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Benchmarking Nordic Music Export Operations

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<p>Description</p> <p>Increasing export is necessary for companies and organizations in order to make profit in more globalized business environment. The field of exporting is also ever-changing, especially regarding music exporting.</p> <p>The aim of this research project was to explore and improve the joint music export operations in the Nordics. It was assigned by Music Finland which administrates the umbrella organization for a Nordic co-operation called NOMEX. Thus, the author set to discover favorable practices and improvements in the working methods and processes of NOMEX's projects and compared these to those found in other successful Nordic export co-operation and to NOMEX's goals through benchmarking. The research was implemented by using qualitative research method. Qualitative data was received through interviewing eight professionals from Nordic music exporting organizations as well as music and culture industry. Interviews were semi-structured, and they were analyzed by focusing on deductive approach.</p> <p>Findings from interviews showed that from favorable practices, for instance joint Nordic stands at trade fairs and continuous music exporting activities, aligned with the success factors of clear vision of activities, passionate work of the ones included and removing restrictions between these countries. Additionally, suggested improvements of focusing more on Intra-Nordic markets and developing interactions between the Nordics aligned with this success criteria. However, suggested improvement on focusing on developed markets did not align with the success criterion of meeting unmet demands in emerging markets. The findings were also compared to NOMEX's goals and all of them aligned with these goals besides one suggested improvement. This one included focusing more on developed markets. Thus, this could be disregarded by NOMEX.</p>		
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Tiivistelmä <p>Viennin kasvattaminen on välttämätöntä globaaleilla ja jatkuvasti muuttuvilla markkinoilla etenkin suomalaisille musiikkialan yrityksille. Täten pohjoismaiset musiikkivientijärjestöt ovat yhdistyneet työskentelemään NOMEX organisaation alla kehittääkseen musiikkiviennin yhteistyötä.</p> <p>Työn tarkoitus oli tutkia ja kehittää pohjoismaisen musiikkiviennin yhteistyötä. Näin ollen suotuisia käytäntöjä ja parannuksia NOMEX:n työmenetelmiin etsittiin, jotta käytäntöjä näiden sekä muunlaisesta pohjoismaisesta vientiyhteistyöstä saatujen onnistumiskriteerien sekä organisaation omien tavoitteiden välillä voitaisiin verrata. Tutkimus toteutettiin käyttäen kvalitatiivista tutkimusmenetelmää. Aineisto saatiin haastatteleamalla kahdeksaa asiantuntijaa pohjoismaisista musiikkivientijärjestöistä ja musiikki- sekä kulttuuriteollisuudesta. Haastattelut toteutettiin puolikonstruktoiduilla teemahaastatteluilta, jotka analysoitiin käyttäen sisältöanalyysia.</p> <p>Tulokset osoittivat, että esimerkiksi yhteispohjoismaiset messuosastot musiikkimessuilla sekä jatkuva pohjoismaisen musiikin vientiyhteistyö, jotka olivat suotuisia käytäntöjä, tukivat onnistumiskriteerejä Pohjoismaisesta vientiyhteistyöstä, kuten selvä visio aktiviteeteista, osallistujien intohimoinen työ sekä rajoitteiden poistaminen Pohjoismaiden välillä yhteistyön sujuvoittamiseksi. Myös parannusehdotukset, kuten pohjoismaiden sisäisiin markkinoihin keskittyminen sekä pohjoismaiden vuorovaikutuksen kehittäminen tukivat näitä kriteerejä. Silti parannusehdotus keskittyä kehittyneisiin markkinoihin oli vastaan työtappaa joka keskittyi kysynnän vastaamiseen kehittyvillä markkinoilla joka oli yksi pohjoismaisista onnistumiskriteereistä. Tämä kehitysehdotus oli myös vastaan NOMEX:n tavoitteita keskittyä kehittyviin sekä suuriin musiikkimarkkinoihin. Siksi tämä kehitysehdotus suositeltiin kumoamaan, tai ehdotusta tulisi kehittää, jotta se tukisi onnistumiskriteerejä sekä NOMEX:n tavoitteita.</p>		
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1 Introduction

The Finnish export has been declining from the year 2011 and the latest balance of trade was minus 1,796 billion euros in 2014, which is, however, an improvement from this measurement in 2013 which was minus 2359 million euros (Tilastokeskus, 2014). This means that exporting has not exceeded importing in the latest years although some improvement has taken place. However, the EU sanctions against Russia have hindered this growth, since Russia is one of the most important exporting partners to Finland, and the EU sanctions have cut 31% of Finnish export to Russia by July 2015 (op. cit. 2015; Toivonen 2015). This is mainly since EU placed trade sanctions on Russia for its army's aggressive behavior on the Crimean Peninsula (Smith & Eshchenko, 2014). Furthermore, Russian's counter trade sanctions, especially on foodstuff affected the Finnish exporting since especially dairy products, are one of Finland's main exports to Russia (Elinkeinoelämän Keskusliitto, 2015). Still, music industries in Finland and the other Nordic countries have, instead, increased the value of their export in the latest years.

Music Finland, is an organization that promotes the awareness and success of Finnish music at home and abroad. They mentioned in a study that had commissioned from the Digital Media Finland on Finnish music market value and structure (Muikku, 2015) that the Finnish music export had grown by 6 percent between the years 2013-2014 with a total of 42.8 million euros in market value. Especially live music export had grown since it had doubled its value in the 21st century, which is a positive counterweight to the hindered physical records sales that have declined because of the digitalization of music.

Still, even though the Finnish music export is on the rise, it does not compare to the success of some of the other Nordic countries with, for example, Sweden having a music export market value of 133 million euros in 2012 already. Some of the other Nordic countries stayed close to the Finnish figures with Denmark scoring 35 million

euros and Norway 33 million euros with their music export income. (NOMEX, 2014a, 13.) However, this success can always be improved with, for example, co-operation. In fact, the Nordics co-operate in music exporting under the Nordic Music Exporting Programme also known as NOMEX.

NOMEX works actively to facilitate the Nordic music exporting while also working within the Nordic countries which are also known as the Intra-Nordic market. With a total number of 25 million persons and over 400 million euros generated in music sales already in 2008, while also being the world's sixth largest record music market collectively, the Nordic countries are truly a remarkable market. However, the Nordic countries offer a great deal of scope for development due to the lack of artists flow and professional industry interaction because of missing a structure in which this potential could be channeled. (Williams, 2010, 16.)

Thus, in order to facilitate growth and development for the Nordic music exporting within the Nordic countries and markets abroad, the music export offices in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden created NOMEX as a pan-Nordic platform. This platform has projects, such as JA JA JA: Club Night and Festival, Nordic Travel Pass, The Nordic Playlist and the Hokuo Music Fest in Tokyo. (NOMEX, 2015.) These projects are actively monitored and found useful for increasing the Nordic countries' music export.

Nevertheless, Music Finland is currently evaluating the outcome and improvement opportunities for these projects. They are also exploring if these programs could be done somehow better and more efficiently. Hence, this organization had the desire to compare NOMEX's projects to other Nordic co-operation projects in different business areas in order to find better working methods and frameworks with the intention of achieving best results in their co-operation.

These Nordic music exporting projects and other Nordic Co-operation projects were compared by using benchmarking. The aim of this study was to determine how to improve these projects so that they would become successful Nordic co-operation projects or to decide which of the NOMEX's projects to possibly disregard by as a result of benchmarking. This is done by first introducing the theoretical background of Nordic music exporting and benchmarking. This is then followed by presenting the methodology of the research. Finally, findings as well as discussion of results are presented.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Nordic music exporting

The effects of internationalization and globalization have made it possible for businesses to expand their markets outside their domestic countries. However, this has also brought international competition to the domestic markets, which has increased competition in home markets. (Balabanis, 2004, 353.) Therefore businesses are ever more obliged to think about participating in the global markets. One way of reaching the global markets is through exporting. As Balabanis (op. cit. pp. 353-354) mentions, this is being favored by the businesses in their foreign market penetration endeavors since it requires low commitment of resources, investments and has low a financial risk as well as a minimal effect on the ordinary operations of the firm. Other benefits that exporting brings are according to Holmvall (2011, 27-29) increased sales through increasing one's market size and a smaller dependence on one market along with minimizing fluctuations by spreading the investment risks to other countries.

Music exporting itself is composed of many parts. The classification of these may vary on a country-by-country basis. For example, Finland measures export data in the areas of copyrights, product sales and sales of services where as Sweden measures export data in the areas of copyrights, recorded music and concerts. The definitions between these parts may also vary in that Denmark is collecting data for live music, which is similar to the Swedish export data collection of concerts. (NOMEX 2014a, 3,5.) However, it is characteristic for countries to include physical sales, copyrights, live music and music related services to the mix of music exporting. It is also important to notice, that music industry has started to add synchronization to their revenue channels (Sorsa 2012, 4).

The Nordic countries include Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Denmark, Norway and the autonomous areas of Faroes Islands, Åland Islands and Greenland. All Nordic countries have an organization that supports their respective country's music exporting. These organizations are Export Music Sweden, Music Norway, Iceland Music Export, Music Export Denmark and Music Finland. (NOMEX, 2015.) What all of these countries have in common is that they focus their efforts on promoting the export of their country's music in their home country and abroad. They do this by having a grand variety of services, such as support services in marketing and promotion, financial support, education and music exporting support for the artists, musicians and music industry professionals of their country. The presentation of the music, artists and musicians is not only done outwards from the home country, since these organizations also attend international trade fairs frequently as well as have showcases in other countries. These organizations were founded by either right holding organizations or cultural ministries in order to boost and develop the exportation of their countries music. (Music Finland; Iceland Music Export.) All of these organization are also part of the Nordic Music Export Programme which is also known as NOMEX.

NOMEX is a pan-Nordic platform which is administrated through Music Finland but owned by all the music export offices in the Nordic countries. Its activities include facilitating growth and development in the Nordic music exporting actions by supporting artists and participating in media development and transnational promotion. On the whole, the NOMEX is promoting and participating in the Nordic music export co-operation while embracing the values of Nordic collaboration in order to excel within the international music industry. (NOMEX, 2015.) This organization has conducted co-operation projects and studies about music export in the Nordic scale.

2.2 Previous studies and reports on Nordic music exporting

NOMEX itself has some reports and studies about the progress and succession of their projects. Furthermore, the author summarizes the content of pre-study on the comparability of music export statistics and a report on NOMEX's 5-year-plan next.

In their pre-study of existing music export statistics NOMEX (2014a) analyzed and presented what type of figures were available at the time. The idea was to discover how comparable the music exporting data were between these countries before pursuing deeper into comparing the data. The study cleared out that the statistics of the Nordic countries music exporting were not all comparable. For example Iceland did not provide music exporting data at the time, and Denmark collected this data in a way that varied greatly from the more traditional data collection methods that Finland, Sweden and Norway presented. Furthermore, a cross-border co-operation and the establishment of best practices was suggested. (12.)

All in all, the report includes recommendation based on the research of existing data. If a common framework and cross-border co-operation for Nordic music statistics would be created it would be less resource-demanding and it would ensure that the statistics would not develop in a conflicting fashion. The reports that are produced now are not entirely comparable as many adjustments are needed to be made in order to enable an improved comparison of the statistics. The report suggested that instead of yearly publications of music statistics a more extensive study could be conducted in a 5-year-basis, which would be more cost effective and open a better chance to monitor the development of the music industry. (op. cit. pp. 18-20.) The next report is the 5-year-plan report of NOMEX's activities.

This report included the goals, succession points, benefits and progress of NOMEX's projects. Some of the benefits that have risen from these NOMEX projects are a stronger marketing profile for the Nordic countries through working together so that they are seen as a more like-mined business area. Moreover, this has helped to raise

the standard of bands and of the Nordic music industry by presenting the best quality artists through exporting. In addition, these projects have helped for the Nordic countries to be able to compete globally through shared risk and shared investment as well as fend off increasingly strong competition from, for example, UK and USA. This exporting competition can be addressed by constantly developing and spreading Nordic music abroad. (Williams, 2010, 25-26.) However, even though clear benefits have been risen from these projects, they still need to be monitored and compared to the set goals in order to measure possible improvement.

NOMEX has set clear goals and measurement systems for their 5-year-plan of Nordic music exporting programme. These goals are:

1. A more effective approach to major and emerging music markets
2. More effective presence at international conventions, trade missions and showcase events
3. Longer-term market growth.

