

keđja Think Tank  
Touring Network For The Nordic-Baltic Region  
2012 - 2014

# END REPORT

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NORDIC-BALTIC  
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## INTRODUCTION

Think tanks are activities where a certain theme or topic is discussed and elaborated by leaders and professionals from different fields and with different viewpoints. Think tanks gather competent and motivated people to analyze different issues within the scope of the overall theme or topic.

Dance Info Finland has coordinated two Think Tank activities within the keđja 2012-2015 project:

- keđja Think Tank 1: Sustainable strategies for the Nordic-Baltic dance field
- keđja Think Tank 2: Touring network for the Nordic-Baltic region

During 2012-2014 these keđja Think Tanks have worked toward finding concrete action plans, models, suggestions and recommendations for improved practices in order to develop the infrastructure of the dance field in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

### Background

After the keđja 2008-2010 project, the partners decided to expand the co-operation with activities that would build capacity and strengthen the field on many levels, involving professionals and experts from different fields. The Think Tank activities were planned for analyzing and subsequently creating strategies for concrete actions concerned with expanding the possibilities for Nordic-Baltic co-operation that would improve the operating conditions in a sustainable way. Inherent in the Think Tank activities were that developed ideas for strategies should initiate actual activities.

Some of the Nordic and Baltic countries have national or regional touring structures for performing arts, but the area is lacking a touring network for dance in particular. The value and need of a structure for touring dance has been discussed for a long time and the existence of such a structure was seen as a precondition for a strong and sustainable Nordic-Baltic dance sector. Therefore the possibilities for forming a touring network for dance that would encompass the Nordic-Baltic area was selected as the goal-oriented and concrete topic for one of the two Think Tank activities.

### Aims and objectives

The task of the keđja Touring Think Tank was to discuss the possibilities of forming a Nordic-Baltic touring network for dance and to develop a plan or a model for it. The primary aim was to lay the groundwork for an operational touring network during a series of meetings in 2012-2014. The Touring Think Tank also included a secondary aim of organizing a small-scale pilot tour as a concrete outcome.

Such a concrete aim would require strong motivation, will and investment from the Think Tank participants. Therefore, the participants - directors and programmers of venues and festivals - were initially gathered based on an open invitation in autumn 2012, expressing the wish that "all presenters with a keen interest in both building a touring network and being a part of it in the future will be able to attend." As the Think Tank work proceeded, the need for personal motivation and passion for the subject became evident.

A knowledgeable and inspiring moderator was considered to have a key role in successful Think Tank activities and it was considered ideal if the same moderator would be involved throughout the work process. The keđja Touring Think Tank was lucky to find such a moderator in **Alan Rivett** (UK) director of the Warwick Arts Centre and co-founder and chair of a touring network for dance in the UK, Dance Touring Partnership. With experience in both founding and running a successful touring network, Alan was able to both provide experience-based knowledge and passion for the cause, which proved to be invaluable for the work and results. The work process also benefitted from getting an outsider's viewpoint on Nordic-Baltic co-operation.

## OVERVIEW

The keđja Touring Think Tank, consisting of representatives of Nordic and Baltic venues and festivals, has met four times during 2012–2014 in order to work toward its goal. Additionally, two sharing sessions and a seminar talk have been held during the keđja Encounters (Klaipeda, June 2013, and Mariehamn, August 2014) where the discussions and the work of the Think Tank have been shared with a wider audience consisting of members of the Nordic-Baltic dance community.

