum of crafts and design professional background, including textile artists, ceramists, designers, glass artists and jewellery artists. This diversity gives a nuanced picture of different professional groups' perspectives on exchange programmes.

Experience with exchange programmes

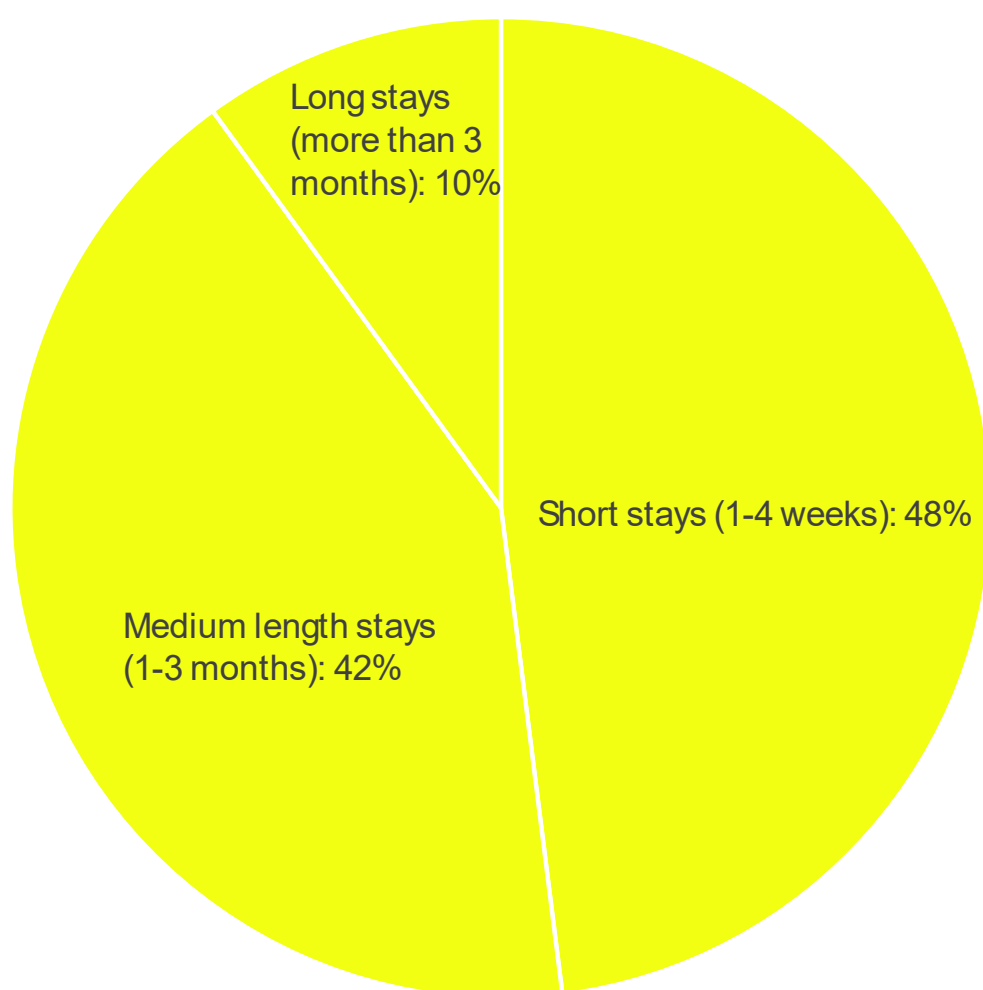
Of those who responded, 61% had previously participated in at least one stay, while 39% had never participated in an exchange programme.



The diagram shows the percentages of the distribution of respondents who have either never participated or who have participated in at least one stay.

Among the respondents who have experience with exchange programmes, 72% participated in exchange programmes within their own Nordic homeland, 43% have participated in another Nordic country, 38% in Europe outside of the Nordic region and 23% outside of Europe.

With regard to the duration of the stays, 48% primarily participated in short stays (1-4 weeks), 42% in stays of medium length (1-3 months) and 10% in long stays (more than 3 months).



Duration of the exchange programmes. The diagram shows the distribution of stays of different duration distributed among the respondents as percentages.

Motivation and benefits

The most prominent motivation factor among the respondents is access to specialised facilities and equipment, which 82% of the respondents state as being important. Also, 78% find that the opportunity for immersion and concentrated work time is extremely valuable, while 76% state that development and learning new techniques are significant motivating factors. Expanding networks and new collaboration possibilities are important to 68%, while 65% find that cultural inspiration from new surroundings is an important factor. Access to professional sparring and mentoring is highly valued by 52% of the respondents.

With regard to actual benefits that the respondents have gained from exchange programmes, 86% of the participants emphasise that artistic development and learning new techniques are key benefits. Seventy-four per cent report that they have produced new works or prototypes during the stay, while 69% have developed new networks and found new collaboration partners. Forty-eight per cent experienced increase visibility and exposure as a result of their participation in exchange programmes, while 32% emphasise new business opportunities and 31% describe improved career possibilities as benefits.

Barriers and challenges

The financial barriers are made especially clear in the replies, where 82% of the respondents find that insufficient financial support is a significant limitation. Sixty-four per cent point out that high costs of living are a problem during the stay, 58% mention loss of income while away from their own businesses, and 54% find that costs of materials and production facilities are financial challenges.

The practical barriers are also emphasised. Provision of care obligations are mentioned by 68% of the respondents, while 56% find that geographic distance and travel costs are challenges. Forty-eight per cent experience lack of flexibility regarding the length of the stay as a barrier and 42% emphasise that finding a suitable place to live during the exchange programme is challenging.

Among the structural barriers, lack of information about relevant possibilities is emphasised the most, which 68% of the respondents point out. Fifty-nine per cent experience unclear or complicated application procedures as a challenge, 57% point out the limited number of exchange programmes within specific craft disciplines and 42% of the non-Scandinavian language speakers among the respondents emphasise language barriers in the application processes.

The administrative barriers include time-consuming application processes, which 64% of the respondents find challenging. Thirty-eight per cent of the participants who are citizens of countries outside of Scandinavia experience bureaucratic challenges with visas and work permits and 32% find unclear contracts and agreement conditions to be problematic.

Respondents appreciate the Nordic perspective

Respondents with experience from Nordic exchange programmes emphasise a number of strengths of the Nordic exchange programmes. Seventy-six per cent indicate the high professional quality and well-equipped workshops, 68% find the professional organisation and structure to be valuable, 67% emphasise professional traditions and crafts expertise and 54% experience good involvement in local professional sites.

At the same time, the respondents identify the many development potentials in the Nordic context. Seventy-eight per cent mention the need for a joint Nordic digital platform for exchange programmes, 72% express the desire to have support schemes specifically for Nordic mobility, 64% want more specialised production sites and 58% emphasise the need for more flexibility for the duration and format of the stay.

One respondent expresses it as follows: ‘The Nordic countries have an enormous potential for creating a coordinated network of complementary exchange programmes, where a

Arabia Art Department. Process photo from a public art project for Arabia 135 block (formerly Arabia factory site) in Helsinki, 2024–2025. Photo: Caroline Slotte



crafts professional could move among different specialisations. For example, by immersion in woodcarving in Finland, ceramic glazing research in Denmark and textile techniques in Sweden, all within a joint framework of understanding and easily accessible information.'

The sustainability perspective in the responses

Eighty-two per cent of the respondents state that sustainability is 'very important' or 'important' in their artistic practice, 76% think that the programmes for exchange programmes should incorporate sustainability perspectives and 68% want specific possibilities for exchange programmes focusing on sustainable materials and production methods.

What respondents want in future exchange programmes

A total of 68% of the respondents want possibilities for shorter, intensive stays lasting 2-4 weeks, which are easier to fit into family life and other obligations. This is particularly relevant for the 39% of the respondents who have never participated in an exchange programme because shorter stays may be more accessible for this group. Family-friendly formats that provide the possibility to bring partners and children with participants are wanted by 72% of the respondents who have children. Forty-seven per cent of the respondents express an interest in hybrid models, which combine physical presence and digital elements, especially in light of climate considerations and practical limitations. Greater access to specialised professional sites focusing on specific techniques or materials, where crafts and design professionals can achieve in-depth learning, is wanted by 64% of the respondents.

Arabia Art Department. Process photo from a public art project for Arabia 135 block (formerly Arabia factory site) in Helsinki, 2024–2025. Photo: Caroline Slotte



Conclusion

Among the respondents who have experience with exchange programmes, 72% participated in exchange programmes within their own Nordic homeland, 43% have participated in another Nordic country, 38% in Europe outside of the Nordic region and 23% outside of Europe. This shows both a strong Nordic anchoring and a significant international orientation among the respondents. The financial barriers are made especially clear in the replies, where 82% of the respondents find that insufficient financial support is a significant limitation. Sixty-four per cent point out that high costs of living are a problem during the stay, 58% mention loss of income while away from their own businesses, and 54% find that costs of materials and production facilities are financial challenges.

The assessment of the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis is that the desire to strengthen the Nordic collaboration is clearly evident in the study. Crafts and design professionals see the potential in increased exchange of experience, techniques and cultural insight between the Nordic countries. A joint Nordic overview and platform for exchange programmes is wanted by many respondents. Respondents with experience from Nordic exchange programmes emphasise a number of strengths in them. At the same time, the respondents identify the many development potentials in the Nordic context. A prominent theme in the responses is the desire for more flexible formats for exchange programmes that can accommodate different life situations.

Data shows a significant interest in aspects of sustainability among the respondents. The sustainability themes comprise environmental sustainability, where respondents want to work with local materials and reduce energy consumption; cultural sustainability focusing on learning and continuing traditional techniques; social sustainability, which is about inclusion of marginalised groups; and financial sustainability with an emphasis on developing viable business models.

Findings in the interviews

Respondent profile and formats for exchange programmes

Exchange programmes in production sites exist in all Nordic countries, but with different approaches and conditions.

The production sites with exchange programmes are described in the following sections based on interviews and questionnaires. The cases that are included in the study provide a good – but far from exhaustive – picture of diversity in the Nordic region. In order to provide an accurate picture, it should be mentioned here that there is a much larger number of established possibilities for stays among production sites than the cases mentioned, and an even larger number of potential possibilities for stays among both small and large production sites that have not yet started exchanges. The institutions and formats for exchange programmes that are mentioned as cases have been selected to illustrate the diversity of formats for stays and differences between institutions and/or production sites.

- **Denmark:** Here, for example, Guldagergaard – International Ceramic Research Centre is a distinctive institution. With more than 20 years of experience, Northern Europe's largest collection of ceramic kilns and around 100 international artists in residence a year, Guldagergaard in Skælskør is an established model for how to combine local anchorage with global attraction. Another example of a programme that Denmark offers and is mentioned in this study is the Paper Museum in Silkeborg, which through exchange programmes activates an old paper factory site as a model for how crafts and design professionals can renew the promotion of a production site and thus attract new audiences.
- **The Faroe Islands:** Steinprent in Tórshavn distinguishes itself by placing a world-class graphic workshop in a small island nation. Despite the geographic isolation of the Faroe Islands, for years Steinprent has attracted internationally recognised artists and crafts and design professionals from the Nordic region and has succeeded in building both residence facilities and a recognised gallery, which sells the works that are created there. It is a model for strategic development towards a financially sustainable production site.

