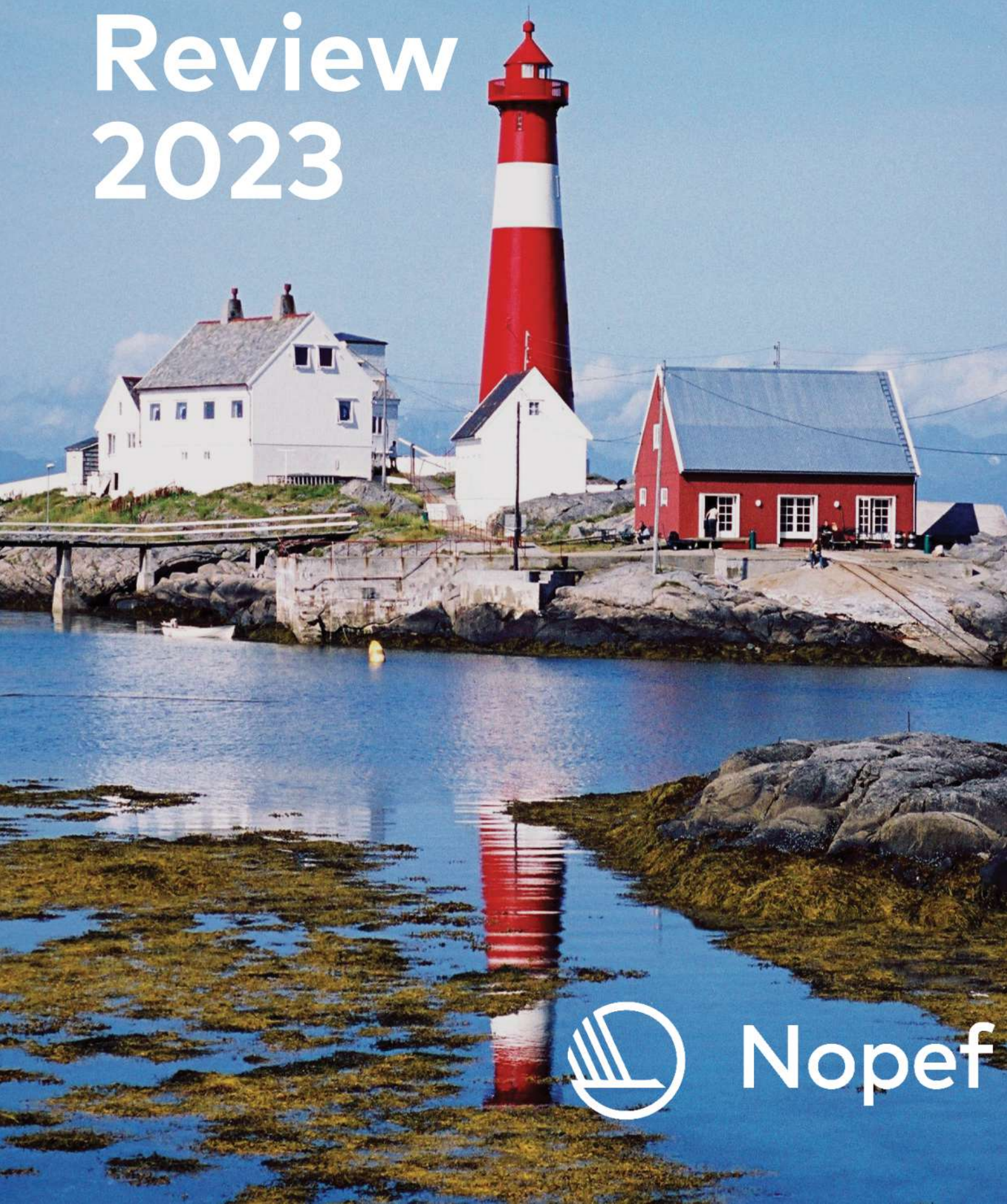


Annual Review 2023



Nopef

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Photo: Johannes Jansson

Review by the fund manager

The Nordic Project Fund (Nopef) is dedicated to driving the green transition towards a climate-neutral and sustainable society by supporting the internationalisation of Nordic green solutions. Nopef is committed to realising the ambitious goals set forth in the Nordic Vision 2030, which aims to establish the Nordic region as the most sustainable and integrated region in the world.