The report even mentioned how NOMEX has envisaged to reach these goals. The first goals would be reached by building NOMEX's awareness of and interest in the Nordic music scene as well as support structures in the existing and emerging international music markets. The second goal was allowing Nordic music professionals to enjoy access to the right international business and trading networks and develop sustainable relationships through interaction with the tastemakers and decision makers within their respective fields. In addition the third goal would be achieved by ensuring that any short term gains are sustainable and repeatable through close and ongoing co-operation within the target markets. However ambitious these goals may be, NOMEX had also ensured that they are measurable. Thus, aspects that are seen not to be cost effective or which fail to produce desired results can be removed or tailored so as to perform better. However, where there are components of the project that are successful, they can be expanded or replicated. The additional way

to measure these projects is through measurement indicators such as the number and seniority of professionals who take part in and are reached by the NOMEX programme, the number of countries it reaches, the amount and quality of media coverage, feedback and customer satisfaction as well as the proportion and value of the target market share in a time period of three years or longer. (Williams, 2010, 9.) In addition, NOMEX has created three goals to for the Intra-Nordic music markets (op. cit. p. 16)

1. Live Music support
2. Media development
3. Professional interaction.

Good indicators to measure if NOMEX has reached its Intra-Nordic goals are, for example, the number of Nordic artists playing in Nordic festivals and the number of Nordic artists performing within Nordic countries. Moreover, the amount of contact between Nordic music professionals and the success in the implementation of the Nordic music chart as well as the quantity and value of media coverage in the Nordic press are redeemed as favorable indicators. Since the working plan of NOMEX was created to cover the years 2011 to 2015, these are long term goals, and it will be easier to see if the NOMEX's projects have reached their goals by analyzing the results with the measurement indicators stated before. (op. cit. p. 16.) In addition, NOMEX measures the success of their projects with an annual report.

The annual report of 2014 included, for example, information about the launching of The Nordic Playlist on the 6th of January 2014, which enjoyed success in attracting artists, industry and audiences alike in the Nordic countries as well as received recognition internationally. Overall, the traffic in the streaming services, for example Spotify, increased despite the fact that the traffic in the Nordic Playlist did not reach the desired numbers. Thus, the goals for the future of this is to increase the number of customers that engage with the Nordic Playlist in the streaming services in order

to boost the Nordic content on these platforms. (NOMEX, 2014b, 5-7.) Successes were also found in other NOMEX projects.

The Nordic Travel Pass had also gained some successes according to the latest NOMEX annual report. For example, even though the project had been running for only a year before the NOMEX annual report was published, it already made five partnerships within the travel industry with, for example, hotels and car rental firms. This did not come without its limitations of course. The project had problems with negotiations between them and the travelling industry partners when the negotiations took longer than anticipated. However, the music industry seemed really eager to establish partnerships and saw a need for guides with information on more practical issues when making a tour, such as Visa applications, VAT and withholding tax. The development and investigation for partners still continues for this project. (NOMEX, 2014b, 9-10.) Nevertheless, JA JA JA the Nordic music affair had already been implemented for five years and the results seemed promising.

JA JA JA was launched in London 2009 in order to showcase Nordic music in the UK. By 2014 JA JA JA had grown to be one of the top showcases in London and filling up the venue with intrigued audience and music industry professionals with approximately half of the audience being the latter. This success was spread to Germany as well with the JA JA JA showcase spreading to Berlin in 2014. This project has had plenty of media interest in various countries and it has backed up the wave of Nordic brand entertainment and popularity in the UK and Germany. (op. cit. pp. 12-18.) What is more, NOMEX has interest in the music market outside Europe too, and they have a special showcase dedicated to this.

Hokuo Music Fest in an annual showcase of Nordic music which had its first appearance in Tokyo, Japan. Its mission is to introduce the best Nordic music to the Japanese markets and build international music industry networks between these two markets. (NOMEX, 2015.) In the second edition of the Hokuo Music Fest a total

of 17 companies participated in the trade mission, five bands performed and four songwriters had their workshops at the showcase (op. cit. pp. 20-23). All in all, despite the projects being fairly new, it has enjoyed successes and popularity in its target groups. However, the implementations of these project have also faced some problems, and improvements can always be made so as to ensure the meeting of long-term value goals of NOMEX.

As NOMEX has increasingly exported Nordic music to the developed markets, such as the UK and Germany, it has also tried to reach the emerging markets. These have proven difficult since they have a long history of piracy, and music industries are only beginning to understand how to do business in these markets. (Williams, 2010, 11-12.) In addition, when the Nordic countries try to work alone to reach the potential that is behind these markets, they have had to face a competition with each other, and all the marketing, promotion and export activities are replicated by up to five times. Fortunately, the Nordic countries have understood the value of co-operation.

All things considered, the main goal for NOMEX is to reinforce the development of the Intra-Nordic music industry with long term goals of larger audiences listening to Nordic music. The goals also include better results for the music companies in the Nordic countries, more international performances and shows presenting Nordic artists as well as increased export income. All in all the goal is to continue the development of the Nordic music industry's ability to bring value to the Nordic and international customers. (NOMEX, 2014b, 26.)

2.3 Strategic leading of exporting and export organizations

It is clear that the Nordic countries want export music through NOMEX and their respective organizations. Hence, they have also decided on how to reach these goals in order to secure Nordic music status in the music markets as well as develop the

image of Nordic music. However, these goals also need leadership and especially export leadership in order to succeed.

The board of NOMEX is composed of executive directors and chief executive officers so that they certainly have a sense of leading and strategic leadership (NOMEX, 2015). Since NOMEX is also an organization, its management also includes aspects of organizational leading. For NOMEX, which is fundamentally a non-profit organization, the for-profit models should also be envisaged, since the organizations that NOMEX consist of work according to rather for-profit models. For instance, even when Music Finland is a non-profit organization, its objectives are largely business-oriented in order to create financial benefits for Finnish music and artists (Jukarainen, 2012, 3).

When looking at leadership especially within a cultural organizations, Holden and Hewison (2004, 5) mention that the first challenge is to understand the field that an organization operates in. For NOMEX this has been clarified so that they have different approaches to the Intra-Nordic and other abroad markets. Moreover, principles have been created on how to lead their projects on these areas. Holden and Hewison further state that the modern economic environment that might have seemed linear or even fixed before is now more fluid and changing so that it is up to the organizations to be fast in their actions and decisions based on their environment (op. cit. p. 9).

Moreover, a person that is running a cultural organization should recognize the context in which the organization is working, know his/her strengths and weaknesses, how culture contributes to the society, what cultural value the organization brings and finally what his/hers values are. In addition, this person is also supposed to have knowledge of how to manage the resources of the organization, namely, the people, money and hardware. Ultimately, what an organizational leader needs to know is how to present the vision of the organization

and how to communicate it to other members of the organization in order for it to stay relevant and keep the organization in constant learning. (op. cit. p. 24.)

NOMEX itself has two types of leading personnel. The board consists of managing directors and chief executive officers who decide on the grand guidelines of the organization since they usually know the best way to implement NOMEX's projects with the experience that they have from their own organizations. The staff, however, then secures the functionality and implementation of these projects by, for example, having an editor position for the Nordic Playlist project. (NOMEX, 2015.) Thus, these leaders have different roles and responsibilities. For example, NOMEX's staff can have more of the controller and communicator types of leaders whereas the board of NOMEX has more direction setter and inspirer types of leaders (Holden & Hevison, 2004, 27-28).

NOMEX has stated its goals in the above mentioned 5-year-plan report. These include a scope and a long-term plan with indicators of which market the business should compete in, how to perform better and different from the competitors, what resources are required to achieve this competitive advantage and in what type of environment the organization competes. This plan can be also rephrased as a strategy. Strategy planning usually begins with a strategic analysis with familiar models such as PEST or PESTEL, SWOT or Porters Five Forces analysis. This is all for analyzing the strength of an organization or business compared to its environment and competitors. (Riley, 2015.)

The stage that follows this is the strategic decision making. The timeline is also long lasting and thus it also creates opportunity costs. However, these decisions are rarely final since the analysis of the environment is made continuously, and strategic decisions are altered marginally in order to meet the new requirements. In addition, the strategic decisions may have direct effects, such as too costly methods draining the resources, which might lead to altering or even revoking of the decision.

(Fernandes, 2009, 5,7.) Lastly, the act of strategy implementation is regarded as the hardest part since there all the plan and analyses are put to test in order for the strategy to reach its goals and for the organization or business to meet the stakeholder expectations (Riley, 2015).

Strategic leadership is not usually trusted to one person or department, especially in large scale organizations, because of the different types of activities that the top level, middle level and bottom level leaders do. The bottom level leaders usually have the implementation responsibility, the mid-level leaders are organizationally oriented and usually set near- and mid-term goals. Thirdly in the top of the organization the requirements for resources are less clear and the problems are less defined, and thus they have the strategic type of leaders. (Fernandes, 2009, 28-29.)

For NOMEX this means that different levels of strategic decisions should be thought of as well as what qualities the leaders in each of these departments should possess. For example, the board of NOMEX should focus on the grand strategic goals whereas the staff of the projects should focus more on the task at hand, and on how to improvise with the decisions based on the working environments and the trends of the moment.

2.4 Example projects of Nordic co-operation

The Nordic co-operation has stretched into many industries. The author presented some of these projects while also mentioning what was successful in these projects. First example was the emergence of a new Nordic food culture.

Food and culinary specialties have been important part of a nation's culture for a long time. This is especially emphasized nowadays when certain foodstuff are protected by name to bring up their originality and place of production. For example, Feta cheese can be named with this name only if it is made in Greece (Feta, 2015).

Thus it is no wonder that New Nordic Food project was created to profile and share the Nordic food experience internationally (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2014, 4-5).

During eight years of activities the New Nordic Food had taken part in many different projects to highlight the possibilities of Nordic cuisine. These projects were, for example, promoting regional products while using them in new ways, improving the nutritional and taste status of food served in public institutions, work with Food & Children- project to increase the level of knowledge in food education and making Nordic fast food from local material in their Street Food- project. The success factors in these projects had been, for example, that the steering groups entrusted the working groups and project managers to perceive their respective assignments individually in order to boost creativity and inspiration. (op. cit. pp. 5-9.) Additionally, it was emphasized the success of the New Nordic Food programme rested on many shoulders. The fact that it raised as a programme in Council of Ministers was the result of geographical pinpoint, clear vision of activities, outstanding Nordic co-operation as well as the passionate work of the ones included. (op. cit. p. 10.) The way that this project presented itself to the public is also one of the success factors and why it gained international press and media attention through communication via active website and strong social media presence. (op. cit. pp. 10-16.) The second example told about meeting the unmet demand in emerging markets.

Nordic countries are constantly observing the economy for new opportunities, warning signs and successes that could be learnt from or replicated. Thus it is no wonder that more than 300 000 jobs were linked to emerging markets in 2014 while traditional markets were having hard times with financial crisis, increasing debt, rising unemployment and low productivity growth. (Nordic Innovation, 2014, 7.) The emerging markets are considered the countries that are expanding rapidly and making unforeseen growth from being developing markets such as Brazil, India and China (TemaNord 2014, 18). This report on unmet demands in emerging markets stated, that the massive growth and growth potential imply, that these markets

might shape the economic, social and political development globally in the coming years. The Nordic music exporting projects have been however rather focused in the developed music markets of North-America, United Kingdom and Germany but with flagship artists and bands performing in some emerging markets. (Nordic Innovation, 2014, 7.) However, a clear data of strongholds in abroad markets in music related products or services had not been mapped on a Nordic scale. Furthermore, the accomplishments that this research brought could be imported into the Nordic music exporting activities as well. For example, existing Nordic strongholds positions could be identified, international trade patterns could be acknowledged and that as emerging markets are growing, the global megatrends that shape the market conditions for Nordic companies could be analyzed. Also, the act of innovation, designing products and services to meet the unmet demands of the emerging markets was encouraged. (op. cit. p. 7.) The third example told about Nordic innovation co-operation event between perceived competitors.

The Nordic Independent Living Challenge was a project formed by the Nordic council in order to find innovative solution to the problem that the Nordic welfare model will face with the growing numbers of people aging. This required for the Nordic municipalities to find innovative solutions and technologies on how elderly and disabled people could live independently the best way since the amount of personal home caretakers was scarce. Thus, 130 people qualified and 25 teams kickstarted business development stage with a workshop in Oslo on august 2015. (Realchallenge, 2015.) The favorable working methods that this project brought were that there was a chance of bringing people from many regions together in order to solve an acute problem in a specific field. Moreover, the careful selection of industry professionals or potential innovators with different and even competing companies created a positive environment to see competitors as resources and working together as region to find a solution to solve a common problem. As a whole, the event provided companies an opportunity to match with each other and ask questions from the decision makers and end users of the field in order to develop their projects. (Nordic

Innovation, 2015.) The fourth example told about recognizing and appreciating the Nordic models of working.

