

NORDYRK - Nordic network for vocational education and training



2024–2025 Activity Report

1. Purpose of the Network and mission of the Steering Group

The work of the steering group is based on the network's strategy document *NORDYRK Nordic Network for Vocational Education and Training - a strategy document* 06/08/2021)

NordYrk is the Nordic research network on vocational education and training.

The purpose of NordYrk is to promote Nordic co-operation in order to:

- Make visible, enhance and communicate the research and development efforts.
- Develop and enhance vocational education and vocational teacher education to meet future competence requirements as well as cultural and societal challenges.
- Create a meeting place for collaboration in research and development projects.
- Enhance the contacts and collaboration between universities, higher education institutions, schools, colleges, as well as both public and private enterprises.
- Provide research-based knowledge in educational policy processes and decisions.

The target groups are researchers, teacher educators, teachers and other stakeholders in vocational education and vocational teacher training, as well as authorities and decision makers. The network's main languages are the Scandinavian languages and English.

The target of the steering group is to:

- collaborate with the organizing university/college in planning and hosting the annual network conference,
- represent the entire network and actively ensure that issues of vocational pedagogy, vocational didactics and other relevant areas are brought up and discussed in order to develop knowledge and skills in the field,
- stimulate the formation of thematic networks with representatives from participating countries,

- market the network and its activities through Facebook and websites,
- be responsible for the network's joint finances, and look for partners who can help the operation of the network,
- be responsible for preparing activity plan and activity report.

2. Steering Group 2024–2025

Members

The steering group has consisted of three representatives from Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Iceland respectively and two doctoral student representatives. Accordingly, the steering group members 2024-2025 have been:

*Denmark: Arnt Vestergaard Louw, Henrik Hersom, Henriette Skjærbæk Duch,

*Island: Guðrún Randalín Lárusdóttir, Elsa Eiríksdóttir, Jóhannes Árnason

*Norge: Sigrund Saur Stiklestad, Julie Leonardsen, Ann Karin Sandal

*Sverige: Susanne Gustavsson, Katarina Kärnebro, Per Andersson

*Finland: Petri Salo, Carina Kiukas, Maarit Virolainen

* Doctoral researcher representatives: My Olofsson, and Monika Øgård.

The steering group has a chairman (Maarit Virolainen) and a vice-chairman (Susanne Gustavsson).

Meetings

The steering group has held six ordinary online meetings, and a two-day online meeting to plan for the NordYrk 2025 conference (3.9., 4.10., 22.11., 21.1. 24.-25.2., 17.3. and 13.5.)

Preparations for the NordYrk 2025 conference were led by Henriette Skjærbæk Duch.

The meeting notes have been archived on the NordYrk's website (see: About Nordyrk/ Steering Committee/ Documents of the steering committee).

They are behind a passcode and available for steering group members.

3. Steering Group activities 2024–2025

Based on the mandate, the steering group's plan for 2024–2025 has included five points. The work is presented below.

Planning for and hosting the NordYrk Conference 2025

According to the decision at the annual meeting in 2024, NordYrk 2025 was carried out in cooperation with the VIA University College, June 10–12 in Aarhus, Denmark. The steering group and representatives from the VIA University College at Aarhus have discussed and collaborated for the planning and organisation of the conference in steering group meetings.

The conference has its own website developed by organisers <https://nordyrk.via.dk/>.

The submission of abstracts was open 15 November – 31 January (extended until 7 February). Altogether, the programme includes 105 paper submissions, 19 posters, 8 symposia, and 2 workshops. The presentations are mostly coming from the Nordic countries, but there are also researchers presenting from outside the Nordic region, for example from Germany.

During the conference days sessions, up to 25 presentations, symposia or other activities take place in parallel. The opening of the conference is at 9 on Tuesday the 10th of June, and conference will end on Thursday the 12th of June at 13. The theme of the conference is *Nordic VET in a Sustainable Future: Social, Economic, and Environmental Perspectives* (see Appendix 1 for the theme presentation). The conference theme is addressed both by the three keynotes — Professor Franz Kaiser [University of Rostock, Germany], PhD, Vibeke Asmussen [Head of Research Center for Social Marginalization, VIA University College, Denmark] and Diana Holmqvist [Associate professor of adult education and learning at the Department of behavioral sciences and learning / Linköping university, Sweden] — and several paper presentations during the conference.

In relation with the theme of the conference, the welcome reception will be held at Café Gadeliv (a local café with focus on diversity and sustainability) and the conference dinner on Wednesday will be all vegetarian.