Nopef's mission is to strengthen the international competitiveness of Nordic SMEs by supporting the scale-up and growth of Nordic green solutions on global markets. More specifically, Nopef offers financial support to Nordic small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) for feasibility studies and similar internationalisation efforts, with a focus on green investments with potential for international scale-up. By helping Nordic SMEs to achieve international growth, Nopef also contributes to increased job creation, knowledge sharing and development of sustainable business models.

In 2023, Nopef witnessed a surge in the number of SMEs eager to expand globally as the volume of applications aligned with pre-pandemic figures. This demonstrates the determination of Nordic SMEs to seize international opportunities.

During the year, Nopef deepened its collaboration with Nordic Innovation by piloting a collaboration project. The project aims to support the objectives of the Nordic Vision concerning a green and competitive Nordic region by focusing on Nordic companies providing green and sustainable solutions to global markets. Through the project, Nopef provided financial support to eight SMEs with products related to energy efficiency and batteries, supporting their participation in Nordic delegation trips to Singapore and Tokyo. By joining forces, Nopef and Nordic Innovation aim to amplify the impact and facilitate greater access to international markets for Nordic SMEs.

Nopef receives annual budget allocations from the Nordic Council of Ministers and is administered by Nefco (Nordic Environment Finance Corporation). Nopef has during the year continued its collaboration with Nefco to facilitate further financing options for its customers. This relationship has created increased synergies with Nopef to generate positive environmental impact in alignment with the interest of the Nordic countries. Moving forward, Nopef remains dedicated in its commitment to contribute to a green, competitive, and socially sustainable Nordic region.



Photo: Jussi Ratilainen for Nefco

Mikael Reims
Vice President, Origination
Nefco



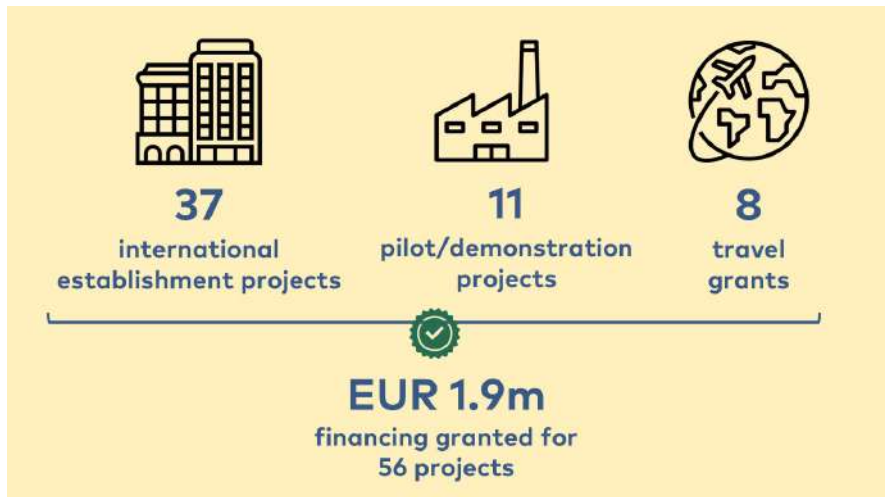
Photo: Pixabay

Key activities in 2023

Nopef granted financing
EUR 1.9 million
 to
56
 new projects

One of Nopef’s goals for 2023 was to approve financing to 35 new projects. It surpassed this goal by granting financing totalling EUR 1.9 million to 56 projects. This demonstrates the increasing demand for funding and support for internationalisation projects among Nordic SMEs when compared to the 35 projects approved in 2022, which totalled EUR 1.3 million.

