



Nordic Council
of Ministers

Impact Assessment Tool

A tool for integrating climate and environment, gender equality (including accessibility), and children's rights and youth perspectives



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Denne publikation findes også som en webtilgængelig version online:
<https://pub.norden.org/nord2024-020>

Start here

This impact assessment tool is for everyone tasked with mainstreaming the horizontal perspectives – sustainable development, equality and a child rights and youth perspective – in the Nordic Council of Ministers. It helps you conduct an assessment that identifies the potential positive and negative effects of a particular *activity*. It also helps you find potential improvements for the activity in question by thinking about one or more of the three perspectives during the planning and implementation stage

Conducting an impact assessment involves reflecting on a series of questions and recording your thoughts in a form that varies slightly depending on the nature and relevance of the activity in question. All of the forms include questions on equality and accessibility, as well as the environment and climate. If the activity is relevant to children and/or young people (under 25), the form will also contain questions aimed at mainstreaming child rights and youth perspectives. For that reason, the initial questions below focus primarily on filtering for relevance to children and young people.

An *activity* consists of any type of defined task or process within your organisation – for example, networks, surveys, projects, work plans, tenders or conferences.

Conducting an impact assessment confronts some of the blind spots we all have. It is very much about being aware of *what we know* and *don't know* and identifying opportunities to learn more. For example, when considering the relevance of equality in recruitment-related activities in the healthcare sector, it may be beneficial to focus on male role models.

Remember, as employees with a diverse range of expertise, you are *not* expected to have such in-depth knowledge of the horizontal perspectives that you are able to conduct an exhaustive analysis of relevant overlapping themes on your own. In this context, the following guidance may be helpful:

1) See the form as a learning opportunity rather than a test of "right" and

"wrong"

- It is okay to skip a question if you are stuck
- The forms may seem inflexible, but remember, you can use them dynamically. For example, parts of them may serve as inspiration during the early planning stage of an activity.

2) Work together

- Gather one or more colleagues for a workshop and look at the tool/form together (perhaps using the inspiration cards available [here](#)). You can also share your completed form with one or more colleagues for their feedback.

3) Be humble and critical about what you *know*

- Be aware of the distinction between what you actually *know* and assumptions/hypotheses
- Note any questions or gaps in your knowledge

4) Seek inspiration and somebody to talk to

- Search online and in Nordic publications and seek help from experts both within and outside the organisation

5) Return to the assessment and use the results in your work

- In principle, the cyclical nature of impact assessments means it is always possible to extrapolate a little more and refine your responses as you learn. The most important thing is that you get something out of the exercise, so that you can use the results – specifically, the notes in the appendix – to make your activities more inclusive, sustainable and effective.

Read more about the tool and its structure [here](#)

Start by answering the questions below. Based on your answers, you will be steered to the form that is most relevant to the activity you wish to assess. Download the form as a Word file.

Background

ABOUT THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOL

Impact assessments: An overview

Impact assessment is a key aspect of the mainstreaming process. It consists of a systematic evaluation that highlights a specific activity's potential positive and negative effects, e.g., a project, programme, event or policy document. An impact assessment identifies blind spots, overlooked potential and unintended negative consequences of a given activity, and ensures that you have a firm grasp on all relevant considerations and potential outcomes.

An *activity* consists of any type of defined task or process within your organisation – for example, networks, surveys, projects, work plans, tenders or conferences.

An impact assessment aims to provide new insights that will form the basis for improvements to the activity in question. These insights are used to refine, adapt, implement and evaluate activities and then to make tangible improvements to decision-making processes.

By using the assessment and results as a tool, you lay the foundation for activities that, as a minimum, have a *neutral* effect on sustainable development, equality and a children's and young people's perspective –activities that do not lead to an unequal allocation or waste of resources. By integrating the results and insights into further work, the assessment can also pave the way for activities that have *positive* social effects in addition to their primary objectives. Successful mainstreaming also helps you to realise your primary objectives more effectively.

About the tool

The Nordic Council of Ministers commissioned this tailor-made impact assessment tool. It is primarily a learning tool designed to encourage reflection and dialogue. In other words, it is not about ticking boxes or showcasing your documentation skills.