<b>Helsinki 2012</b>	<b>Klaipeda 2013</b>	<b>Stockholm 2013</b>	<b>Copenhagen 2014</b>
12.12.2012	10.-11.6.2013	6.-7.12.2013	23.-24.5.2014
14 participants + moderator and coordinator	12 participants (5 continuing and 7 new) + moderator and coordinator	11 participants (all continuing) + moderator and coordinator	10 participants (all continuing) + moderator and coordinator
Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Lithuania were represented	All Nordic and Baltic countries except for Iceland were represented	All Nordic and Baltic countries except for Latvia were represented	All Nordic and Baltic countries except for Latvia were represented (SE and LT participated in absence)

Altogether 23 people from 19 different dance venues, festivals and organisations and from all eight Nordic and Baltic countries have participated in the Think Tank between 2012 and 2014. Around 40 people have taken part in the sharing sessions in 2013 and 2014 and around 70 people attended the seminar talk in 2014.

**Katarina Lindholm** (FI), project manager at Dance Info Finland, conducted the overall coordination and communication throughout the project. Moderator Alan Rivett prepared the meetings together with the coordinator. Outside the working sessions the meeting participants also engaged in seeing performances together.

Additionally, individual meeting reports were made after the three first meetings and they can be retrieved on the keđja and Dance Info Finland websites.<sup>1</sup>

### Inviting Think Tank participants

An open invitation to join the first roundtable discussion in Helsinki in 2012 was widely distributed to venue and festival directors in all Nordic and Baltic countries. The invitation was sent by Dance Info Finland to 100 receivers and distributed further by the 10 other keđja partners in their respective countries.

For the second meeting in Klaipeda in 2013 more potential participants were contacted. Everyone who attended or had registered to the first meeting was invited to continue. Furthermore, according to the decisions made in the first meeting, all venues and festivals in the Nordic-Baltic region potentially interested in joining the Think Tank and a possible touring network were mapped out with help from the keđja partners in their respective countries. About 42 organizations were contacted – a majority of them a second time - with a personal invitation, emphasizing the need for strong motivation and commitment to the project.

The third meeting in Stockholm in 2013 and the fourth meeting in Ballerup and Copenhagen in 2014 (hereinafter referred to as the Copenhagen meeting) gathered only participants from organisations that were already participating in the Think Tank work in order to be able to get ahead with the work process.

<sup>1</sup> [www.kedja.net](http://www.kedja.net) and [www.danceinfo.fi](http://www.danceinfo.fi)

## THE WORK PROCESS

### Helsinki 2012 – The kick-off

The aim of the roundtable discussion was to kick start the process by mapping the possibilities of a Nordic-Baltic touring network for dance and posing the fundamental questions: what, for whom, how and why. The main questions addressed were about the benefits, possibilities and challenges of a touring network, about the passion behind starting a touring network as well as pin-pointing some good models and possible structures for a touring network.

#### Why a touring network?

Sharing the individual passions for forming a touring network among the Helsinki participants became the starting point for the Think Tank and some key questions that would be posed throughout the work process were raised. Whom should the network be for and whose interests should it serve: the audience, the artists or the organizations themselves? It became clear that a touring network is needed to enhance both artistic development and audience development within the dance field in the Nordic-Baltic area.



*Helsinki meeting, 2012  
Photo: Katarina Lindholm*

The Helsinki participants also raised the question of what kind of Nordic-Baltic focus the touring network should have. Should the network only tour Nordic and Baltic work and only in the Nordic and Baltic countries, or should the network act as a gateway for international work and artists to tour in the region, which would also have a positive impact on the development on the Nordic-Baltic dance field? The opinion leaned towards keeping a Nordic-Baltic priority. It was clear that there is a need for sharing information across the region.

#### Benefits and challenges

The Helsinki participants identified several benefits with having a touring network, seen from the point of view of both audiences and artists and organizations. Benefits for artists and organizations were listed as:

- Professional development and increased professionalism on the dance field
- Increased audience awareness
- Extended knowledge of artistic work and other upcoming artists
- The chance for local artists to work in international settings and bringing in international artists to contribute to the creativity of the local community
- The reduction and/or sharing of costs

The audiences would benefit from participatory activities such as workshops, and increased variety and diversity of dance performance supply.