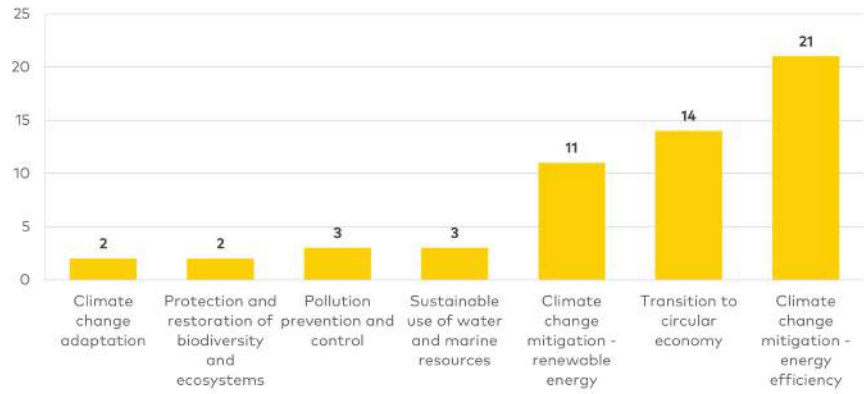
Support for feasibility studies for pilots and demonstration projects continued to see significant demand in 2023 and resulted in 11 approved projects, representing 21% of all project financing. The approved feasibility studies included solutions in energy efficiency, batteries, solar power, offshore wind, digitalisation, sustainable packaging and building materials. The approved projects also include eight travel grants provided as part of the pilot cooperation project with Nordic Innovation.



Demand for Nopef funding increased in 2023.

All approved projects have been assessed by Nefco’s environmental and sustainability experts and are expected to provide measurable environmental benefits when implemented. Of the projects approved for funding by Nopef in 2023, 21 (38%) are climate projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions through increased energy efficiency or renewable energy production. The number of projects focused on solutions for the transition to a circular economy increased during the year to 14, representing 25% of all approved projects.

Approved projects by environmental category



Case story

Kube Energy's modular renewable energy solution expands in Africa

Kube Energy is a Norwegian energy company that specialises in providing clean, renewable energy to international aid organisations working in remote and unstable areas. The environmental benefit stems from replacing diesel generators with solar plants and generating clean electricity, which is also supplied to surrounding communities.

Having previously worked with Nopef, Kube Energy approached Nopef in 2022 to help the company with an expansion to the Central African Republic (CAR). The first milestone of this international expansion was reached in 2023, with Kube Energy establishing a fully owned subsidiary in CAR and reaching an agreement with the Government of CAR over the production, distribution and sale of renewable energy. Through this project, Kube Energy expects to supply two peacekeeping missions with 6-7 MW of solar power.



Kube Energy specialises in providing clean, renewable energy to international aid organisations working in remote and unstable areas. Photo: Kube Energy

More project stories: www.nopef.com/cases



Photo: Unsplash

Nopef and the Nordic Vision 2030

Concrete actions to support a green, competitive and socially sustainable Nordic region

Nopef aims to contribute to the priorities of the Nordic Vision 2030 and to the specific goals of the business sector action plans. All projects funded by Nopef will contribute to concrete actions to realise the Nordic Vision, which aims to make the Nordics the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030.



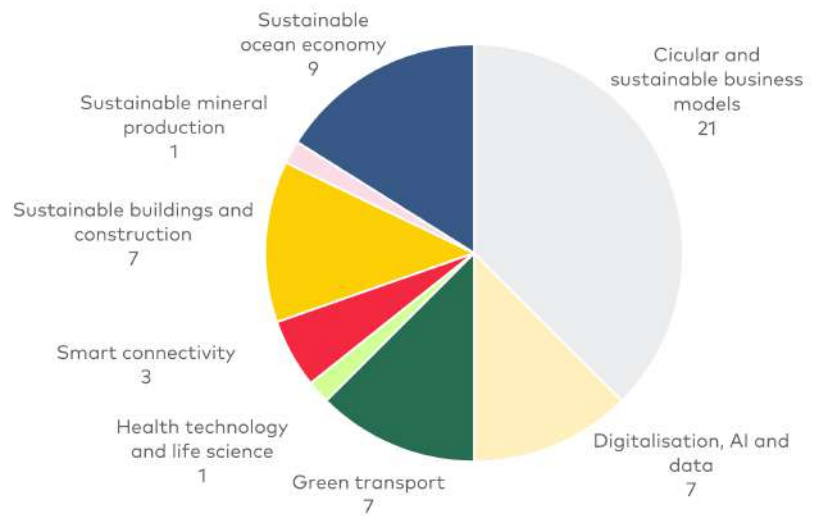
Nopef aims to contribute to the priorities of the Nordic Vision 2030 and to the specific goals of the business sector action plans.