The Nordic countries do not always need to seek improvement models from abroad. Nordic countries themselves have a lot to offer as innovation and technology rich countries. For example, Fjällhed states that even though the Nordic countries are presented as like-minded region with plenty of successful co-operation, it is the special differences within the Nordic countries that really make them unique. As stated by Fjällhed it is internationally recognized that the Nordic countries have a high standard in income, high level of education, freedom of press and equality that other countries have tried to learn from. (2015, 11.)

Additionally, the Nordic countries come together on a political level rather often in order to make lasting decisions and implementation plans that results in concrete co-operation and not only in discussions. For example, the Nordic prime ministers met on the summer of 2015 to discuss how to make Nordic region into a leader of ecological economy. Numerous initiatives included, for example, improving education and research, ecodesign, better waste management and ecological investments. All these initiatives were meant to solve the vital environmental and climate challenges as well as help to boost the Nordic countries' market position. Therefore, it was recognized that co-operation and investing in environmental friendly initiatives will be helpful for all the parties involved. The Nordic countries also saw this as an opportunity to grow their economy. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015, 3.)

All in all, bringing out the successful working methods and processes increased the openness and co-operation between the Nordic countries as well as with abroad countries and regions. Additionally, working in a co-operative way could give a positive market image of the Nordic countries and strengthen the Nordic brand even more. Furthermore, the sharing of successful working methods in benchmarking

channels could increase the co-operation between Nordics and other abroad countries. This could also facilitate learning best working methods and processes from countries outside of the Nordic region. However, even when there were notifiable benefits to Nordic co-operation projects and in NOMEX's own projects there is always room for improvement. This could be done by comparing NOMEX's processes to other successful co-operations processes in the Nordic countries through benchmarking.

2.5 Explaining benchmarking

According to Patterson, Keppeler and Mapson (1995) benchmarking originates from land surveyors term in a setting where benchmark was a unique mark made on a rock, building or on a wall and it was used as a reference point determining the position or altitude in landscape surveys and tidal observation. Nowadays, a benchmark is a detection point to make measurements from. Hence it is a standard against which other activities, companies and virtually anything can be compared to. (4.)

Benchmarking maybe be desired by different entities for many purposes. Patterson et al. (1995) state, that benchmarking is taken upon in order to find the favorable organizational practices. Furthermore, it can be used on a person, a unit or a manager or even inside a company to where these entities operate in order to compare their activities to best practices. Benchmarking is also possible by comparing to outside entities. Essentially, the aim behind benchmarking is to determine what can be done better and how can the value of product, service or experience be increased. (5.) Also, as Tuominen, Niva and Malmberg (2012) mention, the ground for benchmarking is in self-assessment. Moreover, they also mention that this process supports a company's, unit's or a persons' need and preparedness for development by mapping the needs of developing in a systematic manner. (7.) Besides, companies and organizations need to develop their business ideas

continuously in order to stay competitive and learn from their business environment. Companies' development is ultimately learning from what is important and what is favorable. This learning is not only generated from experiences inside the company or an organization, but also from other people's experiences. (op. cit. 10-11.) Patterson et al. (1995) also agree on this since they add that learning and sharing knowledge is essential in benchmarking (4).

What drives companies and other entities to benchmarking can happen for various reasons. Patterson et al. (1995, 4,7) think that this can commonly happen to find favorable practices to keep up with world-class competition as well as it is an easy process that any organization, unit or individual can learn and implement. In addition, Patterson et al. (1995, 8) add that benchmarking can help companies to focus on significant improvements rather than incremental improvements as well as providing a measurement system that can help companies to comprehend what mark to measure their own processes to.

Moreover, benchmarking can help companies to meet customer requirements through examining best practices that are also favored by the customer and adapting industry best-practices in a company after comparison. In addition, it can help companies in analyzing fitting practices of industry leaders and becoming more competitive by realizing and minimizing benchmarking gap to the industry leader. (Patterson et al. 1995, 19-22.) Additionally, Tuominen et al. (2012, 8) mention that self-assessment through benchmarking can help companies and organizations discover what the personnel and customers think about the necessity for change, identify the topics that are deemed vital and to perceive what the company excels in and what is needed to be improved.

2.6 Benchmarking examples

Benchmarking is a widely used developing method in various industries. For instance, benchmarking was used in higher education institutions to increase effectiveness in their management and to have a standpoint against the global competition and rising challenges of the education field. This was done by a member of Bialystok University of Technology in Poland in order to find a proper tool from benchmarking to assess institution's competitive position and learn from the best in order to improve.

Benchmarking models were found from higher education institutions in Great Britain, Germany, USA and Australia since these countries could be seen as leaders of the field. The benchmarking was deemed useful to see in what position the institution was to others but did not show how to implement the concrete improvements. Still, it was up to the institution self to consider the improvement needs. (Kuźmicz, 2015, 1-15.)

Another research was made to reach the standards of excellence for an intensive care unit. The benchmarking process was described as process to determine the gap of where a company or an organization is and where would it actually like to be. Numerous of benchmarking projects had been made within other areas of the health industry such as health care delivery and patient outcomes. Hence this was desired to be brought to intensive care unit as well. The rate of tracheal tube displacements within their unit was set as a benchmarking target and the hospital did procedures to stay under the target of tracheal tube displacements <1% per patient and at <0.5% per tracheal tube day over a 10-year period. In order to stay at these numbers it was ideal to recognize the success factors which in this case were, for example, developed guidelines to manage pain and communication between all the health care workers as well as between patients and their health care providers. This internal benchmarking was ultimately a success since these rates were kept sustained during 10-year period. (Mathai, 2014, 265-266.)

Moreover, a third example of benchmarking included how benchmarking itself was evolving to meet the modern requirements. In a research to find a model for Big Data processing, many faculty members from five different universities were looking for a way to process the data that is acquired from the new systems of wireless sensor networks also known as Internet of Things and cloud computing. These faculty member were looking to do this with more general algorithms and applications. It was recognized that when control flow systems were compared to data flow systems they showed considerable aspects of speedup, space savings and power reductions regarding the implementations of the same in control flow computers. It was also mentioned that due to the Big Data phenomenon the computers should not be benchmarked anymore by how many programs it can execute in agreed amount of time but instead how much data it could process in the same amount of time. The conclusions were that programs do not control the flow of data with the Big Data phenomenon but instead the flow of data defines the structure of the program. (Sun, 2015.)

There were many examples of benchmarking to be found. NOMEX could in its part learn benchmark implementing, what is it and how it could apply them as an organization from these examples. However, it is recommended for them to also search for more concrete examples of benchmarking. When this phase is thought trough, can benchmarking process continue to planning the implementation of it.

2.7 Implementing benchmarking

To start benchmarking Patterson et al. (1995) state that first matter which a company should attend to is to define it benchmarking objectives. This can be achieved by thinking why have they chosen to begin benchmarking, what are the processes that are desired to be improved and to what extent they want to benchmark. Furthermore they add that companies tend to fall to the common trap of thinking that their only objective is to make money. Although it is true, that

increasing stakeholder equity is important, it serves the company more in the long run to find objectives that in the end serve their customers and is of value to them. (9.) These activities could then be practiced by NOMEX to begin benchmarking on their projects.

What is also needed to be thought of before starting benchmarking is to identify the benchmarking partners. Benchmarking partners can be companies, individuals units or any other countermeasures that benchmarking is done against. Tuominen et al. (2012, 15-17) suggest that benchmarking partners can be found internally, within the competitors, within the industry and globally. The benchmarking partners can also certainly be made in partnership so that companies exchange best practices between each other for the development possibilities for each party involved. However, benchmarking partners can also be searched through finding an entity that is best in the matter that is benchmarked and learning from their processes and work methods. However, when searching for benchmarking partner it is good to understand the ethical principles of benchmarking.

What is important to know with benchmarking is that it should not be the same as repeating or copying. Besides, just plain copying does not usually work as expected anyway, since all the individuals and especially companies are different. So what might work for a one company does not always work for another company because of the differences in resources, competences and timing. Furthermore, straight-out copying is illegal especially if it is done under the same trademark or design while claiming that it is original (stat. 22.5.2015/607).

Benchmarking is then in best case scenario mutually agreed and confidential exchange of information between two or more exchange partners. The trust and effectiveness of the change of information works best if all the parties included are in the same level of expectations concerning implementation of benchmarking. Favorable business practices also include that companies that takes part in benchmarking should not release or share any information that is protected by

confidentiality agreements. Additionally, as a good will gesture, the information that a company gives should be of same quality as it is itself receiving from benchmarking partners and it should share information that is believed to be useful to other benchmarking partners. In addition, the information that is gained through benchmarking should be used for learning and development use only and not, for example, marketing or sale purposes. (Tuominen et al. 2012, 105-107.) In addition it is important to notice that benchmarking can happen in various forms.

There are various ways of doing benchmarking. These vary depending on the benchmarking objective and the amount of resources used. The reach of benchmarking also categorizes some benchmarking forms. Patterson et al. (1995) represent six ways of doing this:

1. Internal benchmarking
2. Competitive benchmarking
3. Collaborative benchmarking
4. Shadow benchmarking
5. Functional benchmarking
6. World-class benchmarking.

These benchmarking ways vary from each other so that from internal benchmarking to world-class benchmarking the time and resources used grow progressively the further down the earlier mentioned list the benchmarking ways selection goes. However, the risk to compromise resources grow as do the possible benefits gained for benchmarking way the further down the list the selection goes. (31-37.)

These benchmarking ways have some unique practices to them as well. Internal benchmarking is the easiest cheapest way of doing benchmarking (op. cit. p. 31). In addition, when doing benchmarking internally the assessments inside a company are quite easy to establish since the information is already there and it is reliable

(Tuominen et al. 2012, 16). The second benchmarking way of competitive benchmarking can be the hardest to implement since information is usually hard to be gained from perceived competitors and they might give the benchmarking entity false data to mislead their practices. In the third way of collaborative benchmarking a company usually joins to information sharing from consortium of companies. The fourth way of benchmarking includes implementing benchmarking to be done rather secretly since the benchmarking partner should not be able to know that they are being benchmarked and this is usually by done benchmarking similar processes. (Patterson et al. 1995, 31-35.) Fifth type of benchmarking is comparing company's processes with similar but not identical processes in the same industry. This usually happens by comparing to industry leaders and it is called functional benchmarking or as Tuominen et al. (2012, 17) name it, industry benchmarking. Lastly, the world-class benchmarking includes activities or processes being compared to outside the original industry into world-class organizations and companies. (op. cit. p. 37). Tuominen et al. (2012, 17) call this type of benchmarking generic benchmarking and add that with this way, a company can learn to implement their affairs differently while avoiding what everybody else is already doing.

Tuominen et al. (2012) presents also four types of benchmarking which are rather similar to the six earlier mentioned types. However, these types focus more on what is being benchmarked. Thus it is important to also think also what is being benchmarked and what needs to be developed for a company. It can be, for example, comparing strategic decisions, where a company benchmarks its decisions to the ones of the benchmarking partners and learns the best course of actions that way. It can also happen as product benchmarking where company compares its products qualities and value and learns best practices from benchmarking partners' products or by comparing to outside the industry. Additionally, when benchmarking processes it is important to think that they are usually build of many stages. Benchmarking should then focus on the whole process since applying benchmarking into individual tasks or functions is bound to bring only minor achievements. Finally,

benchmarking can be focused on competences. This means that even though some processes may be identical, for example delivery, it might be the people working with the delivery and how they implement it that makes a difference in efficiency and creates better profits for a company. (12-15.)

Some styles of benchmarking might fit some companies better than others. It is recommended, especially for a starting company to do internal benchmarking first to understand what to benchmark and to receive a better insight of their own company. Furthermore, before starting with benchmarking it is important to consider that completing it might take a long time and it requires resources depending on the broadness that a company does the benchmarking. Benchmarking is also best implemented if considered a continuous process. (Patterson et al. 1995, 49.)