Different challenges related to forming a touring network were also listed:

- Running a cross-border structure as perhaps the biggest challenge, especially when structures do not exist even on a local level in many countries.
- The size and span of the network
- The openness of the network
- The sustainability of touring activities
- The many kinds of national differences, such differences in national funding systems and accountability as well as structural and political issues

- The general lack of resources, i.e. time, money, human resources, technical resources

Discussing benefits and challenges brought up the notion of quality. The access to quality work and distributing it in a touring network is a considerable benefit. However, the challenge is how to measure and define quality and the criteria for that should be defined among the network partners and that can be done with mutual trust and respect. The structure of the network was therefore seen as a key to defining quality.

#### Formal or informal structure?

Some existing touring networks and other network in different countries were discussed as possible models. Special focus was put on the choice between a formal and informal structure. Informal networks are based on personal relationships and high mutual trust in for example programming choices. A formal structure was, however, considered to be more equal as informal networks might suffer from different kinds of hierarchies and instability due to staff changes, as well as more stable from a funding point of view. The opinion leaned toward establishing a formal structure.

### Klaipeda 2013 – From words to actions

The aim of the second meeting was to move from theoretical discussions, such as the purpose of a touring network and the relationship with audiences, into dealing with practical issues, such as structure, funding options and overall coordination. Also the possibility of putting up a small-scale pilot tour was discussed, as it would be a way to try out a touring network model in practice.

#### Scale and scope of the touring activities

The organizations around the table ranged from having access to venues with 50 to 450 seats so consequently the scale of potential performances and touring activities was an important factor throughout the discussions. Also the geographical and national scope of the touring activities was discussed in more detail. The Klaipeda participants returned to the question that was brought up in Helsinki regarding whether the network should only consider Nordic-Baltic work, or whether it could instead, or additionally, tour interesting international work in the area. However, many participants felt that it would be more realistic – also from a fundraising perspective - to start with Nordic and Baltic work and then perhaps at a later stage also present international work as a parallel activity according to possibilities and resources.

#### The audience perspective

Audiences were another major topic throughout the meeting. As some of the participating organizations operate in capitals and others in smaller regions, the notion of having different, urban and rural, audiences became evident. The work brought to regions outside capitals and urban contemporary dance audiences would need to be engaging and easily accessible, while the urban contemporary dance audiences can be more demanding. The discussion led to the question of whether the network should aim at catering for their existing audience or attracting a new one.

#### The structure of a touring network

Due to the differences in scale, scope and audiences between the possible network partners, it was suggested that the structure of the network would allow for different types and sizes of work to tour. To accommodate this and in order to know more about each other's venues and festivals, all partners involved agreed to produce a fact sheet (with technical and content-based information) to serve as a small database for possibly forming different scales or sub-networks within the touring network.

The discussion around the structural organization of the network also linked to the envisioned selection process. Acknowledging the different personal tastes came up as many Klaipeda participants doubted that it would be possible to find productions that all network partners would like without reservations. It was suggested that instead of touring the same work, the network partners could select from that pool of work that consisted of productions that the network partners themselves have added. This selection method would naturally then require a set of criteria to be followed when adding pieces to the pool of work.

Four different models for a touring network structure were proposed:

- Selecting one production and touring it across the network
- An import-export-based model of Nordic-Baltic work across the network
- Touring new and unseen international (i.e. not Nordic-Baltic) work across the network
- Touring work with a particular audience in mind (e.g. young audiences).

It was concluded that a hybrid model would be the most likely to work, and furthermore that audiences should be an important factor when thinking of the possible models.

#### Revisiting the question of “why”

The Klaipeda participant revisited the question of “why do we need a touring network” in order to crystallize the purpose, partially due to the fact that half of the participants were new to the Think Tank. The answers were many, including more funding for touring activities, to present more dance, to give artists more opportunities to perform and to develop the audience (either catering for a particular audience or attracting a new one). Everyone agreed on the fact that having a touring network would help in sharing expenses of presenting work and sharing knowledge, particularly about touring plans, as well as meeting regularly and seeing work together. Some also felt that the network would give the professional field an opportunity to learn more about each other’s countries and dance fields.