All 56 projects approved for financing in 2023 contribute to one or more of the initiatives in the Nordic Council of Ministers' action plans for the Nordic Vision 2030. In 2023, the area of circular economy and sustainable business models continued to be the initiative in which Nopef has the largest impact, with 21 approved projects for the year.

Nopef also granted funding for projects in the areas of sustainable ocean economy (9 projects), sustainable construction and buildings (7 projects), digitalisation, AI and data (7 projects), green transport (7 projects), smart connectivity (3 projects), sustainable mineral production (1 project) and life science and health technologies (1 project).

Many projects overlap with more than one of the programme initiatives for the Nordic Vision. In these cases, the categorisation has been determined according to the area in which the clearest impacts can be identified.

Number of approved projects in 2023 by initiatives within the Nordic Council of Ministers' action plans for the Nordic Vision 2030



Case story

Manna Insect's solution produces high-protein animal feed and organic fertilisers from biowaste

Finland-based Manna Insect has created a solution for the production of high-protein animal feed, using black soldier fly larvae to simultaneously process biowaste and provide better feed for animals while also producing a fertiliser by-product. The company applied for Nopef funding to test its innovative circular solution in Kenya.

Following the Nopef-funded feasibility study and the completed pilot project in Kenya, Manna Insect has established a permanent presence and hired two employees in Kenya to meet demand. More interest has been received from around the world and the company may carry out further feasibility studies for the Indian market.



Finland-based Manna Insect creates an innovative circular solution for the production of high-protein animal feed. Photo: Manna Insect

More project stories: www.nopef.com/cases



Photo: Johannes Jansson

Completed projects in 2023

International scale-up and investments

33
projects
resulted in the establishment
of an international business
or a completed international
investment

The objective of the feasibility studies supported by Nopef is ultimately to help Nordic SMEs to establish business operations, demonstrate their solutions and invest on international growth markets. The results of completed projects are evaluated annually through a targeted customer survey.

During the year, 33 feasibility studies (target 23) resulted in the establishment of an international business or a completed investment in the project country. This corresponds to a success rate of 57% (target 50%) for projects completed in 2023.

The completed projects represented all five Nordic countries and are spread across 24 target countries, including six projects in the US, three in India and two in Canada and Kenya respectively.



During the year, 33 feasibility studies resulted in the establishment of an international business or a completed investment in the project country.



Photo: Mike Enerio

Organisational collaboration

Pilot collaboration project creates synergies within Nordic cooperation

A key priority for 2023 was to further develop Nopef's organisational collaborations, more specifically by piloting a new collaboration project with Nordic Innovation. The pilot project focused on the implementation of the International Market Entry programme for Nordic SMEs, focusing on companies providing Nordic green and sustainable solutions. The pilot cooperation project was implemented in collaboration with Nordic Innovation and Nordic Innovation Houses in Tokyo and Singapore and closely coordinated with the Nordic Trade Promotion Organisations (TPOs).

As a part of the cooperation project, Nopef and its partners invited Nordic companies in the battery value chain to join a Nordic business delegation visit to Tokyo in March 2023. The objective of the delegation was to promote and showcase the Nordics as an emerging region for the battery industry as well as present Nordic companies and solutions to the most important Japanese stakeholders and business connections.

In October 2023, Nordic companies with green and sustainable solutions in energy efficiency and built environment joined the Nordic delegation during Energy Week in Singapore. The aim was to present Nordic companies and solutions to public and private key stakeholders and enable business connections in Singapore and across Asia, highlight Nordic green innovations and connect Nordic companies with potential business opportunities in this region.

Nopef offered financial support for Nordic SMEs selected for the business delegation visits. A total of eight companies from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden received travel grants from Nopef for participation in the delegations to Tokyo and Singapore. As a result of these delegations, two of the participating SMEs have already initiated feasibility studies aimed at business establishments in these markets.