- **Finland:** Here there is an interesting project that is a private initiative called Linen Stories, led by Leena Pesu, where she and a Danish designer in an exchange programme cooperate with Finnish linen producers to revive the use of locally produced flax and linen textiles in design. It is a model for how an exchange programme can be used as a platform for business development for both practitioners and a production site.
- **Norway:** Kunsthall Grenland offers access to Porsgrund Porcelain Factory's workshops through exchange programmes. The exchange programmes are supported by state crafts funds. Vevft in Bergen is a newer initiative for exchange programmes that focus on textile production and weaving in a Nordic context. The exchange programme is anchored in a production site where crafts and design professionals have access to specialised equipment, and where the programme has a strong focus on sustainable textile practices, as well as experiments with natural fibres and vegetable dyeing. It distinguished itself from many other exchange programmes by connecting crafts with current industrial textile production, which creates a special framework for both artistic immersion and innovation in production methods. The initiative can be viewed as being part of a broader Nordic movement, which tries to revitalise textile crafts and bring them into a context of modern design, sustainability and circular economy.
- **Sweden:** Gothenburg's Textile Heritage Centre is an example of a museum and workshop in one, which with volunteers retains the textile industry's cultural heritage and offers residencies to the extent resources allow. It is a model for how knowledge and technique are revitalised in the hands of current crafts and design professionals. Form/Design Center in Malmö runs the SPOK project, which functions as a network-based programme. Instead of having one location, SPOK matches designers with producers throughout Sweden through its 11 regional hubs. This is a decentralised model, in which exchange programmes take place 'out there' at companies and workshops in different regions. An example that demonstrates the very intimate version of a production site is the recognised textile researcher and weaving artist Marie Ekstedt Bjersing in the Borås area, who welcomes designers to exchange programmes in her home workshop. Northern Sweden is also the home of the newly established cultural centre, Jillat – Sami Dance Centre with a focus on the indigenous population's art and cultural traditions as a model for a production site that offers flexible formats for stays and inclusion.

Similarities and differences across the Nordic region

Based on the interview study and secondary data, the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis assesses that prominent variation occurs across the Nordic region with regard to institutionalisation and formal organisation of exchange programmes. A number of Nordic countries have examples of formally organised, but often individual programmes with time limits that have public support (for example, grants, programmes with a selection committee, etc.), but without being anchored in a national permanent strategy, while other Nordic initiatives are supported by more arbitrary local conditions, business-related efforts, or that are more informal or run by volunteers. For example, the Form/Design Center in Malmö receives support from the government and Swedish regions for the SPOK project, while Gothenburg's Textile Heritage Centre is supported by a combination of municipal rent exemption and the involvement of enthusiastic volunteers. The Faroese Steinprent is an example of a hybrid solution that has received some public support despite its small scale and is able to supplement this with its own income.

Rosanna Vibe weaves on backstrap loom in own atelier. Technique by Marie Ekstedt Bjersings reconstruction of ancient Egyptian circular loom. Photo: Kristina Hernandez



There are also major differences in the degree of professional specialisation. Most places focus narrowly on one discipline, which provides depth and expertise within the field in question. Some work broadly with all types of materials and production. Both models have their advantages: Professional centres that specialise in a single area may achieve a high degree of specialisation quality, while broad networks can encompass more professional fields and create unexpected interactions between professional fields.

Focus on cultural heritage in Nordic programmes for exchange

Despite the differences, there are traits that are repeated and can be said to be representative of the Nordic region as a whole. Firstly, there is a close connection to cultural heritage preservation in many of the exchange programmes' professional content. Nordic exchange programmes in production sites often have the explicit or implicit objective of protecting specialised knowledge, production methods and crafts traditions.

Secondly, there is a high level of quality and professionalism in the Nordic region. The Nordic region generally has a good reputation for education and well-equipped workshops, which is reflected in many exchange programmes. Crafts and design professionals who come here, generally find well-functioning facilities and competent professional staff. This attracts skilled applicants and creates a positive spiral, where success begets success.

A third strength is the tradition for public support for art and culture, which is characteristic of the Nordic region. This makes it possible to experiment with new formats. Projects like the funding scheme Nordic Exchange Programme or national pilot projects would probably not have seen the light of day without initial funding from cultural foundations and ministries. Public co-financing, even in small portions, helps support exchange programmes and provide legitimacy, which makes them more robust and visible.

Benefits and motivation for crafts and design professionals

In the assessment of the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis, the study indicates how exchange programmes provide a number of professional opportunities for the participating crafts and design professionals. Crafts and design professionals especially point out three recurrent values: access to optimal facilities for experiments, craft apprenticeship-like knowledge sharing and the development of networks and careers.

Artistic and technical development

The study shows that a stay in a specialised workshop or factory gives crafts and design professionals access to facilities and equipment that are often not available in their own studios. Participants describe how they, during their stays, are given the possibility to experiment with materials and techniques in optimal conditions.

The interviewees especially emphasise the following:

- Access to specialised equipment, for example, special types of kilns, 3D-printers or glazing laboratories.
- The possibility to test working methods they have not previously mastered.
- Intensive experimentation without everyday distractions.

A graphic practitioner in an exchange programme in the Faroe Islands could, for example, be immersed in lithographic printing techniques and get technical assistance from the workshop's experienced printers. A ceramicist describes how access to advanced kilns and a glazing laboratory made experiments possible, which could not be carried out in their own studio.

Based on this, the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis assesses that the stay often gives crafts and design professionals strengthened technical skills that can be used in their future work. Through exchange programmes, they obtain new skills, which can both broaden their artistic expression and technical repertoire. A number of participants describe exchange programmes as a laboratory where they can experiment intensively within a short period of time, which leads to new ideas, and in some cases, finished works or product prototypes.

Learning, knowledge sharing and traditions

The study shows that another key aspect is the learning that occurs when meeting the production site's professionals, the existing knowledge and traditions. In the production site, crafts and design professionals are often integrated into a professional community, where experienced technicians or crafts professionals work together with the practitioners.

The interviewees emphasise the following:

- Transfer of specialist knowledge, which is often not documented in the literature
- Craft apprenticeship-like situations where one learns by observing and working together with experience professionals
- Putting one's own practice into perspective through the meeting with the location's traditions and routines.

This knowledge sharing functions both as a form of competence development for the individual crafts and design professional and as a way to continue production methods and crafts traditions across generations.

Rosanna Vibe with Ethiopian pit loom, temporarily placed outside in Marie Ekstedt Bjersings Studio.
Photo: Marie Ekstedt Bjersing



Networks and professional relations

The study also shows the significance of relations that are built during exchange programmes.

The interviewees emphasise the following:

- Establishment of contact to fellow professionals and potential collaboration partners
- Development of professional networks that can lead to exhibitions or new projects
- Connection to a broader professional community.

A number of interviewees say that the friendships and contacts they made use of during their exchange programme later led to exhibitions, workshops or mutual visits. A designer who participated in an exchange programme arranged through a network in Sweden, for example, came into contact with a furniture producer, which resulted in a product development project after the stay.

Some product sites have established alumni networks, where previous guests maintain contact and exchange opportunities. Exchange programmes may thus function as a platform for network development, where participants become a part of a larger community of previous and current participants and hosts.

For the individual crafts and design professional, an exchange programme may thus open doors to new markets and circles, which would otherwise be difficult to reach. Visibility is also often increased through exhibitions or open presentations in connection with the stays.

Conclusion

Taken as a whole, the interviewees' motivation for seeking these exchange programmes is based on access to facilities, knowledge and networks, which they do not have in their daily work. Experience from the study indicates that when these elements are in place, the participants gain benefits that can be felt long after the stay has ended.

Benefits and motivation for production sites

For production sites, exchange programmes may add renewed relevance, knowledge and life to the location. The study's in-depth interviews, questionnaires and secondary data focusing on the benefits to the production sites show how the production sites benefit from opening their doors to external crafts and design professionals, both in the form of continuing production methods and crafts traditions, professional inspiration and increased public attention to the location.

Active knowledge sharing and living cultural heritage

The interviewees from the participating production sites view the exchange programme as a way to keep their professionalism alive. When a crafts or design professional works, for example, at a historic textile factory or a ceramics workshop, they do not just use the facilities, but also help sustain a tradition. Knowledge that otherwise might be lost with older employees or volunteers is given further to the visiting crafts and design professionals. A clear example is Gothenburg's Textile Heritage Centre, an industry museum run by volunteers, where the original factory's old thread and ribbon looms from the 1900s still run together with other historic industrial machines. Here, crafts and design professionals are invited in to create modern textile works on the antique machines. As an interviewee and manager of a production site commented, crafts and design professionals are thus participating in 'maintaining knowledge about textile machines' in practice. They learn to work on the equipment and maybe take the techniques home with them or instruct others. The exchange programme thus functions as securing an immaterial cultural heritage. Instead of simply documenting old techniques and crafts in books or films, they are maintained through current projects. This contributes to ensuring that existing knowledge, production methods and crafts will continue to exist in the future.

At Grenland Art Gallery in Norway, the managers who were interviewed as part of the study say that it is 'continuing Porsgrunn's porcelain tradition' by letting crafts and design professionals create new porcelain in the town's old porcelain factory. Interviewees who represent the production sites in the study experience great value in seeing their expertise be used and giving it to others. This anchors the institution's *raison d'être* as more than a museum; that is, a knowledge-bearing site and a living workshop. At the same time, the practitioners contribute to rediscovering the tradition with fresh eyes. New ideas are created from discove-

ring old techniques, which can lead to product innovation, which the production site can also learn from. In this way, the knowledge exchange benefits both ways: Crafts and design professionals learn from the local specialised professionalism and the production site is inspired by their different approach.

Renewal of local relevance and presentation

When current crafts and design professionals work in a production site, a new dynamic occurs between past and present, which may renew the presentation of the production sites. A possible audience gets the opportunity to see production methods and crafts be used in a modern context, which creates renewed interest. The Paper Museum in Silkeborg let, for example, a practitioner work in the museum's exhibition itself for a period of time. Guests could follow the working process and ask questions while the practitioner experimented with making unique paper works. This gave the museum's presentation a living element that few museums can offer. At the same time, the practitioner got valuable feedback from the audience along the way. For the museum, this means they get more types of visitors, both those who are interested in technology and those who come to experience crafts and design professionals' work in practice, and an experience of how their historic machines got new life by not just being demonstrated for the sake of tradition, but because they were used creatively to create something new and relevant in the present.

It is the assessment of the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis that such initiatives can strengthen the local political backing and the audience's connection to the location. During the Corona pandemic, Guldagergaard, for example, experienced that while international crafts and design professionals could not travel to Denmark, local citizens and ceramic artists became more involved in the activities of the centre. Now, after reopening, it is still a priority to invite the local society inside, for example through open workshops, artist talks or volunteer programmes. This creates common pride regarding the place of residence and makes it a more integrated part of the local cultural environment instead of a closed professional world. The production sites harvest social capital by being hosts. They expand their networks, get new ambassadors (through positive publicity) and can more easily attract support and political backing when they can present concrete results and activities that are relevant to society.