It is important to be able to reflect on and answer questions about the horizontal perspectives. As such, everybody must be able to use the tool. The tool and the process work best when approached collaboratively, so the answers

are based on dialogue. It can be used by two colleagues working together or by a team i.e. sharing the document with multiple colleagues.

An impact assessment is an iterative and cyclical process. In principle, that means you always have the option of extrapolating, refining, clarifying and adjusting along the way. Each time you use the tool, you will become better at conducting impact assessments that generate outputs you will find useful in your work.

There are many types of impact assessments. Norion Consult developed this tool for the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2024. In doing so, it took inspiration from the platform for rights-based analysis related to children and young people (<https://pub.norden.org/nord2023-020/>), various Nordic and European models and approaches, and a kick-off workshop on participation, with subsequent feedback from staff from various sectors at the Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat.

To make the overall mainstreaming strategy more manageable, the tool focuses on three horizontal perspectives:

- The environment and climate
- Equality and accessibility
- Children and young people

Who is the tool for?

The tool is designed for managers, advisors, senior advisors, project managers/staff, communicators, coordinators/administrators and consultants. In principle, the person responsible for the activity, case, task, decision or project is also responsible for the impact assessment. However, depending on the scope and relevance of the different perspectives, you may wish to seek help from colleagues or consultants. We recommend you fill in the forms along with a colleague or as part of a team.

When should the tool be used?

The tool can be used to conduct impact assessments of many different processes and on various levels, e.g. when planning activities, making decisions, drafting policy documents, setting goals, budgeting, running projects, tendering and commissioning work. First and foremost, it is suitable for use during the development and planning phases, but it is also useful during implementation and evaluation. However, we recommend conducting an impact assessment before the activity goes live, so you can use the results as the basis for further work. Impact assessments can also be used to adapt and fine-tune activities and decisions continuously.

How are the results used?

You conclude the impact assessment by summarising the key insights in an appendix. This appendix can include firm conclusions, key points, concerns, gaps in the data and to-do items. Use the yellow box in the appendix to define the activity's priorities and next steps. In general, keep the text in the appendix brief (max. 1–2 pages). The appendix can be used in political decision-making processes, case presentations and meetings. The assessment and appendix provide a solid foundation for integrating the horizontal perspectives into work in defined areas, as well as tangible suggestions for next steps.

When advocating that the results of an impact assessment should be integrated into Nordic co-operation, you may wish to refer to the national objectives for the relevant horizontal perspectives and specify how Nordic co-operation helps to realise these national objectives. Doing this creates a robust argument and firm foundation for mainstreaming future initiatives and decision-making processes.

Effective use of the results of an impact assessment also requires a well-organised approach to step four of the mainstreaming work (cf. the Nordic Council of Ministers' model for mainstreaming), which is about setting goals, planning and implementation. In this context, the following guidance may be helpful:

1. Discuss with your team how to set overall and specific goals based on the results of the impact assessment.
2. Define responsibilities and choose indicators to measure progress. Consider the budget and time for the task.
3. Implement the planned initiative and allocate time and money for it.
4. Make sure follow-up procedures are in place, use indicators to assess the impact, and adjust the plan as needed.

About the structure of the tool

The impact assessment is conducted by filling out a form, which consists of a series of questions. There are six versions of the form, depending on the theme of the activity. On the tool's homepage, you are invited to answer questions about the nature and relevance of the activity for children and/or young people, after which you are steered towards the version of the form best suited to the activity in question. The initial questions focus heavily on the children's and young people's perspectives because questions related to this particular target group are included or excluded depending on relevance. In other words, the form only contains questions aimed at mainstreaming child rights and youth perspectives if the activity is relevant to children and/or young people. The point of this filtering process is that certain activities are not directly relevant to children and young people under 25, but most activities have some relevance to the other two perspectives – equality and the climate and environment. As a result, all the forms include the latter two perspectives, but they are introduced differently depending on whether the activity is highly technical or more people-oriented.

Initial filtering

1. Is the activity highly technical in nature?

- ☐ Yes, the activity focuses primarily on technology, systems or industrial conditions.
- ☐ No, the primary focus is on people, living conditions or on development aimed at a group of humans.

The point of this question is to distinguish between those who want to assess the impact of more technical activities and those who have a clear focus on people in a specific context. This filtering is necessary because it can be difficult to understand the relevance of analysing the equality implications of a predominantly technical activity, e.g. aimed at waste systems for batteries, salmon farming or forestry. Activities like these may call for a slightly different approach to assessing social consequences, including who the stakeholders are and who will be directly affected by the activity. After answering this question, you will be steered towards the version of the form most relevant to you and the activity in question.