Read the event summary by Nordic Innovation House Singapore on www.nordicinnovationhouse.com/singapore



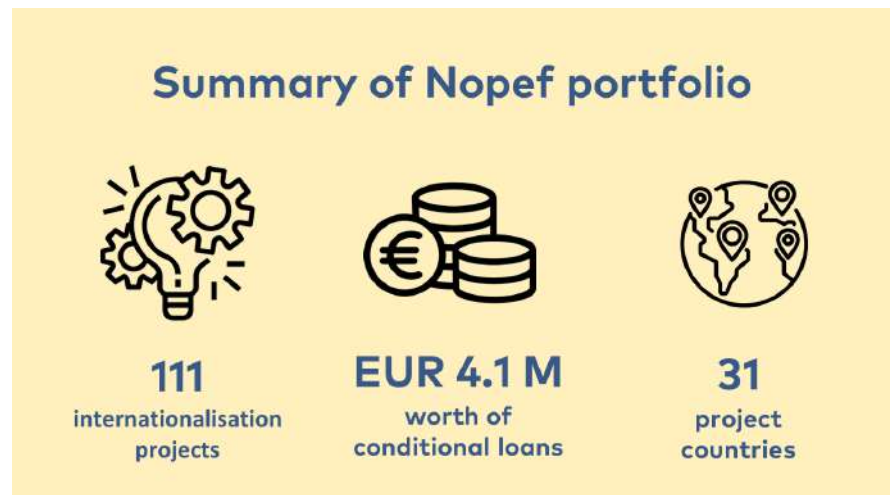
Photo: Nikolaj Bock

Project portfolio

A diverse range of projects across the globe

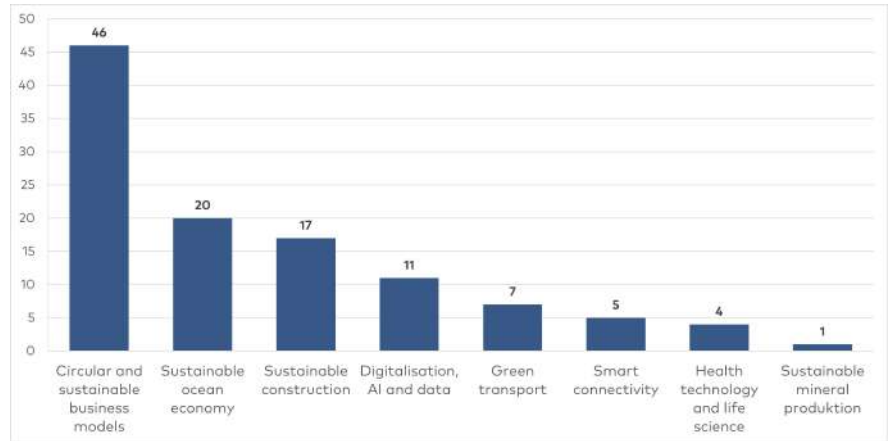
Nopef's portfolio spans
31
countries with
111
internationalisation projects

At the end of 2023, Nopef's portfolio consisted of 111 conditional loans, amounting to EUR 4.1 million. This represents a slight decrease from last year's figures of 140 conditional loans worth EUR 4.8 million, resulting from a substantial increase in the number of projects successfully completed in 2023.



