

A joint Nordic quantitative survey of the cultural habits of children and young people? Summary

In recent years, surveys have been conducted in the Nordic countries (with the exception of the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland) in order to collect data on cultural habits and cultural activities from a representative selection of the respective population, including the segment children and young people. Most of these provide comparative data spanning a number of decades back in time. Some of the surveys focused on the broader concept of leisure habits rather than the narrower cultural habits. Thus, for Denmark, Finland and Norway there is current data on the cultural habits of children (age 9/10 and older) that is comparable in part to corresponding data going back at least 25 years. In Sweden, the equivalent repeated measurements are limited to age 16 and older. In all cases, the studies were initiated, funded and conducted by the relevant ministries/government agencies. Response rates have generally been decreasing over time, and in the latest surveys are usually slightly above or slightly below 50 percent.

The breadth of the surveys in terms of content varies between the countries, but there is a core of questions that have been about the same in all years in terms of what the respondents learned or did themselves. More detailed questions about how the respondents perform these activities are asked in some questionnaires, but not in others. The same applies to questions about any hindrances to the practice of cultural activities, for example.

With a somewhat strict requirement of statistical comparability in responses from different populations, it is not possible to compare data from the cultural habit surveys of the different countries.

Within the context of the statistical cooperation within the EU, a number of surveys were conducted on cultural access, participation in cultural activities, and obstacles to this. Not all Nordic countries were included in these EU surveys. Children and young people have been represented on only a small scale. However, there is a little comparable data regarding cultural habits for three of the Nordic countries, even though the scope of content is narrow in these measurements. There is generally little possibility of making comparisons based on EU survey results.

A general assessment is that it is difficult to bring about political prioritisation of an initiative to conduct a joint Nordic cultural habit survey in all Nordic countries. One reason for this is that a joint Nordic survey would overlap those already conducted within the countries. Theoretically, it would be possible to develop a Nordic approach that follows its own "cultural habit path", but it is difficult to formulate the content of an alternative survey such as this. Theoretically, it is also possible for the countries to negotiate and work together to decide on a shared content that would replace the national ones that currently exist. This would require the countries to break their national time series, which is considered unrealistic for multiple reasons.

Joint Nordic cultural habit surveys would provide added knowledge in the form of comparable data not previously available. Such work would then be performed in stages so that the conditions could be tested more concretely before major resources are invested.

Changes in the culture-related activities that children and young people are engaged in today bring about a risk of certain activities of interest being left out of the surveys, as they have thus far. This requires further investigation.

One difference between the cultural habit surveys in the Nordic countries relates to whether the measurement of cultural encounters and the practice of cultural activities only focuses on leisure time, or if e.g. school and recreation centre activities should also be included in the measurements. Since school is the institution that gives all children and young people opportunities for cultural encounters, the aspect of what is included in the surveys is important to incorporate into the work going forward.

Another aspect which is important to include is the trend of decreasing response rates, particularly among children and young people. While the problem can usually be avoided through use of qualitative methods, such methods do not usually provide representative data.

Based on the conclusions of the preliminary study and after examining five different alternatives for further work related to surveys of the cultural habits of children and young people in the Nordic region, Kulturanalys Norden advises against performing a joint Nordic quantitative survey of the cultural habits of children and young people. We suggest the organisation of a Nordic research seminar focusing on the cultural habits of children and young people. Prior to such a seminar, the results of the Nordic countries' national

surveys of children and young people can be compiled. The seminar should focus on common Nordic cultural-political issues, and the development of proposals for further action in the form of initiatives and additional analyses, for example in line with the alternatives contained in this report.

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