In addition, Patterson et al. (1995) recommend that benchmarking should have absolute and total leadership commitment for them to be able to actively participate in it and provide needed resources. In addition, it is recommended to be open to change and new ideas for change to be able to happen and truly knowing a company's operations so that comparing learned from benchmarking can truly be adapted. (50.) However, these types of benchmarking are not the only ones presented in the literature and there can be variations and different levels of focus into the benchmarking objectives and partners. Moreover, even though these ways and types of benchmarking would be followed to the point it might not guarantee success. The factors that might effect this are time, human capital and other vital resources. In addition, operating parties might not be necessary willing or ready to take on the process of benchmarking in a fear of failure or losing resources. As Patterson et al. (1995, 55) mention not even the best step-by-step procedure will ensure benchmarking success but the practical models can help companies achieve that success. What is also needed to be thought of is that not every benchmarking study is bound to result in change or desired results. It might be that the necessary

changes are too costly or just do not work for the party in question and thusly cannot be implemented (op. cit. p. 61).

3 Methodology

This chapter includes detailed description of the planning and implementation phases of the research design, data collection and analysis methods. The data collection as well as data analysis methods are described in detail and the practical methods and actions written as accurately as possible in order for the reader to understand the research process.

3.1 Research problem and research questions

The aim of this study was to discover how to improve NOMEX's projects or to establish what processes and working methods to enforce, possibly disregard or improve by benchmarking these projects against successful Nordic co-operation projects. Thus, the author's objective was to find the processes and work methods that needed improvements as well as those that were favorable and need to be focused on. This was also the research problem that the assigning organization proposed. With the purpose of achieving the goal three research questions were made:

1. What are the best practices and processes in Nordic music export?
2. What practices and processes need improving in Nordic music export?
3. Are the country-by-country practices and working methods in favor of the strategic capability and leading of NOMEX and its projects?

Since the research questions cannot be answered exactly or numerically, a qualitative research method was chosen. In addition, the lack of previous research on benchmarking Nordic exporting programs drove to the selection of this type of research. Furthermore, general concepts and overall data were sought after in order to answer the research questions especially since the phenomenon that was researched is multinational.

When conducting research on a phenomenon or an aspect that has an effect on the social life of people, we are dealing with a form of social research. This type of research is in its simplest form knowledge production that involves the review of empirical evidence that has a relation to the social context. (Ten Have, 2004, 1.) As Ten Have (2004, 3-4) states, there are different research types in social research: qualitative, comparative and quantitative. A qualitative research method is usually chosen when the cases or examples are relatively small and they are examined intensively in order to clarify theoretical concepts and empirical categories in them (op. cit. p. 4).

Qualitative research methods differs from quantitative method in such a way that in quantitative research there are usually large- data sets but a relatively small number of features or differences. Thus, is it easier to establish general patterns in the data. However, the criteria for a qualitative research method are that events, actions and expressions are not taken as self-evident. Instead it is deemed that they require contextual interpretation as well as that a possible researched phenomenon is not at the moment countable for practical or theoretical reasons. This seemed to be the case with the present research topic and therefore a qualitative research method was chosen. Moreover, some qualitative studies prefer a more holistic and humanistic research strategy as to contrary to a more scientific and specific strategy that is characteristics of a quantitative approach. (op. cit. p. 4.)

Additional differences that quantitative and qualitative research methods have are according to Ten Have (2004) that quantitative research' results can be summarized into numbers as well as arranged into tables and figures, while this characteristic is absent or at least not dominant in qualitative research. He also adds that qualitative research, instead, usually requires extensive verbal expressions, which are expected to be the main data source for the author. He also remarks that a crucial characteristic of qualitative research is working on the research materials in order to

discover, for instance, hidden meanings, non-obvious features, multiple interpretations and implied connotations. Lastly, he summarizes that quantitative research is focused on summary characterizations and statistical explanations, while qualitative research uses complex descriptions and tries to clarify webs of meaning. (4-5.)

The author was certain that the data collection would not give one right answer to the research questions and that the data analysis would have to take into account the variables of context, applications devised on a country-by-country basis as well as the meanings of the verbal expressions. The author wished to stay open-minded and explorative in the data collection phase so as to respect the qualitative research method chosen, and thus interviews were chosen as the data collection method.

3.2 Interviews as data collection method

Interviewing was chosen as the data collection method because of the possibility to obtain holistic data that is required with the aim of answering the inexact research questions. Additionally, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, 318) state that interviews can help an interviewer to acquire valid and reliable data that are relevant to the research questions and objectives.

There are many types of interviews which vary on the formality and structure of the interview. Saunders et al. (2009, 320) suggest three types of interviews based on this criterion: structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured or in-depth interviews. From these interview types the semi-structured interview method was chosen by the author. This meant preparing the questions beforehand while deciding the final form of questions as well as ask possible follow-up questions during the interview. Saunders et al. (2009, 320) mention that with this interview type the questions may vary depending on the flow of the conversation. This interview type also gave the participants some time to prepare for the interview

beforehand. It was, however, communicated to the participants that the questions would be preliminary and that they might be altered slightly closer to and during the interview. Saunders et al. (2009) also add that semi-structured interviews gives the interviewer a change to probe the answers from the participants so as to let the participants explain their answers and build on them, which would lead to obtaining more exact data. In addition, data collection by interviewing lets the author hear the interviewees think out loud, which can lead to obtaining rich and detailed data of aspects not thought about before the interview. (op. cit. 324.) However, this requires the attention of the interviewer to be on questions that will impact on the data collected. This means asking open-ended questions while avoiding questions that have a narrow range of openness as, for example, questions that can be answered with just saying yes or no.

Saunders et al. (2009) also add that when comparing interviewing to other data collection methods, the participants might be more motivated and keen to answer interviews, since it includes a personal contact and thus a certain level of trust and the opportunity to ensure that the participants know what the answers are being used for. Questionnaires, however, might make the participants feel reluctant to give sensitive and confidential information to a person whom have never met or talked with before. Moreover, they can feel unsure what the data is used for. (324-325.) The author also deemed questionnaires to be ineffective in the earlier studies that he had conducted. It is the author's experience that questionnaires hardly ever receive sufficient number of answers from a target group. Furthermore, the questions asked in interviews and the follow-up questions that might also be a part of the interview cannot be easily answered exactly or in a numerous ways. Furthermore, the author was looking for holistic answers, and all these cumulated factors drove the data collection choice to be interviews.

3.3 Interview design

The eight persons selected for the interviews were Nordic music business and music export professionals. This was due to the topic being about Nordic countries' music export of which these persons had the knowledge and expertise to talk about. These persons could as well suggest improvements to the export practices and processes. Additionally, many of these persons were in chief director positions in their respective countries' music exporting organizations as well as on the board of NOMEX, which partly ensured the validity of the answers. These persons were Sami Häikiö, the Head of International Operations in Music Finland; Jesper Thorsson, a Managing Director in Export Music Sweden; Sigtryggur Baldursson, Managing Director in Iceland Music Export; Pål Dimmen, the Communication Manager in Music Norway; Anders Meisner, a Project Director in Music Denmark; Eline Sigfusson, a Senior Advisor in the Nordic Culture Fund; Tomas Jernberg, a Director of International Exploitation in Warner Music Sweden and Zachris Sundell, a Promoter in Live Nation Finland.

The questions that were posed to the participants were made with the aim of finding out the processes and work methods that needed improving as well as those that were favorable and needed to be focused on in the export of music in the Nordic scale. At least one participant from each Nordic country was desired in the search of participants in order to obtain a holistic idea of the solutions and opinions regarding music export in the whole Nordic area. The questions were also formed according to the assignor's wishes while also adding additional questions dealing with issues about which the assignor wanted information. The questions (APPENDIX 1 The interviews questions) were tested before the interview implementations in co-operation with the assignor. However, some of the questions were modified during the interview so as to better fit the music and Nordic business environment professionals. An example of this was asking Eline Sigfusson which goals of the Nordic Culture Funds supported culture exports instead of asking what their goals were for with supporting music export.

The interview times were agreed beforehand by sending emails to the participants and agreeing on a separate time according to each participant's wishes between the 2nd and 13th of November 2015. The interviews were conducted by using Skype, a voice- and video chat program, except those with the participants Meisner, Thorsson and Häikiö who wished to answer the questions in writing first. Moreover, if something was left unclear, the author could contact these participants later by telephone. All the conversations were recorded and the language used with the Norwegian, Danish and Icelandic participants was English in order for the participants and author to understand each other. With the Finnish and Swedish participants the language used was the participants' native language since the author's native language is Finnish and he knows the Swedish language sufficiently well to make the interview in Swedish. The choice of using native languages guaranteed the idea flow and open answers to the questions. The answering might not have been at its best level with the use of English with these participants, even though, the level of the English language of the participants was expected to be excellent.

3.4 Data analysis

Carefully looking into data analysis options is vital since there are many options depending on the type and purpose of the collected data. Moreover, as Saunders et al. (2009, 414) state, data in its raw form before being processed or analyzed gives little meaning to most people, and it therefore needs to be analyzed so as to turn data into information.

The data collection method of semi-structured interviews gave the author qualitative data, and the analysis method was chosen accordingly. In the case of qualitative data, the aim is to develop a theory and understand the meanings from the complex data that is gained from interviews. The procedures that can help with the data analysis are composed of both deductive and inductive approaches and processes.

These begin from the simple categorization of responses and form into identifying relationships between the response categories that are used. (op. cit. p. 480.)

Saunders et al. (2009, 481) add that due to the non-standardized and complex nature of qualitative data, it usually requires to be summarized, grouped and restructured as a narrative to support meaningful analysis. Thus, the author summarized the answers and grouped them under similar answers. Saunders et al. (2009) also add that data collection and data analysis are processes that interrelate and interact with each other to a great extent. This happens because the analysis usually occurs during the data collection as well as after it. They also mention that with interviews at least a preliminary data analysis is recommended to be done after each interview because it helps the author to shape the direction of future data collections as well as helps the start of building a theoretical framework. (op. cit. 488-489.)

When the data was collected it was looked at deductively based on the theory that was illustrated in the theoretical background. The author tried to find results that supported the theory and thus revealed solutions to the research problems and answered the research questions. However, Saunders et al. (2009) suggest using both deductive and inductive approaches to analyze the data. This is because they think this might give the author better and more holistic results since the qualitative data gained from the interviews might not have simple truths or exact answers. Instead, the probable answers are raised because there is not absolute proof of a correct answer. (op. cit. 489-450.) Therefore, the author tried to look at the data first with a deductive approach based on the knowledge gained from the theoretical background. However, if absolute proof could be not found, the author adopted the inductive approach as well in order to identify the probable answer according to the research questions.

During the data collection the data was summarized after the interviews with self-memos in order to help the process of categorizing and unitizing of data and thus make the analysis process easier and more structured (op. cit. pp. 491-493).

Additionally, when analyzing the data a pattern matching method can be used to reflect the finding against the theoretical framework. Alternatively, explanation building can be used, so as to find and redefine the theory while going through the data (op. cit. pp. 500-501). The author believed that the most holistic findings would be presented by using both of these methods in accordance with the data collected while working with a deductive approach. If the author decided to use the inductive approach, the data analysis methods used was analytic induction in order to explain a phenomenon by using example cases or a narrative analysis as a complementary way of telling about the data in writing and comparing the findings in the interviews (op. cit. pp. 508,514). The data that was collected from the interviews was made available to analysis by using transcriptions.

The author decided to make basic level of transcriptions of the contents of the interviews, which means reconstructing the spoken words into writing excluding the parts that were not important to the data analysis. However, it is important to notice that the transcriptions have to be sufficiently accurate for the purpose of data analysis while keeping resources such as time in mind (Yhteiskuntatieteellinen Tietoarkisto, 2015). Transcribing the interviews also helps with unitizing the data into chunks and bits of texts, for example, paragraphs and phrases that fit a certain category of data (Saunders et al. 2009, 493).

The hypothesis of the author was that favorable processes and working methods as well as improvement suggestions could be found in the data. Furthermore, the author believed that aspects and processes that could be benchmarked could be found as well as aspects and processes that these could be benchmarked against. In addition, it was expected that there would be similarities as well as differences in the way in which the Nordic music exporting organizations work in their respective countries as well as best practices that could have resulted in Nordic countries learning from each other.

4 Findings

The findings from the interviews are presented in a way that that similar answers are grouped under the following subheadings. The categorization the of responses was made in order to highlight similar answers and as Saunders et al. (op. cit. p. 481) add that due to the non-standardized and complex nature of qualitative data it is usually required to be summarized, grouped and restructured as a narrative to support meaningful analysis. Thus, the author summarized the answers gained to the interview questions and grouped them under similar answers.

