

Questions and answers

Nordic or Nordic-Baltic PhD and Researcher Mobility Programme

The following questions were asked at the informative webinar on how to participate in the call for proposals: Nordic or Nordic-Baltic PhD and Researcher Mobility and Network Activities, 2022-24.

The call text can be found here: <https://funding.nordforsk.org/portal/#call/2385>

1. Who needs to sign the letters of commitment?

All project partners to a consortium needs to submit letters of commitment (LOCs), regardless of the partner's management role (*see below). The LOC are particularly important as they are signalling the commitment to the project. Thus, the LOC must be signed by someone who is authorized to make commitments on behalf of the partner – usually a department head or vice-rector of the institution, or manager of the company. Please note that, below the signature, the name and title of the signer must be spelled out clearly (typed letters).

2. Do you provide templates for the letters of commitment?

No, Nordic Energy Research does not provide templates for this. However, we would like the LOCs to clearly stipulate that your organization wish to participate in this project if it receives funding, what your organization will contribute with to the project and a signature from an authorized person. Please note that, below the signature, the name and title of the signer must be spelled out clearly (typed letters).

However, we do provide templates for the project and budget applications in the official application portal.

3. Is there flexibility between PhD and researcher mobility later in the project?

In your application, you should allocate funds for the different activities and mobility periods. When implementing the project, the funding should be used in line with your project proposal.

The application will, among other criteria, be assessed on the basis of how the funds and mobility is planned (feasibility of deliverables and milestones) and a clear plan for this will make it easier for the evaluators to score the project application properly. If something were to happen during the funding period later on (e.g., a worldwide pandemic), we try to be flexible to changes.

4. Are the mentioned funds in the call for PhD mobility after or before tax?

Nordic Energy Research does not directly fund individual PhDs and researchers within this call. If selected for funding, the approved funds will be paid out to the Project Owner* who, in turn, will disburse the funds according to the budget and project plan. The funds that later are sent to an individual PhD-student or researcher from the Project Owner or another project partner, might be taxable.

5. Can workshops/summer schools be open to other institutes aside from the project partner, e.g., Baltic universities in a Nordic project?

For networking activities, Nordic Energy Research financially support the following:

- a. Planning
- b. Accommodation costs
- c. Travel costs
- d. Allowance for invited speakers

The networking activities can be open for other institutions outside of the project consortia, but their participation cannot be funded under b and c. To elaborate: The consortium does not need to charge participants from other organisations for the planning, and an honorarium for an invited speaker from outside of the consortia can be covered under budget post d.

6. Regarding speakers for workshops, do they have to be external, or can this also be internal speakers?

For networking activities, Nordic Energy Research financially support allowance for invited speakers, whoever they might be. This means that an honorarium for an invited speaker – Regardless of them being from outside or inside of the consortia – can be covered under budget post “Allowance invited speakers”.

7. Regarding the daily rate for workshop participants, is it for organizing the workshops? Or can this also be travel and accommodation costs for participants, i.e., PhDs?

For networking activities, we financially support the following:

- a. Planning
- b. Accommodation costs
- c. Travel costs
- d. Allowance for invited speakers

The daily rates stipulated in the call text on workshop participation refers to accommodation and travel, as a participant (b-c). For example, if a PhD-student or a researcher, that is tied to one of the participating partners of the consortia, wishes to participate in a workshop, costs related to his/her accommodation and travel can be covered (budget posts b-c). Planning of the event is the responsibility of the organizer and can be estimated freely by the one within the project consortia that is responsible. The recommended daily rate per participant per workshop and summer school is 1 500 NOK, but this is only a guideline from our side. Applicants are free to adjust these amounts accordingly.

8. Is it an annual call? Will there be a similar call in 2022? If not, can we apply with a summer school taking place in summer 2023?

There has been an annual call withing the Nordic or Nordic-Baltic PhD and Researcher Mobility Programme since 2019, but we can never promise for certain that there will be a call next year as well. Thus, we recommend you apply for funding now, while this call is open. You can apply for funding for a project that takes place in 2023, if the planning of it begins before the 28th of February 2022 (see question 12 below).

9. What is exactly funded for networking activities? The preparation of the summer school (are networking activities and lunches included?), travel and accommodation of PhD students and young professionals (all participants or only those from Baltic-Nordic countries)?