*Klaipeda meeting, 2013  
Photo: Katarina Lindholm*

The conclusion was that the aim of the network would in the beginning be about coming together on the basis of trust in order to move on to an import-export model (i.e. touring work among each other) at due time. Furthermore, the network would be devoted to touring Nordic-Baltic work to begin with, meeting and communicating regularly and seeing each other’s work.

#### Considering a pilot tour

The Klaipeda participants decided on putting up a pilot tour, as this was seen as the best way to test the possible touring network model. Trying it out in practice was seen the only way of getting answers to many of the questions. The possibility to have some additional activities to go with the tour, such as workshops and educational work, was also considered important. The Klaipeda participants decided that the Think Tank would apply for Nordic funding for the pilot tour, which would preliminarily take place in autumn 2014.

The Klaipeda participants engaged in a session of watching and discussing trailers of current dance work together in order to spark up a dialogue around content and criteria as well as see if any of them could be considered for a pilot tour. The participants themselves brought the trailers to the table.

A handful of pieces from the watching session were discussed as potential candidates, but one production in particular got a wider support. This piece did not interest everyone and had already toured



somewhat, but was still considered to meet the needs of different kinds of audiences and to be in many ways a good door opener.

The Klaipeda participants also discussed the importance of marketing and branding both the pilot tour and the network in general in order to contextualize the touring productions, attract audiences, communicate credibility and authority as well as raise general interest.

#### Coordinating and funding options

Different possibilities for overall coordination of the network activities as well as the pilot tour were considered:

- One partner takes a coordinating role (main organizer)
- The coordinating post is circulated between partners
- The partners form a legal entity

Creating a legal entity was deemed possibly difficult due to national differences, while having a project leader and operating with a separate project budget was seen as a more familiar and easy way of collaborating.

The different economic situations and resources in the Nordic and Baltic countries would undoubtedly have an impact on operating within a touring network. Furthermore, while some organizations have their own budget for programming, others need to fundraise. The different funding options were roughly categorized as follows:

- Partner funding (self-financing with the help of national and local funding)
- Nordic funding (Nordic Culture Fund, Nordic Culture Point)
- EU funding (Creative Europe)

While it was decidedly too early for a EU application, this was seen as a possible long-term aim. Nordic funding would be a viable source for the pilot tour as well as starting up the network, the former being a short-term plan and the latter a long-term plan. It was decided among the Klaipeda participants that fundraising would be the next concrete measure to be taken toward the formation of a network.

#### Closing the Think Tank from new participants

The strong need for commitment to the touring project became clear toward the end of the meeting and having continuity between the meetings was considered crucial for being able to move forward and make decisions. Therefore it was decided that even if transparency and openness were considered important, the Think Tank and network-in-the-making would from Klaipeda onwards be closed from new participants. This was regarded as a critical birth condition of the network, as bringing new people up to speed at every meeting would be counterproductive. At a later stage the network can, of course, decide to expand.

#### Stockholm 2013 – Making it real

The Think Tank work saw some considerable progress and decision-making during the third meeting in Stockholm. The theme of the two-day meeting was to start outlining the envisioned network model and forming a concrete plan for sustaining the future network. The participants discussed key issues such as network structure, membership, criteria and selection process, fundraising and the pilot tour. Audiences were pinned down as the main focus of the envisioned touring network.

#### The purpose and characteristics of a touring network

The Stockholm participants discussed once again the main purposes of a touring network, but also elaborated them further and concretized them by listing different characteristics that would describe and



define the network.