Professional inspiration and development of production sites

Receiving practitioners may also serve as a catalyst for the production site's own development. It is the assessment of the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis that the personnel or local professionals become challenged by the practitioners' questions and ideas, which can change routines and lead to innovation locally. One production site mentioned, for example, that when a practitioner insisted on trying an unconventional method on their loom, they had to find solutions along the way and discovered new ways to use the potential of the machines. In this way, exchange programmes provide a breath of fresh air that prevents stagnation in production sites. In addition, projects across professions occur when external crafts and design professionals connect the production site's competences with other artistic disciplines. An example is Linen Stories in Helsinki, Finland, where textile designers worked together with a local linen producer. In this case, the production site learned about new design uses of their linen, while the designer learned about the material's preparation, which they independently of each other describe as an important inspiration and learning experience, which can potentially lead to a new commercial product to benefit both parties. All production sites describe how they become revitalised by the exchange programme. They fulfil their purpose, whether it is to retain a craft, research, run an experimenting workshop or stimulate local development with renewed energy and content. Many emphasise that successful exchange programmes may also attract the attention of the press and politicians, which strengthens the reputation of the production site and may lead to further financing or partnerships. In other words: When the production sites invest resources in being hosts, they often multiply the value significantly in the form of knowledge, visibility and networks.

Conclusion

Exchange programmes create value for the production site through revitalising existing knowledge, production methods and crafts, which are kept alive through new practices. This contributes to increased public interest and local anchorage, which again contributes to innovation within the specific production sites. The results of the exchange programmes may – when they are successful in the right conditions – mean that the production sites achieve revitalisation, increased visibility and strengthened relevance in society through improved reputation, networks and finance possibilities.

Barriers and challenges

Despite the obvious benefits of exchange programmes in production sites, the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis identifies a number of barriers in the study that limit access to – and the effect of – these stays. The barriers may be generally divided into financial, practical, access and administrative challenges, which often are related and reinforce each other.

Financial barriers

Financing for crafts and design professionals

The most common challenge for crafts and design professionals seems to be financing. Many potential applicants have limited incomes and it may be difficult for them to find time for a long period of stay if it means a loss of income or extra expenses while they are away from their workshops or studios. Even though the exchange programmes offer unique opportunities, it may be expensive for the individual to travel to a production site, pay for accommodation, materials, and any workshop fees, often without compensation. One of the interviewees and manager of a production site comments that especially after the Corona pandemic, many crafts and design professionals have a difficult financial situation, which makes them less likely to leave without sufficient financial support. Some foundations and state fund programmes have grants, but there are not very many and rarely cover all expenses. An example is a production site that describes how they only have resources for one grant a year, which covers accommodation and materials for a practitioner. Other guests must find funding themselves.

The result may be that exchange programmes are only available to those who either have their own savings, can get support or can afford to take time off, which limits the talent pool and can impact social diversity among the participants. This may especially impact crafts and design professionals at the start of their careers.

Financing for production sites

Production sites also experience financial limitations. Many production sites are run on small budgets; some are based on volunteer work or have only a few part-time employees. This makes it difficult to offer comprehensive processes for exchange programmes. The resources might not be enough to pay fees or grants to practitioners, to employ a programme coordinator or to have employees available for professional sparring during the stay. An example is Gothenburg's Textile Heritage Centre, which only has one technician employed one day a week and is otherwise run by volunteers. Here it is only possible to receive participants if they can work very independently. Many places emphasise that the cost of materials is an especially large financial burden. Materials for some crafts (for

example, ceramics, glass and metal) are expensive and the processing (for example, firing ceramics in a kiln) consume a lot of energy. If the host does not have a budget to cover these expenses, the practitioner must pay, which may prevent the project from taking place. As a solution, Guldagergaard has chosen to offer support specifically for materials and firing for the design and crafts professionals who are participating in exchange programmes, precisely in order to remove this barrier and help financially.

It is the assessment of the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis that many production sites generally spend a lot of time on fundraising and partnerships in order to finance exchange programmes, but not all have the capacity or tradition for it. The consequence is that financially challenged production sites might not dare to try to establish a programme for exchange programmes or only receive crafts and design professionals to a very limited extent. Therefore, valuable development opportunities might not be taken advantage of.

Practical challenges

Geography and accessibility

For production sites that are not in major cities, the distance can be a barrier for crafts and design professionals. Travel expenses may be high and transport is time consuming, especially for foreign crafts and design professionals. For example, a stay at Steinprent in Tórshavn in the Faroe Islands requires both flying to and accommodation in a relatively expensive city. The cross-artistic cultural centre, Jillat – Sami Dance Centre, which focuses on Sami culture, functions as a production site with professional facilities and equipment, where, among other things, crafts and design professionals can create, develop and produce within, for example, costume design. Jillat is in the Sápmi region of Northern Sweden, far from most major cities. The large distances may prevent crafts and design professionals who have limited finances from applying. Availability at the location may also play a role. If the production site is in the countryside, one might have to have a car or spend a lot of time on public transport in order to shop, get to and from an airport, etc., which may prevent focusing on the main intention of the stay. Such logistical challenges are not mentioned in all interviews, but they exist, and it is the assessment of the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis that it may have significance for those who are considering an exchange programme or those who are considering whether to travel.

Accommodation and care obligations

Another practical aspect is accommodation during the stay. Not all exchange programmes include accommodation, and renting an accommodation for a period of time may be expensive or difficult for participants. More than half of those who were interviewed from the production sites recognise this as being a challenge. Steinprent in Tórshavn in the Faroe Islands has, as a consequence, invested in a small guest flat beside the workshop in order to attract practitioners – which has proven to be important for their business, says

Blaafarveværket (cobolt mines), Viken, Norway. Photo: Ane Fabricius Christiansen, 2024



Administrative challenges

A number of interviewees also mentioned various bureaucratic hurdles, which can complicate facilitating exchange programmes. A non-exhaustive list of hurdles that are most often mentioned in this study is shown below.

Barrier for visibility and accessibility

It is the of assessment of the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis that crafts and design professionals' knowledge of especially smaller production sites with exchange programmes may be very limited and that this is a structural challenge. The major international databases for residencies (Res Artis, TransArtists etc.) are dominated by the possibility of stays in traditional visual arts sites in the form of exchange programmes, while crafts and design-oriented stays either drown in the vastness of them or are not registered at all. Many Nordic stays in production sites fly relatively often under the radar and recruit through personal networks rather than through open notices. The Paper Museum in Silkeborg explains, for example, that their first two exchange programmes took place because interested crafts and design professionals contacted them at their own initiative. Without formal notices or advertisements, the possibility is not noticed by the majority of potentially interested practitioners. You have to know someone or take the initiative yourself in order to find offers. The lack of knowledge about and overview of production sites is a barrier in itself. Skilled applicants may get lost and production sites with exchange programmes risk recruiting from a limited network.

Application procedures and criteria

Other structural problems may occur where there actually are formal application rounds. Procedures vary a lot between countries and institutions, which makes it confusing to practitioners who want to find out how to apply. Language may also play a role. A notice on exchange programmes that is only in Danish or Swedish might not attract applicants from neighbouring countries or permanent foreign resident crafts and design professionals who do not understand the linguistic details. In addition, the selection criteria may unintentionally exclude some groups. For example, a Norwegian exchange programme required applicants to have a relevant artistic academic masters degree, and this excluded autodidactic crafts and design professionals, who otherwise could be very qualified through practice. Criteria regarding age, nationality or educational background may thus become barriers if they are not carefully based on the purpose of the stay (for example, for security reasons).

Visas and residence permits

For crafts and design professionals who are not in the Nordic region or EU, it may be difficult to get the required visa for a long-term stay. The production sites rarely have resources to help with immigration and some do not invite otherwise qualified applicants from far-away countries because they are afraid of the administration and uncertainty regarding rules. This limits internationalisation and diversity.

Insurance and legal agreements

When an external practitioner works in a production site, questions may arise regarding responsibility and ownership. Without clear agreements, conflicts or uncertainty may arise. The following is an example from our study, which describes the need: After a course of events it became clear that the expectations regarding consumption of materials should have been described in writing from the start in order to avoid misunderstandings. In another example from the study, a practitioner experienced unreasonable work contribution requirements from the production site after arrival and had to spend a lot of time on renegotiating programme conditions.

Bureaucratic burdens in connection with grants

Many exchange programmes, especially pilot projects, are financed by time-limited project funds (for example, the Nordic Cultural Fund or national funds). These funds often require comprehensive applications and subsequent documentation and reporting. For small and minor production sites and actors without dedicated administrative personnel, this work burden may be significant and distract focus from the actual content of the exchange programme and the production site's daily operations. Some production sites may refrain from seeking funding externally because the process is too complex in relation to their capacity and competences.

Communication across languages and cultures

Crafts and design professionals from different language areas may participate in some projects. This may cause challenges with regard to translating material, understanding contracts or simply resolving expectations. If all parties are not comfortable with the joint working language (often English), small misunderstandings may occur during exchange programmes, both administratively and in connection with the concrete work in the production site.

Conclusion

Across these categories, it is clear that the barriers often occur together. A small organisation run by enthusiastic people with a low budget typically lacks both money (financial barrier), an overview, visibility (structural barriers) and energy for bureaucracy (administrative barrier). On the other hand, a well-financed place can often remedy many practical problems for practitioners (travel grants, help with accommodation, etc.). This emphasises that there is a need for holistic solutions that address a number of barriers at the same time, for example through better basic financing combined with networks and knowledge sharing so that the standard of the exchange programme is improved in general.

Potentials and development possibilities

This section deals with potentials and development possibilities regarding exchange programmes on the basis of the analysis of in-depth interviews, questionnaires and secondary data to investigate sustainability perspectives and with this, also focus on business development possibilities.

Sustainability perspectives in exchange programmes

Exchange programmes in production sites have the potential to contribute positively to the five dimensions of sustainability mentioned in the preface, which concern the environment, the cultural, the social and the financial aspects of society, but this requires conscientious planning and organisation. How exchange programmes can support a holistic sustainability understanding and which activities can promote this is discussed below.

Environmental sustainability

Exchange programmes involve travel and resource consumption that should be handled responsibly. Many of this study's respondents are aware of the need to reduce CO₂ emissions by, for example, preferring to travel by train instead of by aeroplane when possible or by compensating for travel emissions. Some production sites with exchange programmes experiment with greener production methods: reuse of clay and glass, the use of locally sourced raw materials to minimise transport or developing new environmentally friendly materials during the stay. An example could be an exchange programme for ceramics, where ceramists dig local clay instead of importing it, or a stay for textile practitioners, where yarn is only coloured using vegetable dyes from the local area. Such initiatives bind the artistic process closer to the cycles of nature.