The representatives of the steering group have been responsible for disseminating information about the conference within their respective countries through their personal, professional networks. In addition to higher education institutions, invitations have been sent to relevant authorities and organizations.

Maintaining and updating the repository of conference documents and a conference manual at www.nordyrk.net

The minutes of the steering group, conference documents and procedures for planning and implementing the NordYrk conference are available and archived on an internal webpage. The steering group has log-in details for accessing the webpage. The aim of the archive is to facilitate the planning of conferences and to archive the work of the steering group.

Updating the website

The website has a developed structure with four sections: Conferences, Journal, About NordYrk and Contact. It is possible to add further more pages and sub-pages when needed. The language used at the website is mainly English. The steering group is responsible for the content of the website.

Develop utilization of relevant social media as an active place for dissemination of research and development projects, networks and other activities within NordYrk

The steering group has utilized NordYrk Facebook page, and steering committee members individual Facebook and LinkedIn pages to disseminate relevant information and

communicate about NordYrk activities actively. The steering group has a specific responsibility to keep the NordYrk page active.

Contribute to meeting places for presentation and discussion of research and development projects

During the activity year 2024–25 the network for doctoral students has continued as part of the NordYrk activities.

- *Networking for doctoral students.*

The purpose of the doctoral student network is to both stimulate and support doctoral students, doctoral education and research on vocational education and training. Information about the PhD network has been published on the website. The doctoral students have also their own Facebook group, which is a place for information and communication. The doctoral students meet during the NordYrk 2025 conference.

Appendix 1: Nordyrk 2025 Conference theme presentation

Nordic VET in a Sustainable Future: Social, Economic, and Environmental Perspectives

The NORDYRK 2025 conference theme highlights the opportunities, challenges and dilemmas for vocational education and training (VET) that arise from discussions on sustainability. These possibilities and dilemmas can be social, economic, or related to environmental issues.

Ensuring competence and well-being in Nordic VET

The Nordic countries aim to produce a competent and skilled workforce through different models of vocational education and training that enable educational and geographical mobility. The varying rural and urban development of Nordic societies also needs to be considered. However, the models must also pay attention to the well-being of the students during their education and later in their working lives. The theme of the NORDYRK 2025 conference is therefore related to the diversity of students, which raises questions about didactic and pedagogical choices for education for active participation in the workplace and society in general in the democratic welfare state. Such perspectives relate to social sustainability.

Sustainable perspectives in vocational education

The conference theme also draws attention to evaluation and quality systems that promote sustainable perspectives from a global, regional and local perspective. In the context of vocational education and training, sustainability can relate to teacher training and work from a lifelong perspective, including institutional development and the impact of sustainability and policy regulations on different vocational sectors. Some occupations, such as construction, industry and fashion, are experimenting with new technologies and materials to focus on recycling. Others, such as agriculture and car manufacturing are facing new regulations on their production to reduce emissions. Retailers and shops are predicting new buying patterns from customers. As a result, vocational teachers, teacher trainers, and vocational higher education teachers will need new skills, and vocational colleges will need new production equipment, increasing the economic costs of organising education. At the same time, sustainability is increasing interest in traditional crafts.

Collaborative research

VET and higher education institutions are increasingly involved in collaborative research projects that support the transition to sustainable societies. Research and development projects are also incorporating sustainable perspectives into designs and methodological choices to develop new production models through cooperation between research, VET institutions, private enterprises, and public institutions developing VET. These partnerships aim to increase retention and make VET attractive to young people and adults. The diversity of adult learners' careers results in a diversity of needs, aspirations, motivations, and learning conditions that adult education needs to address. In addition, higher vocational education and training is

closely linked to societal economic development and production conditions and their transformation towards sustainability.

VET and sustainability in Nordic education

The conference organizers are calling for participants to examine the connection between Vocational Education and Training (VET), higher vocational education, and the sustainability agenda, as well as the potential opportunities, challenges, and dilemmas that may emerge. Participants are encouraged to present research that sheds light on the current state of Nordic VET and its evolution in developing future skills, learning methods, and work practices. Questions to consider include the necessary competencies for teachers, the development of teacher education, strategies for increasing student involvement, and the role of VET in advancing towards a sustainable future.

The NORDYRK Steering Committee and the conference organisers look forward to active participation, lively discussion, and exchange of ideas at the 2025 conference. Contributions that explore different aspects of the theme and align with the overarching goals of the NORDYRK network are particularly encouraged.