The purposes of touring activities were articulated as follows:

- Audience development; getting new audiences for dance would benefit the dance field as a whole
- Artistic development; create more possibilities for dance as an art form
- Expand the market for productions; increase the amount of performances for works as well as increase opportunities for artists to perform more
- Increase sustainability through all of the above

The purposes of operating within a network were identified as follows:

- Share resources; financial but also other, especially important for those operating in the regions and outskirts where receiving performances is more difficult for various reasons
- Share knowledge; to find new and interesting artists and performances
- Cross-border advocacy; mitigating the differences in e.g. infrastructure, economy and cultural policy between the Nordic and Baltic countries
- Co-produce more efficiently, the need of which will increase in times of economical
- Support forward planning
- Increase sustainability and mutual support and synergy through all of the above

#### Setting the focus; mission and aims

The Stockholm participants put a lot of time in conceiving a first draft for a mission and a vision, through which the participants started making decisions on the core characteristics and functions of the envisioned touring network.

Audiences and audience development was pinned down by the Stockholm participants as the main purpose of forming a touring network for the Nordic-Baltic region and this influenced much of the decision-making process throughout the meeting. Consequently, the Think Tank decided that the lead focus of the envisioned touring network would be on audiences and that its core mission would be to get new audiences for dance.

The focus on audiences was elaborated further in the mission statement, which was refined and worked on in detail. The main aims of the envisioned touring network were formulated as follows:

- To present Nordic-Baltic contemporary dance to new and existing audiences
- Through art to expand cultural understanding between the Nordic and Baltic countries
- To enhance Nordic-Baltic dance by providing expanded touring opportunities
- To provide production related outreach activities

It was suggested that a disseminator would be hired to follow the tour and take care of the outreach activities, such as workshops and talks.

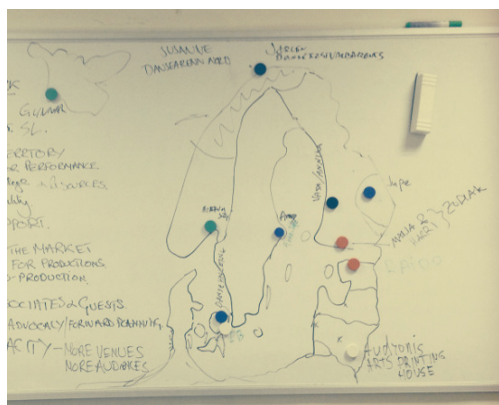
#### Selection process and criteria

A potential selection process was outlined as a combination of an open and a closed process. The Stockholm participants were inclined to opt for a model where the network partners in each country take responsibility of arranging a local open call, after which they choose a couple of proposals to be brought to the table. Additionally, all members could bring one "wild card" to the table as well. The network partners would then make the final decisions on which work(s) will be invited to tour. It was also decided that the touring network would present finished work only, which would also be available for touring and could provide a technical rider and a budget.

#### Network structure and coordination

The Stockholm participants agreed that a network structure with core partners who have certain obligations is required, especially in the beginning. It was decided that the core partners should commit

to being part of the network for a fixed time period (e.g. 2 years) and sign up to some of its activities and decision-making processes during this time.



The Stockholm participants expressed their interest in committing to being a core partner of a future network. Most of them would also look into their possibilities of taking part in the pilot tour.

Furthermore, the Stockholm participants agreed on a structure where one of the core partners takes on the role as project leader. This would mean acting as the legal entity on behalf of the network for signing contracts, administrating the funds and hiring people to take care of administrative tasks such as marketing and tour coordination.

*Mapping the network in-the-making, Stockholm meeting, 2013*  
*Photo: Katarina Lindholm*

## Copenhagen 2014 – Life after keđja

The fourth and final two-day meeting focused on wrapping up the Think Tank work by preparing the network-in-the-making and its partners for future activities and next steps. The funding applications that had been submitted earlier in spring had proven unsuccessful, thus much of the Copenhagen meeting was spent preparing for the next round of applications by focusing on those issues that needed to be improved or concretized, such as the audience development activities. Also the plans for the near future, such as network coordination, economical issues as well as possible touring activities, were outlined.