There are production sites in Finland with exchange programmes, for example, Mustarinda, which is run with a strict organic profile (although not crafts-specific), which illustrates that climate awareness can be taken into consideration in the organisation of the exchange programme itself. In a Nordic context, one could prepare joint guidelines or 'green standards' for exchange programmes in production sites: energy-saving measures, waste sorting in workshops, sustainable purchasing policies for materials, etc. The Danish Arts Foundation has, for example, supported a concrete project that exchanges experience with local clay between Iceland and Bornholm. Although some environmental initiatives might seem

small, many statements in interviews and replies to questionnaires regard production sites with exchange programmes as playing an important role in experiments. During exchange programmes, crafts and design professionals can test new sustainable production methods which can later be spread more widely. For example, a Finnish linen project has just contributed to the revitalisation of flax production because flax requires fewer pesticides than cotton and thus linen is a more sustainable textile. Experience with exchange programmes can thus contribute to the green transition in crafts and design professions, and the most successful ideas can be scaled up or disseminated through networks.

Cultural sustainability

Cultural sustainability is about maintaining and developing cultural values over time. As previously described, a large part of exchange programmes in production sites is almost tailored to ensure immaterial cultural heritage. When a young weaver learns to use a Jacquard loom from the 1920s during a stay, or a ceramist learns old glazing and decoration techniques in a historic faience workshop, invaluable knowledge is continued, which otherwise might be lost. This is not just preservation, but living handing down of tradition, which is embedded among new crafts and design professionals. Cultural sustainability, however, includes more than just preservation – it is also about renewal. A tradition is only living if it is able to continue to be relevant. Exchange programmes facilitate precisely this bridge-building between inheritance and innovation. The example of Grenland Art Gallery with traditional porcelain illustrates this by allowing young present-day crafts and design professionals to work with the classic materials, which results in new works that give the porcelain traditions new relevance. The public experiences porcelain objects it had never imagined and thus tradition is given new life seen with contemporary eyes. This strengthens a diverse cultural identity, where local or professional distinct characteristics are not forgotten; on the contrary, they are used as a basis for innovation. Seen from a Nordic perspective, cultural sustainability celebrates local design and crafts traditions while inviting international impulses to join in, so that the traditions are vitalised. Exchange programmes often create concrete output (works, exhibitions and workshops), which document and communicate the process. Over time, an archive of works and descriptions can be developed, which witness the production method's or craft's development. This is also a form of documentation. Each exchange programme leaves traces that can contribute to the story of the craft, material or location in question. Integrating an exchange programme with public-oriented activities (for example, open workshop days and local exhibitions) further contributes to making the work culturally relevant for more people and inspire young people to appreciate and maybe continue crafts traditions themselves.

Financial sustainability

In order for exchange programmes in production sites to continue in the long term, robust financial models must be developed for them. This is both about the finances of crafts and design professionals personally during stays, and about the business foundations of the host institutions. From the perspective of crafts and design professionals, the ideal is for exchange programmes not be a financial loss, but rather an investment in their careers,

potentially with profit. In practice, this means that grants or fees are important for attracting a broad range of crafts and design professionals. But in addition to direct support, an exchange programme may also be with open income possibilities. A number of places combine exchange programmes with sales or promotion, which benefits the finances of crafts and design professionals. Steinprent in the Faroe Islands has, for example, a tradition where crafts and design professionals print a series of lithographies during their stays and the practitioners keep most of the editions, while Steinprent can sell the remainder in order to finance operations. This creates a model that gives value for both parties. In the same way, Steinprent arranges exhibitions of the practitioners' works in their gallery and sells the works, which increases the visibility of the practitioners and possibilities for sales, while attracting the public to the gallery and practitioners to the workshop. Other production sites, which also offer exchange programmes have similar initiatives. Guldagergaard has an annual exhibition with works from the crafts and design professionals who have participated in exchange programmes and production sites sell, for example, ceramics, glass or textiles made in connection with the practitioners' stays in their shops or in connection with events.

For the production sites, financial sustainability is about avoiding having exchange programmes become an unprofitable undertaking. A number of places experiment with connecting exchange programmes with the host institution's combined experience financing. Guldagergaard's manager argues that if ceramics workshops are to survive, they must create experiences for paying guests, courses, open workshops and festivals that generate income to support the financing of an exchange programme. This principle can be used broadly. Production sites may, for example, hold masterclass workshops subject to a charge. The income that comes from such activities can be targeted towards covering the costs of having

Blaafarveværket (cobalt mines), Viken, Norway. Photo: Ane Fabricius Christiansen, 2024



crafts and design professionals living in exchange programmes and covering the expenses for materials, fees and other personnel. Thus, a financial situation is created in which the public contributes to the development of the practitioners in return for unique experiences.

Another aspect is partnerships with private businesses or funding bodies. Some production sites have succeeded in attracting sponsorships, for example, involving donations of equipment or discounts from suppliers, named grants financed by local businesses or collaboration with tourist organisations on marketing. An innovative approach was seen at Jillat in Sweden, which participated in competitions and ensured SEK 5.6 million in support and discounts through a commercial promotional initiative. These funds went directly towards establishing a house for practitioners and making their residence free of charge. This financing model is an example that by thinking untraditionally, resources can be obtained without using the traditional arts support channels. A new European study (World Crafts Council, 2023) also emphasises the interest for locally produced artistic crafts and design is increasing.

The Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis recommends strengthening the artistic crafts professionals' business competences and collaboration opportunities, which is exactly what exchange programmes facilitate. Investing in exchange programmes may therefore be seen as an investment in the sector's long-term robustness. The participants become more innovative and ready for the market, and new products and techniques developed during stays can both create financial value and subsequent artistic development. Thus, there is a business and regional financial dimension where successful exchange programmes can, in the course of time, lead to new business establishments, product lines or visitor attraction in the local fields.

Social sustainability and inclusion

The social dimension of sustainability is about creating an inclusive, diverse and enriching artistic and cultural life in society. In the assessment of the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis, exchange programmes may contribute to this in a number of ways. Firstly, by ensuring diversity among the participants. If exchange programmes are to be socially sustainable, they must be open and accessible for various genders, ethnicities, ages, financial backgrounds, etc. Historically, many production sites with exchange programmes (seen globally) have been dominated by Western established crafts and design professionals, but Nordic initiatives also break this pattern. Jillat has, for example, prioritised being a 'safe space' especially for Sami and other marginalised practitioners, who might not have felt at home in traditional possibilities for exchange programmes. The centre's clear target group strategy with regard to, among other things, being family friendly and having a non-judgemental atmosphere has resulted in these participants experiencing themselves as a target group for exchange possibilities. Many participants were pleased to experience support and respect – something they might not have been used to in previous experiences. Here, the emphasis is that proactive inclusion works. If you remove some of the barriers that

keep underrepresented groups back (due to financing, insecurity and discrimination), their talent comes into play to benefit the entire field. This example is included to show how work can also be done in the field of crafts and design in the Nordic region by creating inclusive frameworks for ethnic minorities and other minority target groups.

Inclusion is also about the relationship with the local society. Exchange programmes in production sites can create bonds between crafts and design professionals and local citizens, which increases the social cohesion, attachment and support for the production sites. When locals participate as volunteers, hosts or audiences at events, the production site becomes a joint meeting place. One example is Guldagergaard, where its manager tells about how, during the Corona pandemic, local people were involved in the operations and activities, which created increased local ownership. Subsequently, some of the initiatives were retained so that the dialogue between international crafts and design professionals and the local society continued, for example, by inviting local people to 'artists' talks' or by cooperating with the city's other cultural actors. In this way, the exchange programmes do not become isolated bubbles, but are part of society's cultural ecosystem. Both parties win: The citizens gain insight into creativity, local ownership and involvement, and the practitioners gain an impression of local culture and get feedback from a nonprofessional audience.

Another social aspect is education and the next generation. More production sites with exchange programmes are connected to local schools, youth projects or educational institutions. In Porsgrunn, Grenland Art Gallery, for example, has involved crafts and design

Caroline Slotte, Arabia Art Department Society, Helsinki, Finland. Photo: Chikako Harada, 2024



professionals in exchange programmes by holding workshops for children and making ceramics workshops in nursery schools. This gave the children a unique experience with clay and crafts, and the practitioner received training in communicating and was given a chance to reflect on the work from a pedagogical point of view. Such initiatives spread the joy of crafts and design among children and young people and ensure that interest in the professional fields is awakened early. For designers and crafts professionals, it may also be meaningful to contribute locally and see their knowledge benefit others, because it may create a feeling of making a difference in addition to their own processes.

Finally, well-being and the work environment are given a sustainable aspect. A number of those interviewed state that exchange programmes, when they work well, also teach crafts and design professionals some 'soft' competences regarding balancing work and time off. In a secure working environment, you learn to enter into communities, share knowledge, structure your time and maybe incorporate breaks and reflection, because the framework is different from busy everyday life. A Norwegian participant called this learning 'to live a whole new life' as a practitioner; in other words, to avoid isolation and stress by experiencing the value of community and exchange. This may lead to a more sustainable career for the individual, where you are better equipped to deal with burnout and work pressure.

Business development

In order to ensure vitality and growth in production sites with exchange programmes for crafts and design professionals, it is also important to focus on the business aspects, both for the participating crafts and design professionals and for the production sites. In the following, the potentials and opportunities that the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis assesses as existing within business development of exchange programmes are presented from a sustainability perspective.

Financing models for exchange programmes

The investigated in-depth interviews, questionnaires and the secondary data show that financing typically comes from a combination of sources:

- **Public support:** National or regional cultural funds are the backbone for many programmes for exchange programmes, for example, through the Danish Arts Foundation or the Norwegian Cultural Fund. This support ensures basic operations (salaries of personnel and basic facilities) and legitimise the initiative politically.
- **Private foundations and sponsorships:** Philanthropic foundations or sponsorships often contribute on a project-by-project basis. A number of production sites note, however, that it requires a significant work effort to obtain and maintain sponsorships, and that private funds may be vulnerable (time-limited). Nonetheless, they may provide flexibility for new initiatives and development.

- **Own income:** Many places seek opportunities to earn money – through holding courses, selling tickets to events, selling products created during exchange programmes or by renting facilities for other purposes. These incomes are rarely big enough on their own, but they are an important piece of the puzzle because they often involve free funds that can be used as needed
- **Partnerships and hybrid models:** One tendency is the appearance of hybrid models, where a number of actors jointly finance programmes for exchange programmes. A municipality may, for example, make rooms available, a business may deliver material sponsorships and a foundation may, for example, provide support for the crafts and design professional's exchange programme. In combination, this creates a viable model, although it is complicated to coordinate.

Sustainable financing thus requires diversification. The Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis assesses that an individual exchange programme can exist on one source (for example, a grant), but if the scheme is to continue year after year, there must be more legs to stand on.

Business development for crafts and design professionals

Exchange programmes may serve as a springboard for crafts and design professionals to strengthen their businesses and careers commercially. As mentioned under financial sustainability, during the stay, many learn, for example, new techniques or develop prototypes that may become the basis for new products or collections. It is not unusual for a project during an exchange programme to develop into something that can subsequently be sold or exhibited successfully. Thus, the exchange programme becomes a kind of incubator for creative business ideas.