For networking activities, we financially support the following:

- a. Planning

- b. Accommodation costs
- c. Travel costs
- d. Allowance for invited speakers

The approved funds can be used by the partners of the consortia. This means that **you are not** allowed to use the approved funds to cover the costs of participants (e.g., accommodation and travel costs) that are not tied to the partners of the consortium. For example, the accommodation and travel costs for participants in a workshop can be covered by the approved funds if these participants are PhDs or researchers at a HEI that is a partner in the project. All other participants, for example PhDs from external HEIs, must carry their own costs for travel and accommodation. However, allowance for invited speakers – regardless of them being external or internal – can be covered under budget post d.

Regarding costs for planning (budget post a), the funds can be used to cover the costs for the organizers to salary for persons involved in planning, rent of a place to be or lunches for any participant that is a part of the project consortium.

10. What do you mean by families for funding PhD mobility in this text from the call (For PhD-students and researchers travelling for research abroad, the recommended grant is NOK 18 000 per month for singles and NOK 33 000 per month for families.)?

When going on a mobility period, one can move alone or with their closest family. The recommended rates stated in the call text, indicate that Nordic Energy Research encourage the involved project partners to estimate the level of the PhD grant rewarded depending on if the specific PhD student brings their family to the new country or not.

11. Does one need to somehow show that the PhD students considered for mobility are already employed (specific names) or can it also be future students coming in during the project runtime?

Nordic Energy Research has received some applications that stipulate the names of the PhD students considered for mobility and some applications that has not. As mentioned above under question 3, it is preferable if the application is written as true to the final project plan as possible. This, since the application will be assessed based on quality as well as feasibility / implementation and the more specific you are regarding the number of PhD students and the value of the mobility periods to them specifically, the easier it will be for the evaluators to score your project application properly. However, the application is not required to state any names and can thus inform that PhD students will be selected further on.

12. Is there a minimum project duration?

No, the project could be a "one-time-thing" that takes place during the funding period (1st January 2022 until 31st of December 2024). The most important thing is that the expected project start, at the latest, is the 28th of February 2022. For example, a possible "shorter" project could be a one-week arrangement of a summer school in 2023, but the planning of the event must begin in January or February 2022.

But note the minimum exchange period for PhDs stipulated in the special eligibility criteria for funds sought for PhD-mobility.

13. Is there a maximum project duration?

Yes, Nordic Energy Research's purpose is to support projects with a duration of approximately two-three years, with an ending at 31.12.2024 at the latest. Expected project start at the latest is the 28th of February 2022.

14. What are reasonable travel costs?

There are some travel costs stipulated in the call text under Guidelines for rates. However, these are just guidelines from Nordic Energy Research's side and applicants are free to adjust these amounts accordingly. In many cases, applicants must consider a range of factors (e.g., the need for Covid-19 passports or expensive tickets etc.) and therefore each applicant must assess what is reasonable for their project specifically.

15. What type of projects do you consider fall under the key areas of research?

This is hard to answer without a full proposal at hand. If there is any hesitation, the applicant himself/herself must assess if his/her project could fall within any of the stipulated thematic areas. In the application, the same must argue for why this is. Nordic Energy Research always try to show some flexibility regarding this criterion due to the various nature of research topics, but the applicant's argumentation for the cause must still be valid and good.

The key areas of research are digitalization, energy markets, energy storage, green transport, bioenergy and CCUS.

16. Is it possible to apply in groups?

Yes, one of the general eligibility criteria is that the consortia consist of several HEIs.

- a. For Nordic projects, the consortium must include a minimum of two Nordic HEI partners from two different Nordic countries and all partners therein that are applying for funding must be legally based in a Nordic country or their autonomous areas.
- b. For Nordic-Baltic projects, all partners applying for funding must be based in a Baltic country, Nordic country, or their autonomous areas, and one of the following criteria must be met:
 - i. The higher education institution coordinating the consortium is based in a Baltic country, or
 - ii. At least two of the participating higher education institutions are based in a Baltic country.

17. Should we list in-kind funds (i.e., the hours of people who manage the project) in the proposal?

Yes. Under every budget post in the provided budget template that you should use for your application, you can list both your own resources (in-kind and cash) and other external funding of the project. The budget template can be found in the official application portal.

Management roles in the project

Project Owner:

The legal entity (e.g., university, university college, research centre, or other research organization) having the overall responsibility of the project.

RPO:

The formal applicant (Project Owner) must be a Research Performing Organisation (RPO).

Project Manager:

The person who, on behalf of the Project Owner, is responsible for the professional implementation, progress, and completion of the Project

Project Partners:

The entities which participate in the Project having committed themselves contractually to contribute with professional and/ or with financial resources to the Project Owner for the implementation of the Project.

Observers:

The entities which participate in the Project having voluntarily committed themselves to contribute with resources. Not eligible for funding. The Project should not be dependent on professional or other contributions from Observers.

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