4.1 The significance of export activities for the participants

When the participants were asked the first interview question about what type of music exporting their respective organization or company did, it seemed that they had different views on do they actually participated in exporting themselves or if they were assisting it. This meant that the music companies saw themselves participating in exporting, whereas music export organizations identified themselves as music export aiders with at least Meisner and Thorsson having this opinion. They also did not identify themselves as for-profit organizations but more as enablers and helpers of music exportation for companies, artists and producers.

The size of the organizations varied as well. For example, Sweden, Iceland and Denmark have only a few persons working full time in the organizations. The smaller organizations regarded their position more as helper and enablers rather than participants in music export activities, as Baldursson, Thorsson and Meisner mentioned. These participants also mentioned that they participated in giving information and education about the music industry in their home countries as well as in promotion and showcasing towards and in foreign countries. Baldursson also added that Iceland specializes additionally in catering the music that is on demand in Iceland, since the demand of a certain type of music in Iceland, such as Indie and

Electronica, makes those styles more appealing to their organizations. He added that they also had minor activities in Jazz and contemporary music styles. With these actions Baldursson wished to achieve the goal of Iceland Music Export which is to help the music export sector export itself since the small music market of Iceland makes it relevant for artists to seek bigger markets through exporting. Still, Baldursson stated that they helped the music community inside Iceland as well with a more artist oriented and direct help. This type of help is suitable for many projects that have smaller networks according to Baldursson. This also relates to the success history of Icelandic music since Baldursson revealed that success in the Icelandic music history had been mostly by individual artists and bands, whereas, for example, music companies had not had this type of success.

Additionally, the participants added to the first question that they did a great deal of exporting work nationally but with an international interest. This meant, for example, communication and seminars in their home countries while helping artists with their international goals as well as facilitating international co-operation. Thorsson also confirmed that the interest to go international was significant, but due to the risks, economic uncertainty and lack of monetary resources the international projects were scarce. Dimmen also declared that they had a model of starting locally and moving to the international interaction with a progressive 10-modules tactic. In addition, it was emphasized from the exporting organizations that music was supported in all its genres and formats, contrary to the music companies' way of working on their own material that might be based on popular music genres as mentioned by Jernberg.

When the first question was answered by Sigfusson however, she mentioned that Nordic culture fund did not consider music as export even though that is the main form of culture that they work with. Instead they were looking into the co-operation of projects with at least three Nordic countries included that have applied monetary aid from them. The important factor regarding the co-operation is also how do the Nordics artist benefit from project that they apply aid for and how the countries that

this project includes are benefitted from the project. One major difference to other music export organizations was that Nordic culture fund does not support projects that have their main goal in commercial success but value more the development of cultural life and the cultural value of the projects as said by Sigfusson.

In addition when the first question on exporting activities was answered by Jernberg, he said that their work area reached out internationally but focusing on Nordic artists. He stated that music companies were looking export more as a way of bringing the artist to the public knowledge. However, since this has been happening a lot from the Nordic countries, the Nordic songwriters and artists are becoming more and more well-known abroad. This also attracted music industry professionals and music consumers to visit and work in the Nordic countries as mentioned by him. He also stated that streaming services such as Spotify have a lot to do with the fast spreading of Nordic artists with, for example, Nordic songs played through curated playlists. This also been enabling the Nordics to do a lot of the basic work behind artist launch to abroad markets in their home market as specified by Jernberg.

4.2 Uniqueness in exporting goals and projects

In addition, when the first question came to its second half about uniqueness of music export supporting, the participants were telling about different projects in detail and how they differed from other music export organizations and music companies. Unique projects that were mentioned were, for example, Häikiö giving an example of workshops with Finnish and international songwriters and Dimmen mentioning about FRAM project that is aiming to professionalize Norwegian music industry.

Baldursson's take on uniqueness was that Iceland Music Export was more web based with having a clear focus on service two types of services. The first service is meant for Icelandic artists and music industry professionals and the second service is a

separate website in English that is meant as a portal to Icelandic music community for people from abroad with information about festival and news about Icelandic musicians that export music. He also mentioned that they did unique measuring on collecting information about all the concerts that Icelandic artists do abroad and these figures are then displayed on their websites.

When the participants answered the third question about the goals of their exporting efforts the answers were varied but there was a focus in wanting to increase the capital that is coming to the host country. However, many of the participants, for example, Dimmen and Jernberg mentioned after the exporting point being brought up that their work consist also of professionalizing the music industry in their home countries and creating a large international network while trying to keep the music business in growth in their home countries. The last point was raised since these organizations would rather have Nordic artists that do well internationally do their possible contracts and business interaction in their country of origin. It was pointed that these type of artists could their business interaction outside their country of origin due to the lack of professionalism and development in their home country music industry. However, acceptable international exporting related work could be done in a form of co-operation such as co-publishing and co-management mentioned by Dimmen.

When asking what does the music exporting hold in value, the cultural value was brought up by Sigfusson with, for example, culture supporting organizations hardly using the term exporting but instead looked into cultural value of the projects that are being send to another country as well as what cultural benefit they could have in the destination country. Jernberg mentioned about value that exporting Nordics artists are making the Nordics as an area a desirable market to find music industry talent, artists and culture from. In addition, this can develop the local artists at the same and that holds value in itself as he stated:

Värdet är att Norden som marknad kommer bli en av dem största, vilken det redan är i USA, men som sagt i artist sidan kommer det nu bli en av största export aktören i världen. Alltså, det finns så mycket talang i Norden och vi har så mycket talang med låtskrivarna idag, som idag dominerar Billboard listan så borde vore naturligt att dem sakerna spilla över till att utveckla mer artister lokalt också. (The value is that the Nordic market will become one of the largest [music export industry], which it is already in the US, but as I said the artist factor will now become one of the largest export actor in the world. Also, there is so much talent in Scandinavia and we have songwriters with so much talent today, which even dominate the Billboard list, so it should be natural that those things spills over to developing more artists locally as well.) Jernberg, 2015

4.3 The manifestation of Nordic co-operation through NOMEX

Many of the participants said that co-operation and knowledge sharing was already done mostly through NOMEX when they answered the second question on would they be open to share business practices, frameworks and working methods in order to develop music export collaboration in a Nordic scale. The answers of co-operation really grouped under co-operation done under NOMEX. For instance Meisner mentioned that knowledge sharing and discussions on joint export projects as well as information about favorable international partners were shared through NOMEX meetings. Dimmen even mentioned an example of roadmaps that are certain knowledge that was spread in these meetings. Roadmaps that are in his words basically an overview of an export territory with information about the industry such as the live market, music companies, press, etc.

When the participants were asked more precisely what the other exporting organization learned from each other in question four, Dimmen mentioned, for example, that they had learned exporting and publishing activities from their Swedish colleagues excel in these. He also mentioned that export measuring methods were learned from Finland. Häikiö also mentioned that Finland had shared working methods and practices regarding their experiences with songwriting workshops/song camps they had with international songwriters

Additional learning was done from inside the music industry as well. Many participants mentioned that they learned from Hokuo Music Fest- showcase event in Japan. Jernberg also mentioned this but referred to actions taken by Music Norway. However, Baldursson pointed out that many of NOMEX's projects that include many of the Nordic countries could not be directly applied to Iceland for that showcase events and bigger happenings were meant more for bigger companies working inside the music industry or related in industries. Thus these were not aimed for individual artists as the business model for exporting was usually in Iceland as said by him.

Furthermore, openness was mentioned as a value for plenty of the participants when answering to the second interview question. Regarding to this, NOMEX was pointed to be an organization that brings Nordic exporting organizations together to share and discuss working methods. These points were mentioned by Thorsson, Meisner and Baldursson who also added that NOMEX created a working field for the Nordic music exporting organizations to co-operate in as well as a framework for collaboration. However, Baldursson also mentioned that co-operation in projects such as JA JA JA and Hokuo Music Fest was already done between Nordic countries before NOMEX became an organization in 2012 since. For example, the JA JA JA Nordic music affair began as a collaborative project already in 2009.

Sigfusson mentioned about openness that even without a binding organization such as NOMEX there was openness and willingness in sharing best practices and working methods between culture aid organizations and music exporting organizations. She declared that Nordic Culture Fund was open to share examples from their successful projects, aspects that need improvements and give an opinion on Nordic music export collaboration from a different perspective. Related to this, she also mentioned that artists and culture exporting persons wanted to work more under Nordic brand rather than national brand.

The two music industry professional participants Jernberg and Sundell stated that they participated in active co-operation inside their respective companies and were open to the sharing of working methods and practices with other entities. However, this was mainly focused abroad offices of the company group they were working for. For example, Sundell mentioning that they co-operated with Live Nation in Sweden to unite warm-up act from Finland to a Swedish band's tour. Nevertheless, both company representatives also gave examples on how they had worked with music exporting offices in their respective countries.

In addition, Jernberg's take on openness in sharing working methods and processes was not as open as music exporting and art support organizations'. This is because music companies naturally worked with their own clients and artists in a for-profit working environment as he mentioned. Yet, he suggested that more investments could be directed to export organizations in order for artists to have more channels to spread their music to outward markets. He also suggested a creation of a possible connector organization in a Nordic scale that would connect artists with media and band partners, management and live music agencies and offer mentoring help to artists beginning their careers. He also added that if this type of organization could be build it would be favorable to have music exporting professionals working there to communicate, for example, what to do when approaching the United States markets by touring.

4.4 Learning about exporting from various business areas

The participants were asked in the fifth question that had their organizations and companies learned or would they have been willing to learn aspects outside the music industry. The answers consisted mostly of them learning from music industry leaders of their respective country with learning happening also from various other businesses outside this industry. Dimmen, for example, mentioned programs and learning opportunities from fish and oil industry since they were Norway's leading

export industries. The learnings from these industries focused on finding out the mechanisms that enabled the export success and they tried to adapt them to music industry in Norway. What is more, he mentioned that music companies needed to learn more about the basics of building a successful company with, for example, learning from other industries how to make strategic plans.

Thorsson added that they could have learned from South by South West conference in Texas, USA on how to build and present conference and showcases. He also mentioned that abroad markets could learn from the Nordic countries as well. Related to this Häikiö added that they received inspiration from Nordic food culture exporting. Meisner told that Denmark looked to arts, design, fashion and other cultural forms inside Denmark for learning about export in order to receive inspiration since these businesses were successful in helping their industry's export. Thus, it was vital to analyze were there ways that could be adapted to the music industry as Meisner mentioned.

Sigfusson on the other hand mentioned the various governmental levels that culture and music organizations should work with more often in order to receive a better scope of monetary aid and professional help. She also mentioned that the existence of NOMEX and national music exporting organizations was known by many cultural organizations but interaction between these was lacking:

Yes, the national support for art is important here so it is not only the industry but also sort of a cultural politics in the country: How will you work, which level actually decides where you have export? It is often the Ministry of Culture or the art foundation so you have to have this kind of a developed art form. (Sigfusson, 2015)

Sundell, which was the other music industry professional mentioned NOMEX's projects as positive examples to have learned exporting from. He named, for example, JA JA JA club in London as a way of introducing interesting Nordic talent.

4.5 Co-operation in digital music focusing to streaming services

The sixth question was asking about the possible co-operation that could have been done in the digital music area with regarding PR, streaming services and digital music sales. All of the Nordic music export organization participants as well as Sigfusson mentioned that co-operation in digital music had strongly been done with The Nordic Playlist which was NOMEX's own project:

“There is, in my opinion, very functional collaboration happening especially in regards to PR and the digital music area with the Nordic Playlist. I think that exemplifies those areas quite well.” (Baldursson, 2015)

The Nordic playlist itself was at the time connected to Spotify, Deezer and Tidal which all are streaming services. Thorsson even pointed out that The Nordic playlist was a playlist in streaming services that worked well. However, he did not believe that specific campaigns in these services would be beneficial to improve it. Jernberg also brought up that there was co-operation with artists and streaming services, for example, streaming services boosted certain artists' songs in exchange that they spread a positive message about the streaming service in their networks and to their fans.