An important factor is that practitioners during an exchange programme are given the opportunity to test ideas in a product-technical context. One designer described, for example, how during a stay she tested the entire process from idea to finished product by using the production site's equipment. This provided insight into how there were bottlenecks or quality problems that she could remedy – a learning process that enabled her to scale the production later. This form of practical product development in secure frameworks is of immense significance for a crafts or design professional who maybe dreams of moving on from unique works to series production. Often, practitioners do not have the capacity in their own workshops to try scaling or new materials, but an exchange programme creates the frameworks and resources.

Expanding networks for crafts and design professionals

Networking also plays a role in business development for crafts and design professionals. The contacts that are established with, for example, producers, gallery owners or other crafts and design professionals can open doors. An exchange programme at a furniture producer may, for example, lead to the designer subsequently entering into collaboration with the producer on launching new furniture where the producer takes care of manufac-

turing and sales. Such examples are seen, for example, in SPOK programmes and are a clear example of how exchange programmes can build bridges between small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) in the crafts and production sector and the creative practitioners. For crafts and design professionals, this means access to the market through a partner, and for the business it means innovation and new products. This is a situation that results in strengthening the businesses of all parties.

In order to maximise these effects, in the future one can think of models for exchange programmes being even more connected to commercial promotion and entrepreneurship initiatives. An exchange programme could, for example, be connected with mentor coaching in business development so practitioners do not just create a prototype, but also learn to make a business plan for it. In Finland and Sweden, this has been done through organisations such as Nordic Innovation or local business offices, but it is not used systematically. One possibility is to seek funding from funds intended for entrepreneurship to support production sites that offer exchange programmes, as the argument is that these stays create new creative startups and products. At EU level, there are programmes in the intersection between culture and business, where Creative Europe and Horizon Europe have themes involving innovation, circular economy and crafts traditions. Nordic actors could take advantage of these funds jointly to finance exchange programmes, which precisely focus on developing sustainable products and business models. In short: There is business potential in the exchange programmes, which goes beyond the individual participant, namely new markets and businesses.

Paper Museum. Photo: Museum Silkeborg, Paper Museum, 2024/2025



Business potential for production sites

For production sites, the challenge is to make exchange programmes an integrated and income-generating part of their work instead of something extraordinary.

The in-depth interviews, the questionnaire and secondary data include proposals for how hosts can think in an innovative manner to create value around the exchange programmes.

- **Activities targeting the public:** As mentioned, places like Guldagergaard use courses, events and exhibitions offensively. An exchange programme may end with an open event that attracts the public (and maybe generate income through tickets or catalogue sales). Some workshops also make annual publications, for example a book or a series of products for sale based on the programme projects.
- **Tourism and branding:** Production sites with exchange programmes may attract tourists interested in culture. For example, ceramics and glass enthusiasts visit Skælskør because of Guldagergaard and those interested in textiles travel to Borås in Sweden. If this is systematically developed (with municipal tourist strategies and visibility in travel media), a production site can attract more visitors who stay overnight locally and eat at local restaurants.
- **Partnerships targeting businesses:** Some production sites seek partnerships with local businesses in related lines of business. For example, Linen Stories could use the result of their exchange programme with a crafts professional to cooperate with a textile factory to sponsor a place for guests, while the factory made use of the designs that were developed. Or, a production site can have wood delivered from a local sustainable forestry business in exchange for promoting the forestry business through the practitioners' works and collaboration with the production site. Such partnerships may bring new resources in and anchor programmes for exchange programmes in a financially broader value chain perspective.
- **Structure for scaling:** If a number of small places work together, they can obtain economies of scale, for example, joint administration or marketing. A concrete example: If each of five small workshops in different municipalities seek funding for a joint coordinator, they could share an employee who develops exchange programmes each place. For the individual place, the expense becomes less, but the effect multiplies. This requires trust and coordination, but is also a model for scaling up without losing distinct local characteristics.

A broader perspective is to think of exchange programmes as a part of regional development strategies. A ceramics centre may be the focal point for attracting related businesses (galleries, suppliers and educations) to the field, which then strengthens the centre's financial foundations. The Nordic Council of Ministers' political priorities 2025-2030 (the Nordic Council of Ministers, 2025) emphasises culture as the driving force for regional development and entrepreneurship. Exchange programmes fit perfectly into the vision if one is able to connect them to the right programmes and foundations.

Conclusion

In summary, it is the assessment of the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis that exchange programmes contribute to production sites by supporting sustainability in the broadest sense. They can promote greener ways of working, ensure cultural sustainability through living practice, create financial value and innovation, and strengthen social inclusion and competences. It is a clear opportunity to integrate sustainability wilfully in programme design and operations, that is, from the very beginning, considering: How can we make the stay as climate friendly as possible? How do we ensure that knowledge stays with us afterwards? How can we finance it without wearing people or the financing out? And how do we make it open for different people?

The recommendations of the report address these questions and propose actions for making exchange programmes in production sites be good examples of sustainable cultural development.

In summary, the key to business development of production sites is to think outside of the exchange programme itself. By integrating programmes for exchange programmes in a larger story about experiences, products, branding and collaboration, a sustainable financial framework can be created in which all parties contribute a bit and all get a lot in return.

This requires an entrepreneurial approach, which fortunately is reflected in a number of the cases mentioned. It is the assessment of the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis that with the right recommendations and initiatives, these business perspectives can be strengthened, for example through earmarked support funds that connect programmes for exchange programmes for small and medium-sized business (SMB) innovation, preservation of cultural heritage and/or EU's programmes.

Initiatives such as the joint collaboration and funding scheme Nordic Exchange Programme in Norway and Denmark has already shown potential in connecting production sites and practitioners across national borders. A number of interviewees have expressed a desire to continue and expand this type of exchange. The SPOK network in Sweden has also expressed the desire to spread its model to other countries, which illustrates the interest for thinking of the Nordic region jointly as a whole.

Recommendations from the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis

Based on the insights in the report, this section sets up a number of action-oriented recommendations to strengthen exchange programmes in production sites in the Nordic region. An introductory recommendation on how a collaboration can be strengthened broadly in the Nordic region and which existing actors would be able to participate in this strengthening starts this section. Thereafter, four sections include recommendations directed towards the target groups:

- Crafts and design professionals
- Production sites with or without exchange programmes
- Funding bodies and organisations
- Politicians and authorities

The recommendations are considered to be items in a master plan in which crafts and design professionals, production sites with exchange programmes, funding bodies and politicians each do what they need to do, but coordination and collaboration between the different groups is also a significant part.

Paper Museum. Photo: Museum Silkeborg, Paper Museum, 2024/2025



Recommendations for strengthened collaboration across the Nordic region

Especially at a combined Nordic level, a joint effort for exchange programmes in production sites targeting the target groups mentioned above would have a great effect, because the countries would have better conditions for learning from each other and form the local initiatives on a knowledge-based basis.

Some actions may thus be initiated locally by the involved parties themselves, while others require political or structural backing.

It is a general observation on the part of the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis that the Nordic countries generally have different strengths and traditions within crafts and design, which would be beneficial to bring together through increase collaboration. Closer Nordic collaboration could focus on exchanging experiences in the form of sharing knowledge and experiences between production sites with different specialisations and organisation types through, for example, making use of complementary competences, where the different Nordic countries' special professional positions of strength are clarified and used.

The assessment of the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis is that by emphasising the professional specialisation, the qualities of the materials, properties, knowledge and history, the Nordic exchange programmes can contribute to branding the Nordic identity as something special outwardly in a strengthened position: Uniqueness of materials, pride in crafts and sustainable anchoring, as well as preserving methods and knowledge.

Joint visualisation, where collaboration on presenting possibilities for Nordic exchange conditions as a combined resource is an obvious strategic recommendation, which is described in more detail in the following, intended for foundations and professional organisations. Initiatives such as the funding scheme Nordic Exchange Programme in Norway and Denmark has already shown potential in connecting production sites and practitioners across national borders.

Based on the results of the analysis, there are numerous possibilities for strengthening exchange programmes in production sites across the Nordic region.

If work is done systematically to strengthen a practice for exchange programmes in production sites across the Nordic region, it is the assessment of the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis that in combination, it may lead to:

- Increased development and innovation within crafts and design
- Strengthened preservation of crafts and design traditions through active practice and continuation
- Greater diversity among participants who apply for exchange programmes
- Production sites with stronger networks and resource foundations
- Closer connections across the Nordic crafts and design scene

As one of the participants in a related Finnish study project (Heinämaa, 2020) formulated it: ‘The field is operated by a joint passion for promoting artists’ development and react to societal challenges through crafts and design.’ The Nordic exchange programmes can be examples of connecting this passion with concrete results – new works, new products, new communities – which remain long after the programme’s duration itself.

Existing networks, organisations and financing sources

It is worth noting that established networks, organisations and financing sources may have an advantage if they work together on strengthening Nordic collaboration.

These include:

- **Nordic Network of Crafts Associations (NNCA):** A collaboration between the Nordic crafts and design organisations, which can contribute to coordination and promotion
- **Swedish Artist Residency Network (SWAN):** A network for Swedish residencies across arts, crafts, design, film, literature, music and dance
- **Baltic-Nordic Residency Forum:** A forum for residency operators in the Baltic-Nordic region
- **National arts foundations and councils:** The Danish Arts Foundation, the Norwegian Cultural Fund, the Swedish Arts Council, etc.
- **The Nordic Culture Fund and the Nordic Council of Ministers:** Key sources for Nordic financing, including the Nordic Council of Ministers’ political priorities 2025-2030 (the Nordic Council of Ministers, 2025), which emphasise culture as the driving force

At EU level, there are programmes in the intersection between culture and business, where Creative Europe and Horizon Europe have themes involving innovation, circular economy and crafts traditions, which could be relevant for initiatives for exchange programmes. Also, small and medium-sized business (SMB) funds, innovation funds and cultural heritage funds can potentially support programmes for exchange programmes that work with product development or threatened techniques and knowledge within design and crafts.

Paper Museum. Photo: Museum Silkeborg, Paper Museum, 2024/2025



Recommendations for crafts and design professionals

These recommendations are for those of you who want to develop your practice through an exchange programme in a production site.

Actively finding production sites with exchange programmes: Think of an exchange programme as a strategic part of your career development, not just as a possibility to carry out a project, but also to learn new techniques and expand your networks. Stay informed about programme notices (use networks, social media and possibly the proposed Nordic portal, when it is ready). If a specific place interests you, do not hesitate to contact the production site yourself with a project idea.

Preparation and attitude: Think of an exchange programme as a strategic part of your career development, not just as a possibility to carry out a project, but also to learn new techniques and expand your networks. Stay informed about programme notices (use networks, social media and possibly the proposed Nordic portal, when it is ready). If a specific place interests you, do not hesitate to contact the production site yourself with a project idea.

Contribute to the production site and local society: Be aware that an exchange programme may also involve entering into a community. Contribute actively. This may, for example, involve an informal artist talk, making a small workshop for local people or sharing some of your own abilities with the production site's local fellow professionals. Experience shows that this can open doors for new collaboration or stays.