## Setting the targets

In line with the previously made decision to put focus on audiences and audience development, the Copenhagen participants elaborated further on this dimension of their future touring activities. By mapping the different audience development activities that each of the venues and festivals are already conducting, it became clear that all network partners already have experience in a range of different audience development activities, but that they need to be measured. It was agreed that some data on the current audience base is needed in order to set some targets for the audience development activities that the touring activities of the network would provide. Furthermore, evaluating the activities of the network itself was considered very important.

Being able to measure something after the pilot tour was consequently deemed important. The network needs to measure and evaluate the increase in audiences from the very beginning, as well as collect data from the first tour and report of it afterwards. While it is not possible to conduct market research and collect qualitative data in time for the application deadlines, it would be good for the network to include that in the plans of the near future.

The Copenhagen participants decided to collect some elementary audience data from the calendar year 2013 from each network partner, including the number of professional and amateur contemporary dance productions and performances as well as the number of tickets sold. The target was set on an increase of 5 % in audience numbers after the pilot tour and some longer-term targets in even higher increase in audience numbers were also discussed.

## Sharpening the arguments

The Copenhagen participants discussed the rejected funding applications in detail and as a consequence made revisions to its content, choice of words and their implications. In that process many of the fundamental questions and characteristics of the network were revisited and crystallized further.

Besides revising the mission statements made in the Stockholm meeting, the Copenhagen participants also discussed the short-term and long-term outcomes of the pilot tour in more detail. The Copenhagen participants continued to agree on that the pilot tour would be the only way of trying out the network and the idea of touring something across the Nordic-Baltic region in practice. Taking the big differences among the different countries as well as the partners involved into consideration, the Copenhagen participants saw best to keep the main focus at the moment on setting up and testing a touring network model and learning from that. Any longer-term plans would be made based on experiences from the pilot tour. Therefore, several fundamental characteristics of the future network, such as what kind of work will the network tour, were left to be decided in the near future. However, it was agreed that a communication strategy would be needed already at this stage to answer questions about selecting process and criteria.

As a short-term outcome, the pilot tour would be an opportunity to look into a series of issues: reaching remote areas, covering a big region, associated costs, different venues, practices and production, how to organize the tour coordination and audience development activities. The main long-term outcome was by definition developing a structure for touring.

The need of having a marketing plan was also restated and the Copenhagen participants agreed that some marketing activities in relation to the pilot tour must be conducted by each receiving organization. Having a name and a logo was also considered very important to have as soon as possible.

Some tasks for preparing the applications to be submitted in the autumn of 2014 were listed and dealt among the participants. The option of forming an association to act as a legal entity was discussed once more, but again the option of one of the partners taking on the role as project leader was considered much easier in a cross-country collaboration.

#### Pilot tour in practice: what, when, where

The plans for the pilot tour needed some rethinking. During spring 2014 it had become clear that the piece that had been tentatively selected for the pilot tour in Klaipeda and again in Stockholm in 2013 was too big for many venues and therefore could not be toured as planned. It was decided that the pilot tour plans would have to be postponed with a year to autumn 2015. This also meant that the sum in the project budget of keđja partner Dance Info Finland that was earmarked for a pilot tour in 2014 could not be used as planned. Despite this, everyone agreed that preparing the pilot tour would need more planning time in order to be successful, which was considered crucial for the future of the network.

It was restated that the pilot tour piece needs to be something that will work toward the aim of a 5 % audience increase as well as fit within the scale range of the venues that are able to and interested in receiving the piece. The participants reminded themselves of the choice to focus on audiences as the leading selection criteria.

To support the decision-making, the Copenhagen participants watched 10 different video bits or trailers of potential pilot tour pieces, based again on suggestions coming from the participants themselves. The discussion concluded in proceeding with Finnish choreographer Jyrki Karttunen's solo *Jemina – Act as you'd know her*, as it was seen as a piece that would attract new audiences, show how broad the genre of contemporary dance can be and being of a suitable scale. A back-up piece was preliminarily selected in the event of Karttunen being unavailable. The tour would be planned mainly for autumn 2015.