Dimmen mentioned that PR co-operation was done to some extent with common Nordic stands within trade fares. This helped the Nordic countries to communicate with each other as well to music industry professionals from abroad according to him. However, Dimmen also mentioned that more of this type of co-operation should be done and the music industry in the Nordics itself should be focusing on to prioritizing the Nordic markets. This should be done in order to create a more of a home market between the Nordic countries as he stated. This opinion was supported by Sundell with mentioning that marketing collaboration in the Nordics could have been valued higher. Furthermore, he pointed out that exporting organizations in the

Nordics could learn marketing collaboration from other companies that had offices in the Nordics and do marketing collaboration between their Nordic offices:

...esimerkiksi sellaisessa tilanteessa jossa sama firma on useassa maassa se voisi tehdä markkinointi yhteistyötä tekemällä saman kokonaisuuden kaikille pohjoismaille ja käyttäisi samaa materiaalia Pohjoismaissa kiertueen kohdalla. (...for example in a scenario where a firm has offices in various countries it could make marketing collaboration by creating a same entirety for all the Nordics and by using the same material in Nordic tours. (Sundell, 2015)

4.6 Practices that are done well in Nordic music export

The seventh question focused on finding out favorable practices from Nordic music export. The aim was to find grand themes of successes and bring them out in order for these organizations to enforce them. Many of the participants mentioned that the continuous co-operation activities were themselves a favorable practice and should be continued with even greater investments. Thorsson even mentioned that music export co-operations gave a positive picture about the Nordics as business area and as separate countries. Sundell supported this view by stating that the Nordic countries were seen as exotic and interesting business area in numerous countries which sometimes made the exporting of other products easier. Concrete example of a favorable practice was mentioned to be the success of the JA JA JA showcase as mentioned by Dimmen, Thorsson and Meisner. Dimmen even stated:

“Like I mentioned, especially the JA JA JA concept is very good. ... there is a lot of industry coming to the events and it has become sort of a go-to place to find the new good Nordic music. So I would absolutely say that this has been a big success.” (Dimmen 2015)

Many participants marked also the success and continuity of Hokuo Music Fest-showcase in Tokyo. For instance Dimmen, Meisner and Thorsson regarded this project as an excellent way to approach far away and expensive market with joined efforts. This was possible after Music Finland had included other Nordic countries as well in its showcase, trade mission and songwriting camp- happenings during the events. Additionally, the reducing of costs when co-operating was mentioned by all

of the participants to be a positive aspect. Additionally, Dimmen mentioned Nordic stands in trade fairs as favorable practice in the way that they eliminated the costs of if all the Nordic countries would have had a separate stand. Moreover, this inspired networking when all the Nordic countries were gathered at the same place. Häikiö also added that a positive aspects about Nordic music exporting were the quality and variety of artists and the fact that Nordics were not focusing on promoting only one music style. He also mentioned that, when Nordic music export was done well, it had a great side effect besides of economic success. These side effect were improving the national brands of the Nordic countries as well as boosting interest towards other creative industries in the Nordics from abroad markets.

Participants outside the Nordic music exporting organizations, for example, Sigfusson and Jernberg, also mentioned that the organized music exporting in a Nordic scale was beneficial and positive. Sigfusson was also pleased with the framework that Nordic music exporting was working with and how there was active business co-operation between the Nordic countries.

Baldursson mentioned also a positive as well as negative aspect on branding that came with Nordic music export collaboration. He mentioned that the Nordic brand was in many ways quite positive and functional to be used in sort of a collective way. However, he also thought that all of it needs to have a focus and a real sort of a thoughtful philosophy behind it in how branding is used.

4.7 Suggested improvements to practices

The participants were asked about how the Nordic music exporting could be improved at question number eight. The answers were varying but grouped under few themes. Dimmen, for example, mentioned that the Intra-Nordic markets could be strengthened by Nordic countries booking more artist from other Nordic countries. He mentioned this since it was difficult for Norwegian artists to be booked in, for example, Sweden without first having international recognition. This was

agreed by Sigfusson when she stated that Nordic countries considered abroad markets outside the Nordics primarily for music exporting. Furthermore, Dimmen mentioned that the music industry and other industries alongside it should focus more on the functionality of the Nordic markets to make it easier and thus more attractive to operate in the Nordic countries with. This could be made, for example, by having reduced rates for travelling to make touring more attractive in the Nordics as he declared.

Sigfusson also stated that there was undeveloped business interaction between the Nordic countries. According to her, the focus on thinking in many levels of export all the way to the countries ministry of arts was missing. Moreover, she mentioned that when the national support for exporting was looked into, the support for arts should not be excluded since they also had resources to support exporting:

I think we should look music as many more levels, so it is not just the export and the industry but also the national supporting system as well as the ministries from the Nordic Council of ministers and their co-operation in music. It just has so many levels that you can look at and especially the live scene and the venue scene and festivals have to have a stronger co-operation... (Sigfusson 2015)

Within this regard, she also mentioned that to be able to do Nordic co-operation and to export culture in the Nordics, a person cannot only have a lookout from one Nordic country. He added that all the Nordic countries needed to be involved. She also mentioned that this made exporting more complicated if, for example, a band wanted to tour the Nordics. According to her this was due to the fact, that when national board of the cultural politics looked at export, they looked into the cultural development from a national perspective. Thus, according to her, adding a Nordic element to that might have been hard, since all of the political aspects needed to be considered and monetary help needed to come from all the Nordic countries.

Additionally, numerous improvements suggestions seemed to be focusing on the need of more financial support for implementing music exporting. This opinion was stated, for example, by the Swedish participants Thorsson and Jernberg. Moreover, it was mentioned by Jernberg that Finland and Norway had bigger investments and more people working at their music export organizations. This then created a chance for greater interactions with abroad markets in introducing songwriters and artists to these markets, according to him. Jernberg also mentioned, that besides the economical factor that there was only a little acknowledgment to the supporting of music that comes from certain communes. This could had at its best brought tourism and other kind of positive remark to the place of origin, according to him. Thorsson also added suggested improvements of strengthening copyright surveillance and giving more support to intermediaries of exporting such as producers and agents. Moreover, he also added the suggestion of improving on the fact that creators and entrepreneurs who had a creative exporting ideas needed help to find more investors and to negotiate better terms for loans in order to implement their ideas.

4.8 Markets for exporting

When the participants were asked the ninth question about what types of markets should the Nordics export music to, the answers were rather similar. For example, Dimmen mentioned that ideally Nordic music could be exported to developed and emerging markets. However, according to him, developed markets were favored because of high level of music consummation in these countries as well as safer working ground for music industry with the working control of intellectual copyright surveillance and low corruption rate. The developed markets were also considered more lucrative and more prominent for future business opportunities by Thorsson, Meisner, Jernberg and Sundell. Baldursson also suggested even more focus on western markets such as the USA. He also declared that in ideal situation the exporting could be happening to various markets but Iceland was focusing on Germany and the USA for that they used English actively in business interactions as well as there was found interest to Icelandic music in these markets. However, while

considering USA as a market, the two music industry professionals Jernberg and Sundell noted that entering the USA market in terms of music export required a great deal of groundwork and efforts to start exporting to.

However, Sigfusson mentioned that the market itself, when exporting culture, was not really a key issue and variety in exported markets was actually favored. According to her the cultural aid organizations did not consider markets as developed or undeveloped. Instead, she mentioned that they had the focus on the artist that performed in another country as in what cultural value they could bring to the destination. Nevertheless, she mentioned that they recommended to artists and performers to approach the developed markets if they wanted to have a sufficient income from performances.

Jernberg stated to this question, that more of a balance between developing and developed markets should be done since too many artists and companies were concentrating on saturated export markets such as Japan, England and USA. He gave an example of a way of going first to less saturated music markets such as Italy, Benelux countries and Spain and building a fan base in those countries made it often easier to approach bigger and more popular markets later. He also added that the music exporting efforts might spread to neighboring countries as well while using this music exporting approach.

4.9 Few actual examples of past benchmarking

When the participants were asked in the tenth question about had they benchmarked their projects earlier or had some other entity benchmarked their projects and working methods earlier, the concrete examples were scarce. Moreover, information about new benchmarking related programs could not be spread during the interviews since information was not desired to be share publicly at that stage as, for example, Dimmen mentioned.

Sigfusson however mentioned that Nordic Culture Fund participated in different networks for culture aid organizations in order to receive and share information about best practices and working methods. They also tried to learn from the latest information shared in these networks by other entities while also learning from the culture aid applications that they received. In addition, meetings were held with other cultural foundations and art councils from all the Nordic countries in order to learn how they worked and how were arts supported in each country. Jernberg also mentioned, that there is plenty of information sharing happening between Warner Music Sweden and their company's affiliates in other countries. For example, they were sharing information and contacts to a German affiliate office upon successful artists launch as stated by him. Sundell also added that future benchmarking could be indeed done in the Nordics but stressed the fact that this would be done between them and abroad offices of the company group.

Thorsson stated that Export Music Sweden used a web survey system to measure various parameters. With these results they benchmarked their activities against similar activities from earlier years as mentioned by him. Dimmen also stated similar by mentioning about their ways of handling benchmarking material. However, this was done through third party by receiving help from school in analyzing their survey materials. Baldursson also stated that they had done benchmarking type of process comparing between other music exporting organizations in the Nordics but details could not be given.

5 Discussion

5.1 Summary of the findings

The summary of the findings was based on the answers that were stated on the previous chapter. First of all, it was needed to mention that the answers varied somewhat from the two types of participant groups. First one of the participant groups included the interview participants from the music export support organizations and the second included the interview participants from the music companies and art support organization. However, these two parties were not totally opposing in their answers but some answers varied greatly between these two groups.

Most of the music export organizations identified themselves as supporters of export activities rather than the implementers of them, whereas the music companies mentioned concrete music exporting examples and that they were implementers of music export. The music support organizations had similar working methods in aiding music exporting in their home country and openness to supports all types of music styles and formats. Furthermore, openness was a lasting theme for the music export organizations when the questions came to asking about sharing business practices, frameworks and working methods, which all of them mentioned NOMEX meetings to be a forum of. However, music companies were not as keen to share their working methods with companies on the same field in order to stay competitive. However, providing of tips and guidance to export organizations was deemed an open possibility.

The goals of export organizations and the participating companies were slightly varying but the common focus was on increasing the capital that was coming to the host country from music export activities towards abroad countries. However, export organizations mentioned doing this while also having a focus to their home

countries. This was done, since with a great deal of their work consisted of professionalizing the music industry in their home countries and creating a large international network while trying to keep the music business in growth in their home countries. However, culture aid organization participant mentioned separately that she did not see music as export or used the term exporting for that her organization looked into the cultural value of exporting in their activities.

The learning points that the music exporting organizations presented were from varied sources and leaned to their countries industry leaders. For example, Norway learned exporting from their biggest exporting industries of fish and oil. Other countries learning came from various industries such as food, art and design industries' creative export approaches.

When the answers came to co-operation in the digital music area, all of the music export supporting organizations mentioned The Nordic Playlist project as a type of a flagship project for digital music co-operation in the Nordics. Jernberg also mentioned that there was partnership co-operation happening from streaming services' part as well. Moreover, marketing co-operation between was happening between them and artists as well as newest technology solutions. In addition co-operation in PR was mentioned to be active when Nordic countries shared a stand in music exhibitions and trade fairs which also boosted the co-operation within the Nordic countries themselves.

When the participants were asked about the positive aspects and possible factors that needed be improved in the Nordic music export, the answers were rather comparable. The favorable practices brought up were, for example, successful implementation of projects such as JA JA JA showcases and the Hokuo Music Fest and their way to approach abroad markets collectively as well as the continuous exporting activities themselves giving a positive picture about the Nordics as business area and as separate countries. The suggested improvements that were pointed out

consisted of music exporting organizations wishing increased export and import activities within the Intra-Nordic markets which was a point that was also supported by culture aid organization representative. She also added the lack of interaction between the Nordic music export enablers and governmental levels of arts and culture support. Increased interaction between these entities could bring more opportunities to the arts and culture export activities. Furthermore, the need for more financial support for music exporting was a repeated aspect of an improvement need.

The markets that the participants wished to export were rather parallel as well. There was a profound interest to invest and export more into the developing countries such as Brazil, India, and China. However, the music exporting organizations and music companies had to focus on developed markets. This was, according to them, because of developed markets such as UK, USA and Middle-Europe being more lucrative to work with as well as safer working ground with control of intellectual copyright surveillance that functioned as well as these countries having a low corruption rate. However, the culture aid organization participant mentioned that variety for the area that the supported act was going to was actually favored rather than focusing mainly on developed markets.