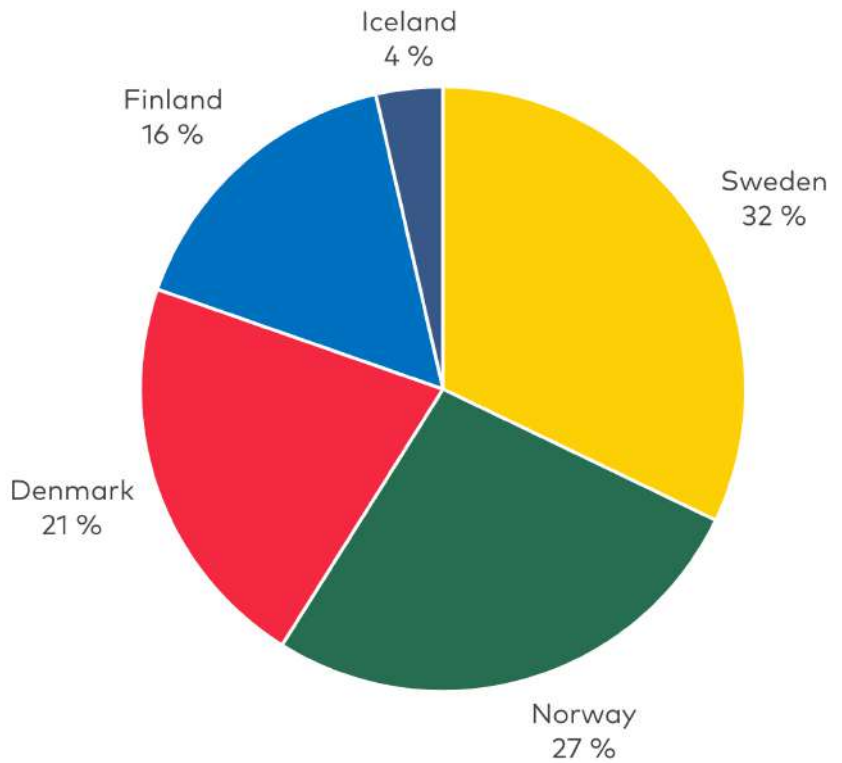
The diverse range of projects encompasses international establishment projects, as well as pilot and demonstration projects that focus on innovative solutions in key areas such as circular and sustainable business models (46 projects), sustainable ocean economy (20 projects), sustainable construction (17 projects) and digitalisation, AI and data (11 projects).

Current portfolio projects per Nordic Vision priority areas



Spanning 31 project countries, Nopef’s portfolio truly embodies its global reach. The US is the most represented target country, with 21 active projects, closely followed by India, with 18 projects. Other countries with multiple Nopef projects include China (9 projects), Indonesia (7 projects), Kenya (6 projects), the UK (6 projects) and Canada (5 projects).

Country of origin of approved Nopef projects in 2023



40%
of projects
include partners
from multiple Nordic countries

Nopef is proud to maintain a strong presence and high level of project activity in all five Nordic countries. In 2023 the distribution of projects aligns with the country of origin of the main applicant company, with Denmark accounting for 21% of projects, Finland 16%, Iceland 4%, Norway 27% and Sweden 32%. In addition, more than 40% of internationalisation projects approved in 2023 include partners from multiple Nordic countries.



Photo: Ane Cecilie Blichfeldt

Impact from Nopef projects

Financial support from Nopef drives international growth and job creation

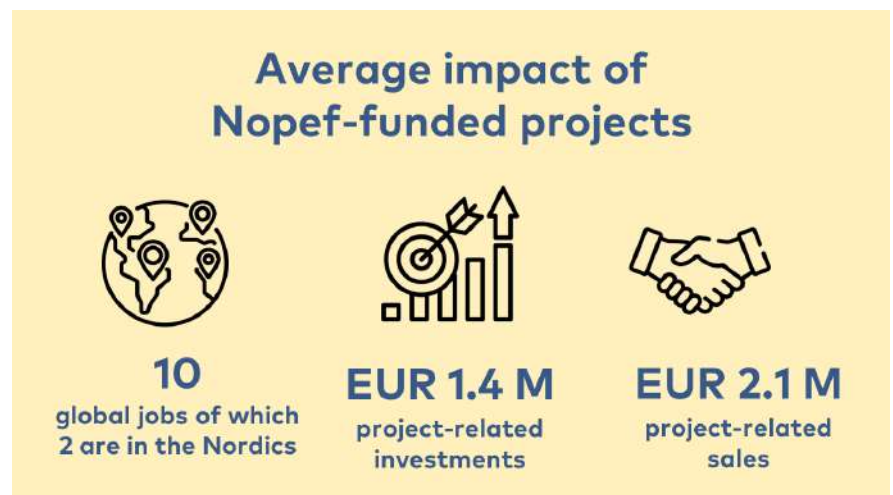
74%

of companies report that Nopef support has had a significant impact on their international competitiveness

When evaluating funding applications, significant emphasis is placed on the environmental benefits that Nopef can help to achieve. This is followed up in annual customer surveys, which have been conducted since 2014, with the aim of measuring results achieved through funded projects. The annual customer survey furthers the additionality of Nopef's financial support among companies that have received Nopef funding.