#### Sharing roles and responsibilities

The Copenhagen participants wrapped up the final Think Tank meeting by listing and sharing roles and responsibilities for the next steps. These included the overall coordination of network (internal communication and meeting coordination), coordinating the collection of data and venue-specific facts, making a pilot tour budget and preparing and submitting the applications. Also a rough schedule for all

network activities until 2016 was made. It was agreed that network meetings are needed twice a year and the dates were set for the two following ones.

## Sharing sessions

The work progress and outcome of the keđja Touring Think Tank were shared with a wider audience on two occasions: as a sharing session in June 2013 during the keđjaKlaipeda Encounter and in August 2014 during the keđjaMariehamn Encounter as a sharing session as well as in a broader seminar talk about the importance and future of networks. Both were used as opportunities to communicate about the aims and motives as well as the challenges of touring activities on one hand and forming a network on the other hand. They also served as ways to get feedback and answer questions regarding the endeavour. All in all, around 40 people have taken part in the sharing sessions and around 70 people in the seminar talk.

In Klaipeda in 2013, the question of flexibility in scale of productions within the touring network was discussed, as it was seen as important that different kind of work would have the opportunity to tour. That the right kind of work is presented to the right kind of audience was also discussed as one of the responsibilities of a touring network.

In Mariehamn in 2014 the Touring Think Tank participants together with moderator Alan Rivett shared the work process and its results with a wide audience. Think Tank participant Susanne Næss Nielsen as well as Alan took part in the main seminar talk ("Building New Bridges") discussing the importance of networks in general. Later that day in a more intimate sharing session ("Toward a touring network") both the challenges and the motives were opened up, and a dialogue was created around the pilot tour plans, selection criteria as well as funding issues.



Seminar talk "Building New Bridges"  
Photo:© Uupi Tirronen. Kedja Mariehamn 2014

## OUTCOME

The content of the meetings proceeded from theoretical discussions to dealing with practical issues early on, but some fundamental questions were revisited in every meeting. These were in particular the question of why a Nordic-Baltic touring network for dance is needed and which should be its main aims and objectives. Finding purposes for such a network seemed an easy task but deciding on a main focus took more time and discussions. The Touring Think Tank participants decided in the Stockholm meeting to set getting new audiences for dance as its main purpose. This acted as a spur for many other definitions of network characteristics, targets and selection criteria, among others.

Throughout the meetings the participants also stated to the importance of building trust among the partners as an important precondition for a functioning network and it was emphasized that it takes time to build such a relationship among the partners. The fact that the network was not being formed in an "organic" way but through systematic and result-driven work through a coordinated series of meetings and by inviting all interested organisations to the same table, was found to be challenging at times. The participants needed to deal with different aims and motives on top of more obvious differences.

The fact that the organizations involved are quite different in terms of scale, structure, audiences and resources, stirred some interesting, and at times challenging, discussion among the participants. It became clear that creating a cross-border structure faces some difficulties in legal, administrative and above all economical practicalities. The fact that some countries lack public funding for travel and touring – whether national or international – puts the organizations in the different countries in an unequal situation, which they already are based on the differences in economic resources for culture.

For these reasons it was clear that the network also needs to engage in political advocacy. Furthermore, the organizations are in different positions when it comes to receiving and programming, as some present in their own venues and others need to collaborate with an array of venues in their regions.

Despite – or perhaps because of these differences, sharing a joint need and passion for building a network for touring activities became a leading star for the work process. New people coming in was at times problematic for the decision making process, but on the other hand forced the participants to crystallize the purpose and main objectives of a touring network many times. Commitment and continuity was seen as a crucial birth condition to a touring network, which was behind the decision of not inviting new participants in after the second meeting.