For the final question the author was trying to probe concrete examples of past benchmarking from the participants, but very few examples of outward benchmarking arose. Few of the participants however mentioned that they did internal surveys and thus benchmarked the results to their past results and activities. This was done in order to visualize pattern for improvement need or succession. Participants also mentioned that a great deal of information about best practices was shared through selected networks and some participants mentioned about benchmarking programs that were about to be published, but which details could not be made public yet because of the novelty of the programs.

5.2 Benchmarking findings to success criteria and NOMEX's goals

As Patterson et al. (1995, 19-22) mention the starting point of benchmarking is to set relevant, realistic and achievable goals. After these goals are set benchmarking calls to identify favorable practices and practices that need improvement. Thus, the author presented the favorable practices and suggested improvements received from the data collection in the TABLE 1. These were then benchmarked to success factors and NOMEX's goals that were gathered into TABLE 2. Type of benchmarking used was world-class benchmarking presented by Patterson et al. (1995, 36). The favorable practices and suggested improvements were also separated into two categories by the author. This was done, since the two types of participant groups gave rather differentiating answers.

TABLE 1. Favorable practices and suggested improvements on Nordic music export collaboration

	Favorable practices:	Suggested improvements:
Participant group 1: The Nordic Music exporting organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuous Nordic music export activities - Nordic giving a positive image of the Nordics as business area and as separate countries - Succession of JA JA JA showcase and its spreading into other countries - Succession of Hokuo Music Fest and it involving many Nordic countries' music export organizations - Joint Nordic stands at trade fairs - The quality and variety of artists - Not focusing on one certain music style - Exporting music boosts other creative industries. <p>Table continues to the next page</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More focus on Intra-Nordic markets - Having reduced rates for travelling to make touring more attractive in the Nordics - Better financial support from governmental levels to export activities - Strengthening copyright surveillance - More support for intermediaries of exporting - Better loan terms and help to find investors for creative entrepreneurs and creators - Focus on developed markets. <p>Table continues to the next page</p>

Participant group 2: Music companies and art support organization	Table continuum from previous page <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuous Nordic music export activities - Collaboration in export to minimize resource costs - NOMEX being a platform for active business co-operation - Exporting improves the brand of Nordic music - Positive recognition of NOMEX projects - Active in digital music area - The increasing interest from abroad markets towards Nordic markets makes exporting activates easier 	Table continuum from previous page <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More focus on Intra-Nordic markets - Developing interactions within the Nordic countries - Looking into variety of national support when exporting music - Developed interaction within Nordic countries when artists want to tour the Nordics - Having a Nordic political or governmental office that artists and performers can seek help from with exporting - Better financial support and more personnel to work for export activities.
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TABLE 2: Success factors from other successful Nordic exporting co-operations and NOMEX's goals.

<p>Success factors from other successful Nordic exporting co-operations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making Nordic co-operation more seamless with removing restrictions between these countries - Embracing the specials features of each Nordic country but also familiarizing Nordics as common minded business area - Entrusting working groups and project managers to perceive their respective assignments individually in order to boost creativity and inspiration - Clear vision of activities and passionate work of the ones included - Communication via active website and having a strong social media presence - The act of innovation, designing products and services in order to meet the unmet demands of the emerging markets - To see perceived competitors as resources and co-operating as region to find a solution to common problem - Creating opportunities for companies to match with each other and ask questions from the decision makers and end users of the field in order to better their projects - Active communication to and between different Nordic political decision makers to create concrete co-operation.
<p>NOMEX's 5-year-plan of Nordic music exporting goals (Williams, 2010, 9):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A more effective approach to major and emerging music markets 2. More effective presence at international conventions, trade missions and showcase events 3. Longer-term market growth. <p>NOMEX's Intra-Nordic specified goal (Williams, 2010, 15):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Live Music support 2. Media development 3. Professional interaction.

As can be seen from the two tables there were some similarities with favored processes made in Nordic music co-operation and with the success factors of Nordic exporting co-operations outside the music and arts industry. The benchmarking way of world-class benchmarking presented by Patterson et al. (1995, 36) fits to compare these activities since these activities can be searched from outside the benchmarked industry. The comparing of the activities and improvements was aimed to reveal what practices to favor and what to improve all while the author kept in mind NOMEX's goals and the success factors from other Nordic co-operation successes.

The mentioning of Nordic exporting giving a positive image of the Nordics as a business area and as separate countries by first participant group seemed to align with the success factor of embracing the special features of each Nordic country but also familiarizing them as common minded business area. This was one key success factors of the Nordic Food programme and could be seen as an action that could be continued and emphasized. Furthermore, the continuous work on Nordic music exporting activities presented by both participant groups seemed to support the success factor of clear vision of activities and passionate work of the ones included with the Nordic exporting and could be given emphasis to. In addition, when the first participant group mentioned NOMEX's projects such as Hokuo Music Fest and JA JA JA music affair and second participant group mentioned collaboration while exporting minimized resource costs, they could be said to support the success factors of seeing competitors as resources and working together as region to find a solution to common problem presented in TABLE 2. Thus these activities could be continued and they could be considered to be invested more to.

From suggested improvements mentioned by participants, the activities of focusing on Intra-Nordic markets and having reduced rates for travelling to make touring more attractive in the Nordics seemed to corroborate with the success factors of making Nordic co-operation more seamless by moving restrictions as well as seeing co-operation with possible competitors as resourceful and way of solving common

problems. Therefore it might be favorable for NOMEX to improve on these activities. Furthermore, the suggested improvements of improving financial support from governmental levels to export activities and hiring more people to work on export activities seemed to align with the activities of dynamic communication to and between different Nordic political decision makers in order to create concrete co-operation. This was deemed a success factor, for example, in ecological economy meeting by Nordic ministers in the summer of 2015 (The Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015, 3). However, these organization received only certain amount of monetary support from their respective governments and from donations. Thus, the implementing of these ideas might fail due to limited budget. Nevertheless, these could be improvement ideas for NOMEX to concern.

Additionally the suggested improvements of scouting the whole variety of national support when exporting arts, developing interaction within Nordic countries when artists want to tour the Nordics and to have a Nordic political or governmental office that artists and performers can seek help from regarding exporting appeared to support the other Nordic exporting activities of active communication to and between different Nordic political decision makers to create concrete co-operation. This could consequently be an improvement chance for NOMEX. However, there were also some activities mentioned by participants that conflict with the success factors of other successful Nordic exporting co-operations.

The conflicting activities between the answers and success factors were not many. Hence, only one conflict was spotted. The suggested improvement of focusing more on developed markets by Nordic music export organizations was contradicting with the success factor from other successful Nordic exporting with the act of innovation, designing products and services in order to meet the unmet demands of the emerging markets. Still, there was a great deal of interest to emerging markets from the first participant group, but these markets were just not as lucrative and safe to work in with music exporting as developed markets. Additionally, when it came to

the NOMEX's two categories of goals there were some activities and suggested improvements that aligned with them as well as conflicted with them.

The first NOMEX's 5-year-plan goal was a more effective approach to major and emerging music markets seemed to be supported by many activities with especially the practices of continuous Nordic music export activities, succession of spreading NOMEX projects outside the Nordic countries and collaboration in export to minimize resource costs. For second goal of more effective presence at international conventions, trade missions and showcase events the favorable practice of having joint stand of all the Nordic countries at joint trade fairs could be a supporting factor. In addition, the favorable practices of continuous Nordic music export activities and succession as well as continuity of such projects such as JA JA JA showcase and Hokuo Music Fest seemed to corroborate with the third goal of longer-term market growth. Thus, all these favorable practices mentioned could be taken into consideration and given emphasis to if NOMEX wants to support its goals. However, the other group of goals focused more on Intra-Nordic markets.

The suggested improvements of focusing more on Intra-Nordic markets, developing interactions between Nordic countries, having reduced rates for travelling to make touring more attractive in the Nordics and developed interaction within Nordic countries when artists want to tour the Nordics seemed to support the first goal of NOMEX's Intra-Nordic specified goals that is live music support through improving the flow of Nordic acts in Nordic festival and venues. Second goal of media development through, for example, establishing a Nordic music chart seemed align with favorable practices such as openness in sharing working methods and business practices with other Nordic countries and being active in the digital music area. Third goal of professional interaction through increase of contact amongst Nordic music professionals seemed to also be supported by favorable practices of having NOMEX platform for active business co-operation, continuous Nordic music export activities and openness in sharing working methods and business practices within Nordic

countries. The reaching of this goal was also supported by suggested improvements of developing interactions between the Nordic countries and having more focus on Intra-Nordic markets. All in all, these favorable practices and improvements could be looked into and possibly emphasized as this could help NOMEX reach its goals. However, not all favorable practices and improvements were helping NOMEX reach its goals.

Conflicting favorable practices and improvement suggestions should be mentioned as well, since these might hinder the reaching of NOMEX's goals. For instance, an alarming aspect was, that most of the participants in participant group one were focusing on developed markets instead focusing on those markets as well as emerging markets such as the goal of a more effective approach to major and emerging music markets guided. However, it was noted that participants had clear interest in emerging markets also but they lacked of many lucrative opportunities and safe working environment for music exporting. Furthermore the Intra-Nordic specified goals contradicted a little with the goal of more effective presence at international conventions, trade missions and showcase events in other goal group as well as with suggested improvement of focusing on emerging markets. This was because all of the Nordic countries are developed markets. However, it might be possible for NOMEX to keep an international perspective in their actions while also focusing more to the Intra-Nordic markets and thus not contradict between the two goals groups.

All in all, there were some favorable practices that were similar to the success factors from other successful Nordic co-operations. Moreover, some of the suggested improvements that were mentioned by Nordic music export organizations personnel as well as participants outside these organizations aligned with the success factors. Hence, these could be considered to be favored and practiced continuously. Same patterns were noticed with some favored practices and suggested improvements that supported NOMEX's goals. However, some of the practices and suggested

improvements contradicted with success factors from other Nordic improvements as well as with NOMEX's goals. These factors could be looked into as to see if they hinder the overall performance of NOMEX and Nordic co-operation in music exporting.

Nevertheless, for example, the improvement suggestion of increased financial support from governmental levels to export activities might not be realistic due to unstable economic conditions and governments having to prioritize to aid industries outside the music and music exporting industry. Moreover, some suggested improvements might cost a lot of resources, for example, concentrating more on emerging markets with Nordic music export as well as having reduced rates for travelling to make touring more attractive in the Nordics. Hence these improvements might not be realistic for NOMEX to concentrate to due to limited resources of time and money.

5.3 Limitations

In the end, the success of a research boils down to the reliability of the work. This was guaranteed by proper a use of sources and collecting the data by using ethical methods. The author should ensure that the sources are marked correctly and that the participants were informed about the usage of the information that they provide. The transcriptions of the interviews were also send to the participants in order for them to check the information that will be used in the data analysis as well as to prevent any misuse or incorrect information. At this stage, the participants could also mention if they want some information to be left out of the transcriptions e.g. business secrets that are not to be published. (Saunders et al. 2009, 485.)

However, as Saunders et al. (2009, 326) mention the interviews might have been biased because of the human element where the tone or non-verbal expressions may affect the way in which the participants respond to the interview questions. They

also add that this might work vice versa since the author's own belief and frame of reference may bias the way in which the questions are asked and how the answers are perceived. The validity of the answers can be, however, ensured by making sure that the questions can be clarified if they remain inaccurate for the participants while also trying to probe the deeper meaning of the responses and discussing the topics from many perspectives. These practices also help avoidance of generalization in the answers and help to really access the knowledge and experience of the participants. (Saunders et al. 2009, 327.)

Since the participants use their own names it was safe to presume that they answered truthfully and with their full professional expertise. This might also have had a countering effect to the participants since they might have hesitated on how to answer the questions. Moreover, the participants might be afraid that their answers might reflect poorly on them later especially if a person in a status of a managing director gave false or mediocre information or did not know how to answer some of the interview questions. This also depended on the form and understandability of the questions which the author had to make sure were easy to be answered to while being open-ended. The interviews could not be made anomalously even if this would possibly have given the participants an opportunity to answer the questions about the negative aspects of export co-operation in the Nordic countries more truthfully and give better improvement points. However, the author was convinced that showing the titles and the positions of the participants gave the research validity especially while including members from all the Nordic countries in order to gain a holistic view of the whole of Nordic music exporting.