2. Is the activity relevant to children and/or young people (0–25)?

The next filter is whether the activity is relevant to children and/or young people, and it determines whether you need to answer questions about them.

3. Are children and/or young people involved?

The final filter determines whether the form will include an "involvement supplement". If you plan to involve children and/or young people and answer "yes", the form will consist of a number of more specific questions. If you indicate that the activity is relevant to children and/or young people but then answer "no" to whether they will be involved, you will be asked why this target group is not involved.

Versions of the form

There are six different versions of the impact assessment form (KA) – KA1, KA2, KA3, etc. These consist of elements that are put together differently depending on the initial filtering/relevance screening. There are eight elements or "building blocks", as listed below. The elements marked in bold appear in all versions of the form and should always be answered by users.

- **Introduction**
- Technical_Equality_Accessibility *or* People_Equality_Accessibility
- **Climate_Environment**
- Children_Young people
 - Participation encouragement
 - Participation appendix

- **Results**

The decision tree below illustrates how you will be steered towards the most relevant version of the impact assessment form.

MAINSTREAMING IN THE NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

What?

Mainstreaming is a strategy for achieving horizontal objectives by systematically integrating perspectives that transcend sectors. The Nordic Council of Ministers has specified a number of perspectives that must be integrated into all sectors and all phases of political initiatives, activities, programmes and decision-making processes in order to achieve Vision 2030. This work is to be carried out in accordance with the "[Nordic Council of Ministers policy for mainstreaming of sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective](#)".

One of the basic principles of mainstreaming is that *you* are best placed to identify which perspectives, issues and potential are relevant in your particular field and work. The Nordic Council of Ministers' mainstreaming policy stipulates that all sectors and institutions must:

- ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to apply this policy in practice
- conduct impact assessments and formulate performance and operational objectives
- systematically integrate all three perspectives into their policy documents and tools in a way that supports their everyday operations
- deliberately and consciously promote sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective
- ensure that sufficient resources, in terms of both time and money, are made available for mainstreaming
- strive for gender equality (defined as a minimum of 40% of the underrepresented gender) on committees, steering groups and reference groups, and for representation based on in-depth consideration of other relevant diversity criteria
- comply with the document "[When involving children and young people in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers: Principles and Approaches](#)"
- when holding meetings and other events, ensure they are universally

- designed and accessible
- endeavour to make ecologically, socially and economically sustainable choices in the procurement and use of products and services.

Mainstreaming is not just a tick-box exercise. It is an in-depth process that takes time, money and an inquiring mind. Systematic mainstreaming puts us on track towards a sustainable and integrated Nordic Region.

The three horizontal perspectives

- Sustainable development including the environment and climate
- Equality
- A child rights and youth perspective

Read more about the horizontal perspectives in: "[Nordic Council of Ministers policy for mainstreaming of sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective](#)"

Why?

Mainstreaming is a method of making operations more efficient and improving the quality of work on sector-specific goals. Integrating horizontal perspectives is a systematic way of *avoiding* blind spots, overlooked potential and unintended negative consequences.

How?

Mainstreaming work must comply with the "[Nordic Council of Ministers' policy for mainstreaming sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective](#)" It is a four-step iterative process adapted to specific needs and objectives. Remember that mainstreaming is an ongoing learning process, and the various activities involved call for consistent commitment and resources.

The four steps:

1. **Develop knowledge and expertise:** Start knowledge-building by searching for data, analyses and other resources, and learn to mainstream.
2. **Conduct impact assessments:** Use the tool to analyse how your work (activities, programmes, etc.) affects the three horizontal perspectives.
3. **Set goals, plan and implement:** Formulate clear goals for your mainstreaming activities, draw up an action plan to achieve them, and

allocate the necessary resources and responsibilities.