Share your experience: When you have been in an exchange programme, share your experience and results with colleagues and the public. You might make use of social media, professional networks, masterclasses or exhibitions for this. Not only does this benefit the production site in terms of visibility, but it also helps other crafts and design professionals to discover the opportunity. In this way, you become an ambassador for the production site and/or exchange programmes generally, and a stronger understanding may lead to better support and more and better development possibilities in the future.

Recommendations for production sites

These recommendations are for those of you who already offer exchange programmes or who are curious about how to do so in an appropriate manner.

Formalise your offer and make it visible: Even though you are a small actor, help potential applicants by having basic information be publicly available. Prepare a short introduction on your website (both in a Scandinavian language and in English), which describes what you offer (facilities, duration, costs and grants, etc.) and how you can be contacted or apply for an exchange programme. In other words, provide clear information that is a sign of professionalism and is open to inquiries from talented people who otherwise might not know you.

Help practitioners: Typical barriers that prevent practitioners to apply for exchange programmes have to do with finances, accommodation, transport and practical conditions. Do what you can to offer solutions to these challenges. If you have difficulties obtaining money for fees, try to help with housing instead – maybe you can enter into an agreement with a local housing association, hotel or educational institution regarding a discount or a sponsorship for accommodations for your resident guests. Or otherwise: If you do not have your own accommodation, seek funding for a work grant that can help with the cost of living. Even small initiatives, such as having a bicycle or shared car available or help with applying for grants can make a difference. Think untraditionally about partnerships: A local grocery or supermarket might sponsor household staples, a car dealer might lend a car against crediting, etc. Such things all reduce the practitioners' expenses and thus make the programme more attractive.

Adjustment of expectations and planning: Before the programme starts, enter into a thorough dialogue with the selected practitioner about the project. Agree on which machines and materials are to be used and what you can make available. Also have a plan B on hand if something goes wrong, for example, if a machine breaks down or if key personnel become ill. In this way, you are well prepared if challenges occur along the way. Talk about and preferably make a written agreement, which also mentions possible expectations regarding open house events, participation in communication, donation of a work or similar things, so that there is mutual clarity.

Paper Museum. Photo: Museum Silkeborg, Paper Museum, 2024/2025



Networks and knowledge sharing with colleagues: Learn from the experience of others to develop your programme. Contact similar production sites domestically and abroad – they often would like to share knowledge about, for example, financing, contracts, security, responsible use of resources, etc. Consider contributing to or creating a network. You could, for example, make exchange agreements, where personnel from your place visit another and vice versa, in order to learn the best practice. You are stronger together, also when you are to explain the value of your work to others.

Document and measure the effect: Be sure to document the results of the exchange programme. What results were created? Were they put on display? Were new collaboration agreements established? How large were the audiences that came to an open house? Also collect statements from crafts and design professionals about what the residencies meant for them. This data and stories are worth their weight in gold when you seek funding or want to be mentioned in the press, because they demonstrate concretely why what you do is important. Over time, you can build a case portfolio, which shows your worth, which can help with convincing sponsors and public supporters.

Flexible formats for exchange programmes and the need for diversification: A number of international experiences show that successful formats for exchange programmes are often adjusted to the different needs of the practitioners.

In order to increase accessibility, exchange programmes in production site should offer more flexible formats. This applies especially to:

- Shorter, intensive stays (2-4 weeks). These stays may be relevant to crafts and design professionals who have care obligations or work at the same time.
- Repeated stays over time. The possibility for practitioners to return to a production site a number of times during a long period of time can strengthen the relationship of crafts and design professionals to the production site, local society and promote deeper collaboration.
- Hybrid exchange programmes. The combination of physical and digital elements (for example, online introduction to techniques followed by physical presence) can increase the accessibility and reduce the impact on the climate caused by travel.
- Pop-up exchange programmes. Formats that are not intended to be permanent, but where the value is in the temporary process and access.
- Nomadic format. A format for exchange programmes where there is collaboration across production sites and where crafts and design professionals can travel between different production sites, which might have entered into collaboration partnerships.

Recommendations for funding bodies and organisations

These recommendations are for those of you who work on cultural exchange and/or in the crafts and design field and want to strengthen the possibilities for exchange programmes in production sites in the Nordic region.

Prioritise crafts and exchange programmes explicitly in support funds: When you grant funds for art and culture, consider creating earmarked funds or categories for exchange programmes in production sites. Initiatives like these often get stuck between visual arts funds and commercial funds. A clear signal that they are wanted could be to mention them specifically in the funds. This will get more people to apply and develop exchange possibilities in the field.

Make application processes flexible for small actors: Many production sites do not have professional experience with fundraising. Consider targeted outreach and consulting, as well as simplified application forms for small amounts, or provide the possibility for dialogue with applicants along the way. Flexible, possibly multi-annual framework support will provide peace to work for developing quality rather than forcing production sites to spend a disproportionate amount of time seeking funding for the next season.

Paper Museum. Photo: Museum Silkeborg, Paper Museum, 2024/2025



Support networks and capacity building: In addition to supporting the individual exchange programme, support initiatives that support development of the field. For example, a Nordic conference or workshop, where actors meet and exchange experiences. Or a Nordic matchmaking programme, which matches crafts and design professionals with relevant production sites to help new partnerships get started. Professional organisations like the Norwegian Association for Craft Artists, the Danish Crafts & Design Association, the Swedish Design Association and others are encouraged to put exchange programmes on the agenda, for example, by more actively communicating the possibilities to their members or, perhaps, even facilitating small exchange programmes, possibly in collaboration with foundations.

Requirements for sustainability and inclusion: As a foundation or support provider, you have the possibility to drive the field in a positive direction by requiring that applicants reflect upon sustainability in their project. You could, for example, ask: How will you minimise climate impact? How will you ensure broad applicant recruiting? At the same time, you can offer knowledge and sparring on these topics, perhaps through webinars or consulting for your applicants. This will raise the standard for working with sustainability.

Knowledge archive for traditional production and crafts techniques: Exchange programmes in production sites play a key role in the work on preserving immaterial cultural heritage. The establishment of a joint digital platform with knowledge and techniques will ensure that working methods and understanding of materials is preserved and continued. Inspiration can be found in projects such as UNESCO's 'Memory of the World' programme (UNESCO, 1992) and initiative like the Dutch 'Crafts Archive' (Crafts Council Nederland, 2012). A knowledge archive can function as a resource for both exchange programmes and the broader crafts and design environment, and it should be anchored in a Nordic collaboration between existing institutions.

The initiative could involve:

- A video archive and digital guidelines on traditional techniques from different Nordic production sites with exchange programmes
- Interviews with experienced crafts and design professionals, as well as representatives from production sites on development and challenges
- A joint 'crafts and design bank', where crafts professionals, designers and production sites can register their research and experiments

Consultants and financial support: Many crafts and design professionals are alone with contractual and administrative questions when they participate in an exchange programme. Experiences from, for example, Norwegian Crafts show that standardised contract templates can reduce uncertainty, but many crafts and design professionals still need specialised consulting.

It is therefore recommended that the following be established:

- A Nordic consulting function for crafts and design professionals, where they can get help with, for example, tax, contract terms and conditions, insurance and legal questions in connection with exchange programmes
- A database with recommended lawyers and financial consultants specialised in the field of crafts and design, which crafts and design professionals and production sites can consult
- Mandatory guidelines for all crafts and design professionals who receive support for exchange programmes so they are given the best possible benefits of the stay without financial or legal pitfalls

Knowledge sharing and digital platforms: The study shows that information on exchange programmes is often difficult to find. Increased digital accessibility can democratise and increase information about the possibilities for exchange programmes and make it easier for both established and new crafts and design professionals to find relevant exchange programmes. There are international databases on exchange programmes in the field of the visual arts, for example, Res Artis and TransArtists. It could be an advantage if a similar database for crafts and design professionals could be developed and sought after by the target group.

A digital infrastructure could strengthen this and, for example, might include:

- Combined overview: A joint digital platform or portal that presents possibilities for exchange programmes in production sites across the Nordic region
- Multilingual information: Making information available in several languages to reduce language barriers
- Sharing of application guidelines: Clear information about application procedures, financing possibilities and practical conditions
- Information about legal conditions: The study points out that production sites and crafts and design professionals in exchange programmes could be strengthened if information on, for example, insurance and copyright, as well as guidance on entering into collaboration contracts in connection with productions were more accessible.

Recommendations for politicians and decision takers

These recommendations are for those of you who work on culture, business and innovation – locally, regionally, nationally and in the Nordic region.

Think across sectors, because programmes for exchange may have value in a number of fields: Remember that these programmes are not just about design, crafts and culture. They have to do with policy fields such as business, education (crafts and design competences are increased and children and young people are involved in projects), regional development and tourism (cultural offers create life in outlying areas and attract visitors). Therefore, support for exchange programmes should also be seen as an investment across sectors. Ministries of trade and industry, regional strategies and rural districts can, for example, co-finance exchange programmes if job creation or product innovation is documented, while cultural heritage authorities can support those who work on cultural sustainability. Politicians can facilitate these synergies by creating contact between different administration branches on joint initiatives.

Rosanna Vibe, process photo from Marie Ekstedt Bjersings Studio. Photo: Rosanna Vibe



Integrate exchange programmes in production sites in political strategies: Set ambitious goals for the field, for example, that each Nordic country has a certain number of internationally recognised exchange programmes in production sites before 2030. Include these goals in national cultural action plans and in the Nordic Council of Ministers' next collaboration programme. By recognising exchange programmes within the field of crafts and design as a strategically important effort, which promotes design, crafts, cultural heritage and business gives the field weight and direction. It could, for example, be implemented in a Nordic minister declaration that backs up the strengthening of this form of exchange programme and this field of practice.

Create broader framework conditions through legislation and incentives: Consider actions that can remove some of the structural barriers. They might include tax incentives, for example, that crafts and design professionals in exchange programmes abroad can have exemptions for double housekeeping or host institutions get exemptions for certain costs in connection with an exchange programme. They might also include working for easier visa procedures for practitioners outside of the Nordic region, possibly through a special cultural scheme so that international exchange is promoted. In addition, investments in cultural entrepreneurship can be thought of in connection with exchange programmes, for example by allowing production sites to become hubs in entrepreneurship programmes.

Celebrate successes and communicate the value: Give recognition when things go well. If a practitioner, who has been in an exchange programme wins a prize or a production site has an anniversary, celebrate it with greetings and publicity. A public pat on the back gives moral support to those involved and make the efforts visible to a broader audience. The visibility also makes it easier to try to develop the production sites' work with exchange programmes. You might, for example, institute an annual prize, which recognises a production site or exchange programme to celebrate innovation and inclusion in the field. Telling good stories contributes politically to legitimising the use of resources in the field.

Knowledge sharing and digital platforms: The study shows that information on exchange programmes is often difficult to find. Further political backing of a joint Nordic digital platform can strengthen the entire field with combined overviews, which present possibilities for exchange programmes with multilingual information, sharing of guidelines and information about legal conditions, etc.

Knowledge archive for traditional production and crafts techniques: Exchange programmes in production sites play a key role in the work on preserving immaterial cultural heritage. Further political backing of the establishment of a joint digital platform with knowledge and techniques anchored in Nordic collaboration will contribute to ensuring that working methods and understanding of materials is preserved and continued.