The way in which the interviews were made posed limitations in the data collection phase. This was due to the fact that five out of eight interviews were made either by telephone or online. Interviews made with the audio chat program Skype, even while being synchronous, eliminated the possibility to analyze the participants' responses from body-language. (Saunders et al. 2009, 348-349.) However, a possible tone of

voice or the way in which the answers are being said can be retrieved from the audio recordings. This was why the Skype interviews were recorded using the Amolto Call Recorded program which is specifically designed for recording Skype audio and video chats. However, even if Amolto Call Recorded can record video chat as well it is only available in a purchasable version of the program and regretfully the author did not have the resources to buy this full version.

However, when using internet and technology for the interview process and data collection, a possibility of technical problems is always present. This was prepared for pro-actively by the author by ensuring a steady internet connection, having a calm and quiet environment for the interview and testing that the recording programs worked accordingly before the interviews. The participants were also approached by an email before the interview to state the usage of the interviews data and to make sure that they would prepare a place with a steady internet connection and have a calm as well as quiet environment for the interview while encouraging them to test that their chat programs worked accordingly. (APPENDIX 2. Updated interview questions before the interview.) Data cleaning of the transcriptions was also made in order to make sure the transcriptions were of high quality and thus valid (Saunders et al. 2009, 485). Additionally, after the interviews were done the author marked some additional limitations to the research.

Limitations noticed after the interviews were, for example, when interviewing the participants the author was too keen in bringing up his own opinion and similar answers from other participants while interviewing the participants. This might have affected the answers given by the participants as too suggestive questions were asked in act of probing deeper context to the answers. Furthermore, after the interviews were done the time that it took to transcribe them was greatly underestimated and this took the time away from analysis and discussion stage of the research. In addition, the interviews that were made in Swedish were not as easy to analyze as the author had thought. Thus the author somewhat overestimated his

Swedish language skills since a third party person was needed to help transcribe one of the interviews that was in Swedish. Additionally, although the recording quality of phone conversations was tested before for the two interviews that were made via telephone conversation they had a rather poor quality in audio. This also affected the time it took to transcribe these interviews as well as understand the audio records of the interviews made in Swedish despite the fact that self-memos were made after every interview.

In addition, it was pointed out by especially the Nordic music exporting organization participants that they did not have the time for a distant interview made by Skype or telephone and thus three out of eight participants answered the interview questions by email. This resulted to answers with less content and misunderstanding or non-understanding of the interview questions, especially with question number 6 where participants mentioned not understanding or wanting a rephrasing to this question. Additionally, it was harder for the participant to probe more content to the answers by email since this was a slow process and the participants did not have sufficient times to answer several emails. The insufficient time for answering might have been due to the fact that most of the participants mentioned autumn period being one of the busiest time for them. Also the questions themselves might not also have fitted all the participants, since they were focusing on export. Thus the questions had to be somewhat reformed again for the participants outside the Nordic music exporting organizations during the interviews. In addition, benchmarking itself had some limits to it.

What comes to the benchmarking results, the fact is that there might not be time or monetary resources for organizations under NOMEX or for the organization itself to implement suggested improvements. Furthermore, as Kaplan (2006) mentions when benchmarking is done by receiving guidance from outside sources, it is often forgotten to do internal analysis first to develop internally before comparing yourself to outside sources. Benchmarking activities might not also be reliable due to the

limited time amount the author had on research and the actions suggested by the author might not be current or implementable by NOMEX as an organization.

In addition, the nature of qualitative research might not always yield concrete or measurable answers but rather suggestions based on the answers and theory which might or might not be worth implementing. The implementing of suggestions proposed by the author might also be hindered by lack of resources by individual countries or has NOMEX as an organization.

6 Conclusions and future suggestions

There was plenty of literature to be found about benchmarking and exporting. However, the previous researches on benchmarking music exporting activities were not many or not made public. Furthermore, even though NOMEX had quite a few reports and researches on its own, a comparison of their activities to other successful Nordic exporting operations had not been done at this scale before. In addition most of the literature on benchmarking applied to for-profit models and worked for that type of companies. Thus, this could not be directly applied into actions NOMEX's actions that are of facilitating growth and development in the Nordic music sector.

Nevertheless, the goal of this research was to develop Nordic music exporting co-operation by benchmarking their activities to other successful Nordic exporting co-operations and to receive suggestions and remarks about the activities that are done well as well as improvement points to NOMEX's activities. These suggestions and remarks were received from the interview participants. Thus, the research problems included finding out positive practices from Nordic music exporting, improvements to the Nordic music exporting actions and to discover are the country-by-country practices and working methods in favor of the strategic capability and leading of NOMEX and its projects. This also included identifying the best practices from successful Nordic co-operation outside the music industry while considering NOMEX's goals as well in order to utilize these aspects in benchmarking.

The research questions were as follows:

1. What are the best practices and processes in Nordic music export?
2. What practices and processes need improving in Nordic music export?
3. Are the country-by-country practices and working methods in favor of the strategic capability and leading of NOMEX and its projects?

The two first research questions were answered by participants with numerous examples of what practices are done well with Nordic music exporting as well as improvements to practices and processes of this. Furthermore, the results that aligned with the success factors of other successful Nordic export co-operations and NOMEX's own goals were highlighted, were it a favorable practice or suggested improvement. These were, for example, continuous Nordic music export activities, Nordic exporting giving a positive image of the Nordics as business area and as separate countries, succession of JA JA JA showcase and it spreading into other countries, collaboration in export to minimize resource costs and NOMEX being a platform for active business co-operation. These were named as the best practices and processes in Nordic music export and they were an example of the answers to the first research question. Furthermore, the answer to the second research question included, for example, more focus on Intra-Nordic markets, developing interactions within the Nordic countries and looking into whole variety of national support when exporting arts as improvements.

However, the third research question did not receive a clear answer since the participants were asked about the activities on a Nordic scale and not country-by-country basis. Still, the asking of what these countries did uniquely gave insight to special programs that they did on their own, for example Norwegian worked with FRAM program. It was also mentioned by all the participants that all the Nordic countries together put an effort to the NOMEX projects' implementation and continuity. An example of this could be the Hokuo Music Fest that has deemed a success by many of the interviewed participants and was a united effort to export Nordic music and create business opportunities for the Nordic countries in Japan and vice versa.

The author had a hypotheses that that favorable processes and working methods will be found through the data collection and while also finding some improvement points. This did indeed happen when the interviews were transcribed and then

analyzed. Furthermore the author believed that aspects and processes that can be benchmarked will be found as well as aspects and processes that these can be benchmarked to. Also, it was expected that there will be similarities in the way the Nordic music exporting organizations work in their respective countries. It was also expected that there will be differences in how the Nordic countries implement their export. Both of the previous points came to fruition when benchmarking partners were found in other successful Nordic export co-operation and when successful and unique projects were mentioned by the participants of their home country.

To conclude, the author's impression was that the research answered the two first research questions and the third one partly. Author was also confident that the research was reliable since the information to the data for benchmarking was gained from music exporting professionals in the Nordics as well as from a grand scale music company and culture aid organization that work in the Nordics. The answers however could have given even more insight to the questions if the all of the participants would have had sufficient time to answer the questions thoroughly and within an interview. The author also marked future use of the research as well as found out information about the possible future of NOMEX itself.

Because the research was a qualitative research the answers to the research questions and course of actions were only suggestive. Furthermore, as the author was a third party researcher doing this research to the assignor, it meant that he could not straightly affect to the suggested improvements but rather just suggested them based on the research findings. Thus, more in depth research on improving the working methods and processes of NOMEX's projects could be done by NOMEX itself. This could also be done by another entity, but it would be favorable that they have the authority to make also concrete changes to the processes and working methods if the change is deemed necessary.

Furthermore, to obtain a better answer to the third research question, another survey or round of interviews could be made about the third research question in order to acquire a better insight on what are the county-by-country practices and working methods are in favor of strategic capability and leading of NOMEX projects. Also, the participants could possibly be contacted again in order to obtain a deeper insight to this question as well as to ask if they deem suggested improvements viable.

In addition, even though a straight question about the future of Nordic music collaboration was not asked in the interviews, the participants mentioned some points about the possible future. Baldursson, for example, mentioned under the streaming collaboration question that there is a great deal of collaboration already done between artists that work mostly online, since they create musical, artistic- or creative collaborations and will do more so in the future. Häikiö also hoped to involve more radios or other big medias into Nordic Playlist in the future. All of the Nordic music exporting organizations participants also mentioned that emerging markets were not favorable to them as music exporting markets during the time interviews were made. However, they saw these as possible markets to export music to in the future.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: The interview questions

English version

1. What type of music exporting does your organization do? What is it that you do uniquely with your music exporting?
2. Would you be open to share your business practices, frameworks and working methods in order to develop music export collaboration in a Nordic scale?
3. What is your goal with music export supporting? What do you think holds value in it?
4. Have you witnessed other projects or work methods from other Nordic countries' music exporting organizations that you have learned or want to learn from?
5. Have you witnessed other Nordic exporting outside the music industry that you have learned or want to learn from?
6. What type of collaboration could be done in the digital music area for example PR, streaming or sales?
7. What do you think is good with Nordic music exporting?
8. How could Nordic music exporting be improved?

9. What types of markets should Nordic countries export music to: Emerging (for example Brazil, China, India), developed (for example UK, USA, Middle-Europe) or something else?

10. Has your organization benchmarked its export projects to other projects or methods before? Has some other organization or industry benchmarked your exporting projects?

Swedish version

1. Vilken typ av musikexport arbetar er organisation med? Var gör ni unikt med er musikexport?

2. Skulle ni vara öppna av att dela era affärs- och arbetsmetoder för att utveckla musikexportsamarbeten i Norden?

3. Vad är ert mål med musikexport? Vad tror ni att det har för värde?

4. Har ni noterat andra projekt eller arbetssätt från andra nordiska länders musikexport som ni har lärt er eller vill lära er från?

5. Vet ni några andra nordiska exporter utanför musikbranschen som ni har lärt er om eller vill lära er mer om?

6. Vilken typ av samarbete skulle kunna göras i det digitala musikområdet till exempel PR, Streaming och försäljning?

7. Vad tycker ni är bra med nordisk musikexport?

8. Hur skulle nordisk musikexport kunna förbättras?

9. Vilka typer av marknader bör de nordiska länderna exportera musik till: framväxande (till exempel Brasilien, Kina, Indien), utvecklade marknader (till exempel Storbritannien, USA, Mellan-Europa) eller något annat?

10. Har er organisation "benchmarked" sina exportprojekt till andra projekt eller metoder innan? Har någon annan organisation eller bransch "benchmarked" era exportprojekt?

APPENDIX 2: Updated interview questions before the interview

E-mail title: Information and updated questions before interview 12th of November

The interview we agreed on is at 12th of November so I wanted to present you with the updated interview questions in order for you to prepare for the interview if you wish.

However, since the interview model is decided to be semi-structured there might be some additional questions that rise during the interview. We will anyway try to keep the interview in the time period of half an hour.

Please be advised to check that your Skype- audio chat program works accordingly, that you have suitable hardware to listen and record audio (headset or microphone other than computers own microphone is preferred) and that you are in a quiet and calm environment with a steady internet connection when interview is being done. Web Camera is not needed, since only audio will be recorded.

1. What type of music exporting does your organization do? What is it that you do uniquely with your music exporting?

2. Would you be open to share your business practices, frameworks and working methods in order to develop music export collaboration in a Nordic scale?
3. What is your goal with music export supporting? What do you think holds value in it?
4. Have you witnessed other projects or work methods from other Nordic countries' music exporting that you have learned or want to learn from?
5. Have you witnessed other Nordic exporting outside the music industry that you have learned or want to learn from?
6. What type of collaboration could be done in the in the Nordics in digital music area for example PR, streaming or sales?
7. What do you think is good with Nordic music exporting?
8. How could Nordic music exporting be improved?
9. What types of markets should Nordic countries export music to: Emerging (for example Brazil, China, India), developed (for example UK, USA, Middle-Europe) or something else?
10. Has your organization benchmarked its export projects to other projects or methods before? Has some other organization or industry benchmarked your exporting projects?

To inform you how the information will be used: Your name and title will be mentioned in the list of interviewees in order to proof the validity of professional data sources used. Furthermore, interviews will be transcribed and then analyzed where our discussions may be mentioned in short citations and presenting of common answers. The thesis itself will be published into JAMK University of Applied Sciences THESUS- thesis network and possibly be published by Music Finland in their website. However, when the interviews will be transcribed these transcriptions will be sent to you, if you wish to modify your answers after the interview and before analysis.

I would appreciate if you would answer this email with your confirmation that you have received the info.

Thank you again for co-operation and all the best for your autumn!

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Best Regards

Arto Koponen