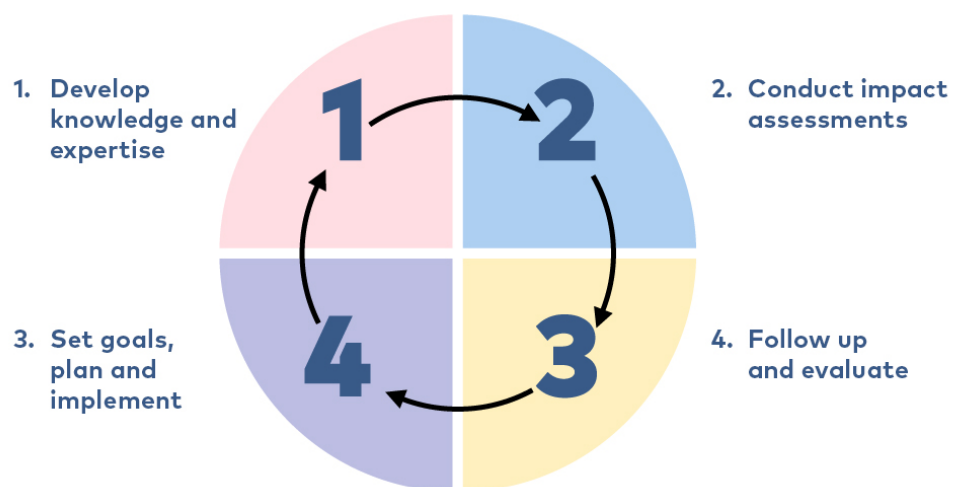


Figure 1. Model for mainstreaming the horizontal perspectives in the activities of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

All formulars and appendices

It can be difficult to understand the relevance of analysing the consequences for equality of an activity that deals with, for example, salmon farming, forestry or waste systems for batteries. Activities like these may call for a slightly different approach to assessing social consequences, including who the stakeholders are and who will be directly affected by the activity. After answering this question, you will be steered towards the version of the form most relevant to you and the activity in question.

Is the activity highly technical in nature?

Answer NO if the primary focus is on people, living conditions or on development that targets a group of humans. Answer YES if the primary focus is on technology, systems or industrial conditions.



YES

Is the activity relevant to children and/or young people (0–25)?

YES

NO

Are children and/or young people involved?

YES

NO

KA6: Introduction+ Climate_Environment+ People_Equality_Accessibility+ Results

KA5: Introduction + Climate_Environment + Technical_Equality_Accessibility + Children_Youth + Participation encouragement + Results

KA4: Introduction + Climate_Environment + People_Equality_Accessibility + Results

NO

Is the activity relevant to children and/or young people (0–25)?

YES

NO

Are children and/or young people involved?

YES

NO

KA3: Introduction + Climate_Environment + People_Equality_Accessibility + Children_Youth + Participation appendix + Results

KA2: Introduction + Climate_Environment + People_Equality_Accessibility + Children_Youth + Participation encouragement + Results

KA1: Introduction+ Climate_Environment+ People_Equality_Accessibility+ Results

Download [Impact assessment Supplement – Involving children and/or young people](#) as a word-document

Inspiration and examples

Priorities

These slides present the Nordic Council of Ministers' priorities for the horizontal perspectives. They are intended to serve as a source of inspiration when considering specific themes and the relevance of the horizontal perspectives in your sector. Use the slides as prompts to kickstart your thinking and dialogue when conducting an impact assessment for a specific activity. [Download the inspiration caards here.](#)

The priorities are based on Nordic Council of Ministers' publications, including

<https://pub.norden.org/politiknord2020-724/>

<https://pub.norden.org/nord2020-047/>

<https://pub.norden.org/politiknord2021-733/>

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The co-operation programme for the integration of refugees and immigrants is linked to the strategic priorities for a competitive and socially sustainable Nordic Region. A gender perspective and a child rights and youth perspective are integrated into this work both as independent focus areas in relation to this minority group and as overall perspectives in research reports, projects, and network collaboration.

Integration of refugees and immigrants

Nordic Council of Ministers guidance for mainstreaming sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective,

2021

About this publication

Impact Assessment Tool: integrating climate and environment, gender equality (including accessibility), and children's rights and youth perspectives in the Nordic Council of Ministers

Nord 2024:027

ISBN 978-92-893-8015-7 PDF

ISBN 978-92-893-8016-4 ONLINE

<http://dx.doi.org/10.6027/nord2024-027>

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Published: October 2024

Photo: Norden.org

Nordic co-operation

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

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

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

The Nordic Council of Ministers

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