Epilogue by the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis

First and foremost, we want to give special thanks to the crafts and design professionals and to the production sites that have participated in interviews, surveys and workshops as part of the analysis' empirical basis. Their contributions have ensured that the report is based on a solid foundation of qualitative insights.

We hope that the results will benefit decision takers, foundations, organisations, production sites and not least, crafts and design professionals, who all work towards supporting the creation of unique crafts and design throughout the Nordic region.

Special thanks are due to the members of the follow-up group who have contributed with valuable sparring, good advice and insights along the way, as well as representatives from the Nordic Culture Fund, the Danish Arts Foundation and Norwegian Crafts.

Should this report give rise to questions or comments, you are very welcome to contact us at the Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis.

Esben Danielsen, Director
The Danish Institute for Cultural Analysis

Roskilde, 19 August 2025

References and annexes

Empirical material (interviews): The analysis is built upon transcribed interviews with the following 10 production sites in 2024, where eight of them have entered into processes with support recipients from the funding scheme ‘Nordic Exchange Programme: Production, Knowledge and Skills’ in 2024.

- Guldagergaard – International Ceramic Research Centre (Denmark)
- Kunsthall Grenland (Norway)
- Linen Stories (Finland)
- Steinprent Galleries (the Faroe Islands)
- Gothenburg’s Textile Heritage Centre (Sweden)
- Vevft [digital weaving] (Norway)
- Art Factory / Vevestudio (Sweden)
- SPOK / FormDesign Center (Sweden)
- Jillat – Sami Dance Centre (Sweden)
- The Paper Museum in Silkeborg (Denmark)

Interviews are used as primary data sources for this report; quotes are included in the text where relevant. References and annexes, including interview guides and questionnaires can be presented as needed.

Here is a selection of background literature and reports used in the analysis:

European Crafts Alliance (2023). 'The European Market for Crafts'. This report identifies entrepreneurship as one of the greatest challenges for crafts professionals and emphasises the need for business competences. It also discusses how sustainability can be a motivating force for innovation in the crafts sector.

European Crafts Alliance (2023). 'The European Market for Crafts'. This report identifies entrepreneurship as one of the greatest challenges for crafts professionals and emphasises the need for business competences. It also discusses how sustainability can be a motivating force for innovation in the crafts sector.

Craft Council Netherlands, C. C. (2012). 'Craftsmap'. Found the 19. of august 2025 from Craftsmap: <https://craftscouncil.nl/craftsmap-nl/>

Unesco. (1992). 'Memory of the World'. Found on 19 August 2025 at:
<https://www.unesco.org/en/memory-world>

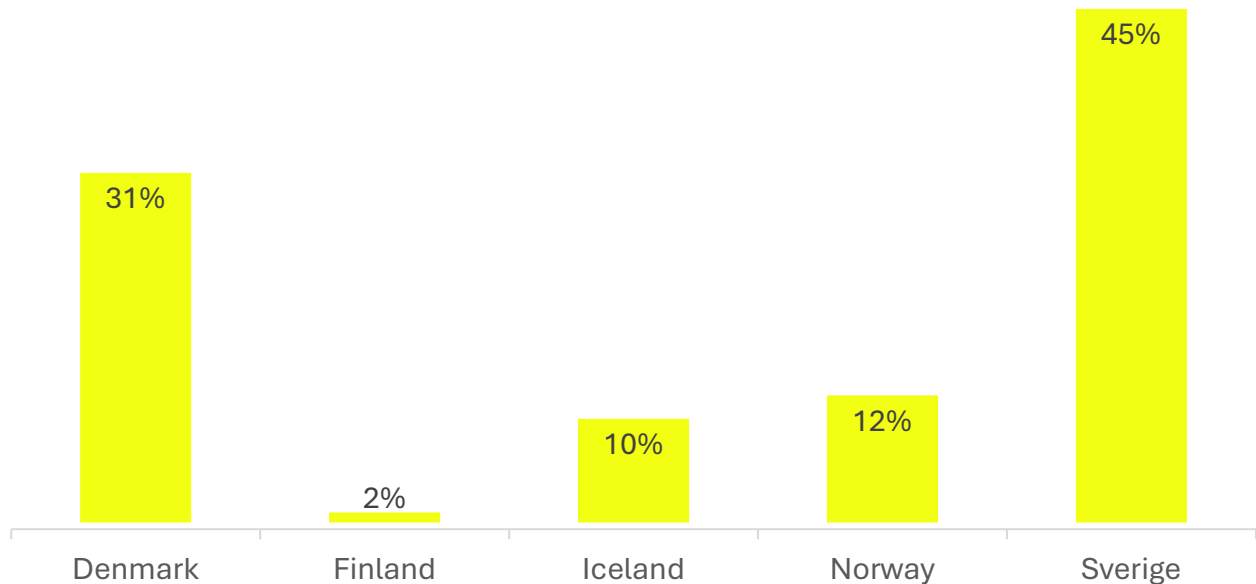
UNESCO (2022). 'Re-Shaping Policies for Creativity: Addressing Culture as a Global Public Good', global rapport, which, among other things, emphasises the role of culture in sustainable development and mobility.

World Crafts Council Europe (2023). 'Resilience of the Craft Sector in Europe', study of the crafts sector's challenges and recommendations, including the importance of business competences and networks.

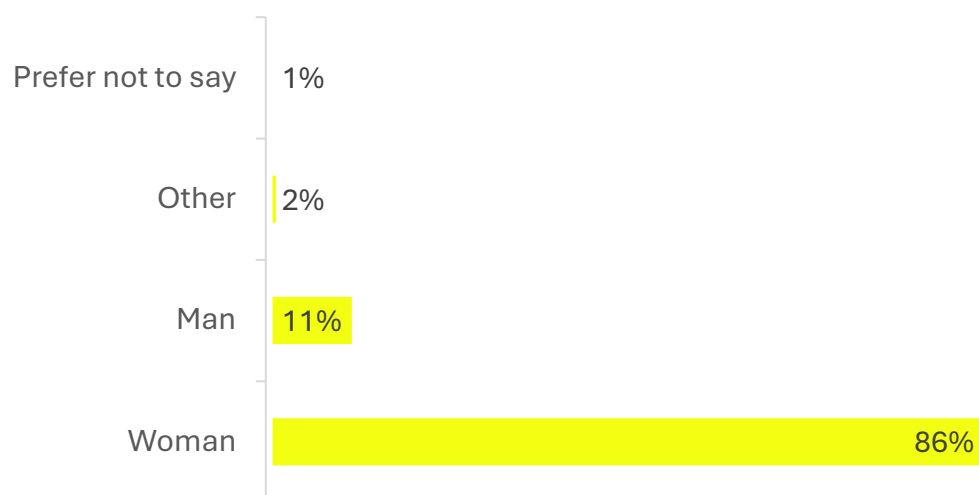
Annexes

Visualisation of data from the questionnaire

Distribution of respondents per country



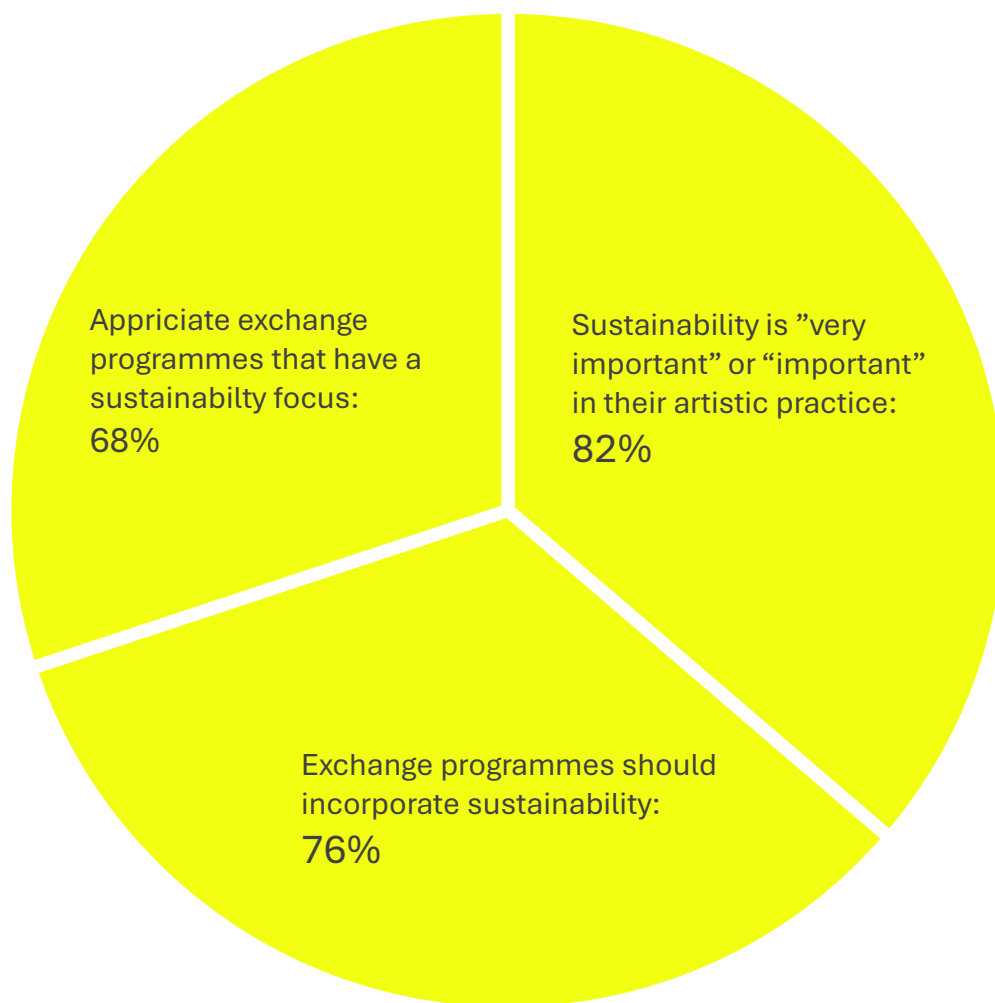
Gender



Visualisation of data from the questionnaire

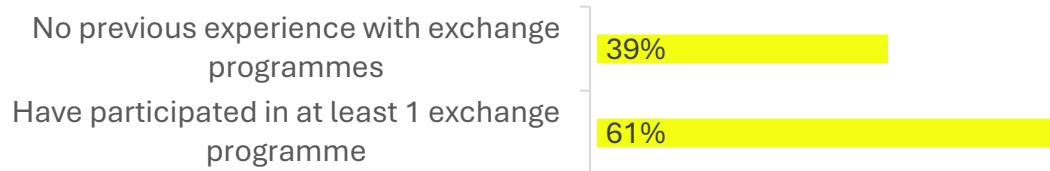
Sustainability perspective

(select all relevant factors)