Average project impact

The 2023 survey shows that each international business established with the support of Nopef creates an average of 10 jobs globally, of which two are located in the Nordic region. According to the customer companies, projects have resulted in average project-related investments of EUR 1.4 million, as well as average project-related sales of EUR 2.1 million.



Expected impact from projects financed in 2023

Expected impact from
projects financed in 2023

242

new jobs

EUR 35 million

investment

(22 times the Nopef funding)

EUR 50 million

sales

Given the average project impact presented above, and the expected success rate of 50%, the projects financed by Nopef in 2023, excluding travel grant projects, are expected to contribute to the creation of approximately 242 new jobs, including 38 in the Nordic region, over EUR 35 million in green investments and an estimated EUR 50 million in project-related sales in the coming years.

Continued high additionality

The findings from the customer survey in 2023 strengthen the view that Nopef's internationalisation support improves opportunities for Nordic companies to scale up and grow. Results show a continued positive trend in perceived customer benefit and added value among Nordic companies that have received funding from Nopef.

The 2023 survey shows that as many as 75% of companies see Nopef's support as having had a significant or very significant impact on their decision to conduct a feasibility study into internationalisation, in line with the previous year. Amongst financed companies, 70% believe that Nopef's support had a considerable impact on the scope and quality of the feasibility study.

According to results from 2023, 74% of companies report that Nopef's support had a significant or very significant impact on their competitiveness in international markets. Of the Nordic companies that carried out an international establishment with the support of Nopef, 93% have ongoing operations in the project country three years after their establishment abroad.

Case story

DTE's pilot project in the US results in new sales and investments

The Icelandic company DTE has developed a way to substantially reduce waste during metal production, using an innovative process to analyse molten metals. DTE's solution offers automation, efficiency and speed to an extremely energy-intensive industry. Nopef provided funding to pave the way for DTE's pilot programme in the US, the results of which were beyond expectation.

DTE applied for Nopef funding for a feasibility study to work in North America with Novelis, a world leader in aluminium production. The feasibility study encouraged DTE to undertake a pilot, the result of which surpassed expectations and resulted in DTE reaching an agreement with Novelis to provide its solution to Novelis facilities globally. In addition, Novelis and the European Innovation Council Fund, and its investors Metaplanet, Chrysalix Venture Capital and Brunnur Ventures, invested USD 10 million in DTE, a direct result of Nopef funding the feasibility study in America.



DTE's solution offers automation, efficiency and speed to an extremely energy-intensive industry. Photo: DTE

More project stories: www.nopef.com/cases



Photo: Johannes Jansson

Governance

Nopef is managed by Nefco (Nordic Environment Finance Corporation) in accordance with a funds administration agreement with the Nordic Council of Ministers. A Steering Committee for the fund with members from each Nordic country is appointed by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Nopef Steering Committee Members in 2023

Denmark

Jakob Tvede

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Finland

Tiina Ingman

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment

Iceland

Ragnheiður H. Magnúsdóttir

Nordic Ignite

Norway

Geir Ove Hansen

Innovation Norway

Sweden

Carl Rosén

Ministry of Climate and Enterprise

Photo: Unsplash

About Nopef



Nopef (the Nordic Project Fund) was established by the Nordic countries in 1982 with the aim of strengthening the competitiveness of Nordic companies by providing support for feasibility studies and preparatory activities for internationalisation.

Today, Nopef finances projects that contribute to the green transition, with a particular focus on the internationalisation of Nordic SMEs that can provide environmental and climate solutions with demonstration value and potential for scale-up and growth on global markets.

Nopef is managed by Nefco and funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Since 1982, Nopef has:

- financed 3,331 projects with a total value of EUR 115 million
- supported over 1,200 international business establishments in 80 countries outside the Nordic region
- contributed to the creation of an estimated 2,500 jobs since 2014

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Cover photo: Karin Beate Nøsterud