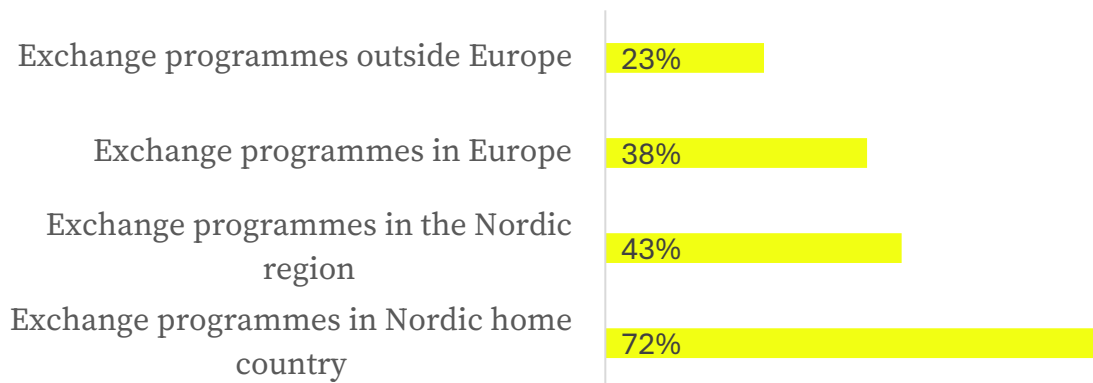
Visualisation of data from the questionnaire

Previous experience with exchange programmes

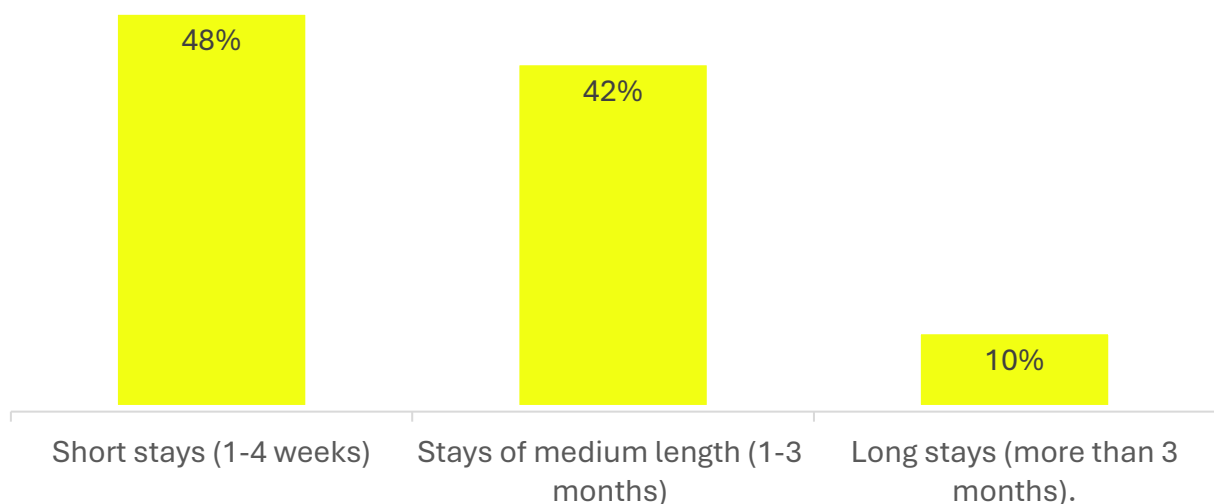


Location of exchange programmes

(select all relevant factors)



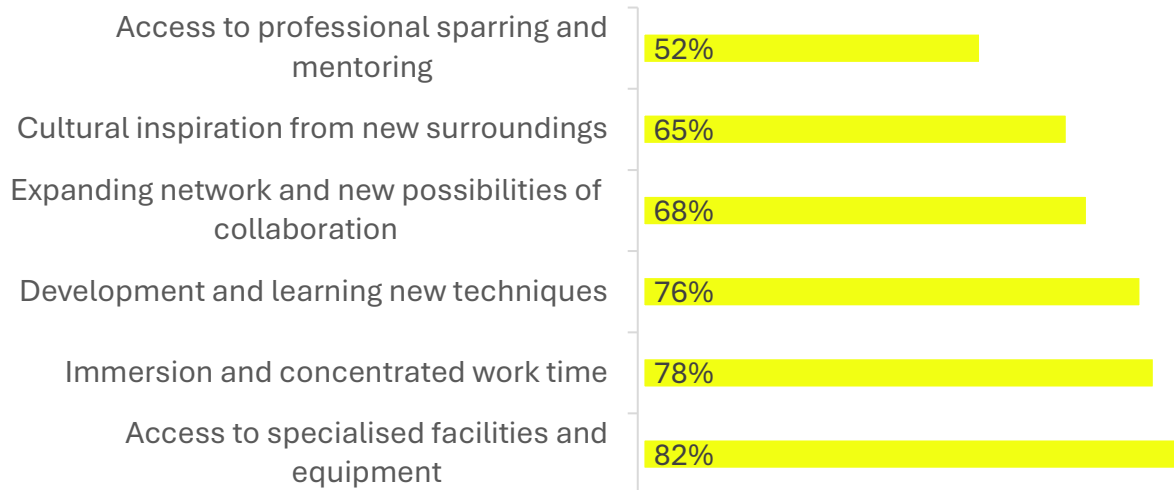
The duration of the exchange programmes



Visualisation of data from the questionnaire

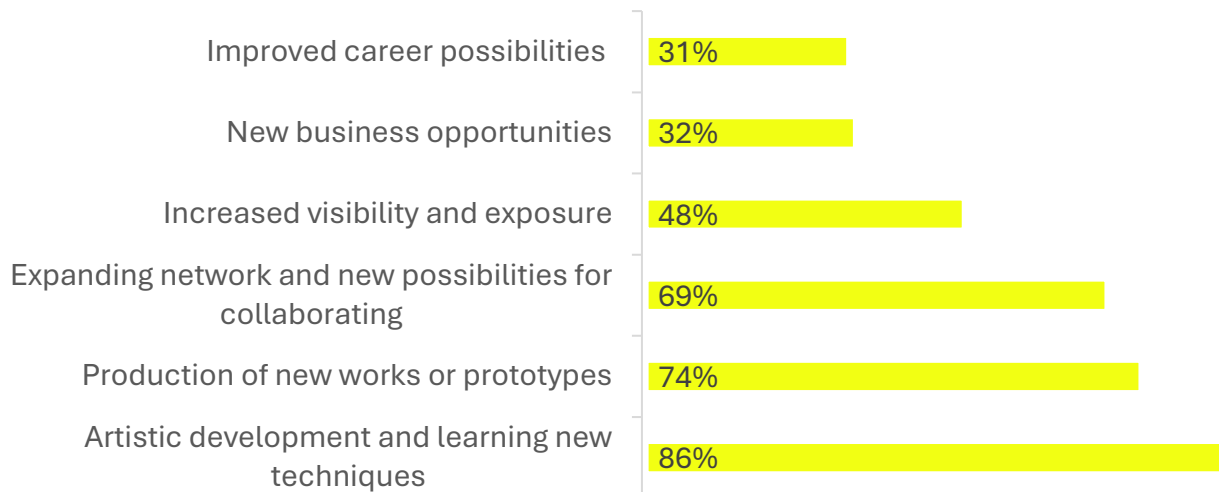
Most prominent motivation factors

(select all relevant factors)



Experienced benefits

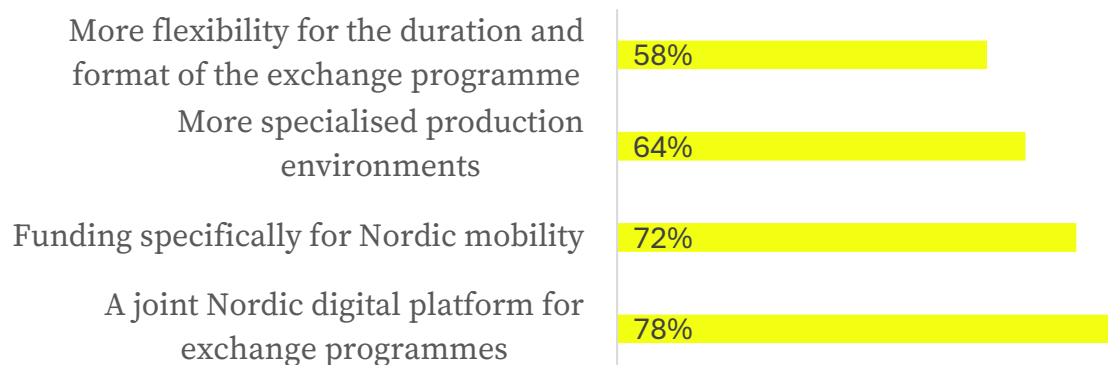
(select all relevant factors)



Visualisation of data from the questionnaire

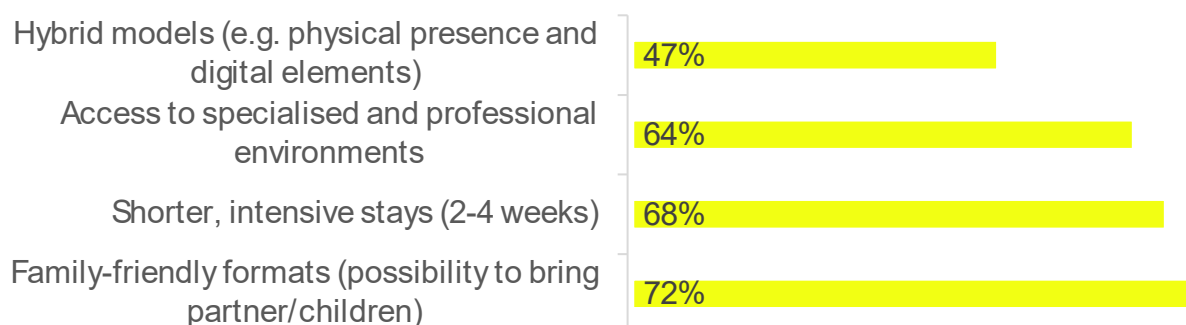
Development potentials

(select all relevant factors)



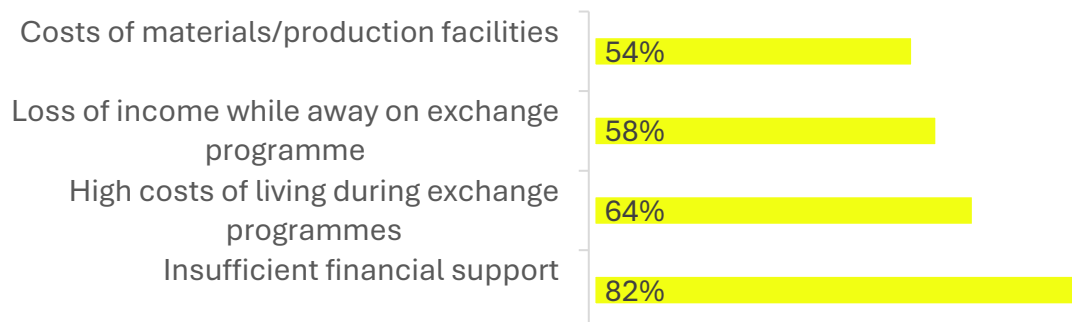
Requests

(select all relevant factors)



Financial barriers

(select all relevant factors)



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