## The model for a touring network

The keđja Touring Think Tank has worked on forming a touring network for dance in the Nordic-Baltic region between 2012 and 2014. The outcome is a model/prototype that will be tested in practice with a pilot tour in 2015 and further elaborated or modified based on the experiences.

Description, mission and aims as outlined during the Think Tank work in 2012-2014:

**Description:** A network for touring contemporary dance in the Nordic-Baltic countries

**The core mission:** to get new audiences for dance

**The core aims:**

- To present contemporary dance to new and existing audiences
- To through art expand cultural understanding between the Nordic-Baltic countries
- To enhance Nordic-Baltic dance by providing expanded touring opportunities and professional practices

**The core characteristics of the network:**

- A formal network, where partnership is built between organizations, not individuals
- Meeting regularly (twice a year), sharing information and coming together on the basis of trust
- Core partners who commit to being part of the network (without an obligation to present) and possible associated partners if needed
- One core partner acts as project leader and the legal entity as well as the main application partner. This role may be circulated at certain intervals.
- Funding will consist of Nordic funding and self-financing (national, regional, local funding options) (EU-funding may be considered in the future)

**The core characteristics of the touring activities of the network:**

- Presenting Nordic-Baltic work (can be expanded to present also international work in the future)
- The network will conduct audience development activities attached to its touring activities
- The network will measure the audience numbers related to its touring activities

The network partners as of autumn 2014 are:

**Zodiak – Centre for New Dance**, Helsinki, Finland

(Main coordinator)

**Baltoppen LIVE**, Ballerup, Denmark

**Dansehallerne**, Copenhagen, Denmark

**Estonian Dance Agency**, Tallinn, Estonia

**Regional Dance Center for Eastern Finland**, Kuopio, Finland

**Regional Dance Center of Ostrobothnia**, Vaasa, Finland



**Tjarnarbió**, Reykjavik, Iceland  
**Arts Printing House**, Vilnius, Lithuania  
**Bærum Culture House**, Bærum, Norway  
**Dansearena Nord**, Hammerfest, Norway  
**DanseFestival Barents**, Hammerfest, Norway  
**Dansens Hus**, Stockholm, Sweden

## The pilot tour

From the beginning on there was an inbuilt aim of organizing a small-scale pilot tour as a concrete outcome of the keðja Touring Think Tank.

The pilot tour was first discussed in the second meeting in Klaipeda in June 2013 as the best way of testing the network model and cross-border touring activities in practice. The plans were temporarily slowed down by rejected funding applications in spring 2014 and the need to reconsider the production choice, but resulted instead in a more well-prepared and extensive tour plan.

The purpose of the pilot tour is to try out the outlined network model and different practical issues related to touring across Nordic and Baltic countries in practice. The aim is to achieve an increase of 5 % in audience numbers and in this way realize the main mission of the network.

At the end of the Think Tank process in May 2014 the network participants were planning the concrete details of the pilot tour, such as schedule, funding, audience development activities and marketing. In the moment of writing a pilot tour is scheduled for 2015 and fundraising for it has started.

The network partners who will present the pilot tour are:

**Baltoppen LIVE**, Ballerup, Denmark  
**Estonian Dance Agency**, Tallinn, Estonia  
**Tjarnarbió**, Reykjavik, Iceland  
**Arts Printing House**, Vilnius, Lithuania  
**Bærum Culture House**, Bærum, Norway  
**Dansearena Nord**, Hammerfest, Norway



*Copenhagen meeting, 2014  
Photo: Marie Le Sourd*

## SUMMARY

Dance Info Finland has coordinated two Think Tank activities within the keðja 2012-2015 project; one on sustainable strategies for the Nordic-Baltic dance field and one on forming a touring network for the Nordic-Baltic region. During 2012-2014 these Think Tanks have worked toward finding concrete action plans for improved practices in order to develop the infrastructure of the dance field in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

The task of the keðja Touring Think Tank was to discuss the possibilities of forming a Nordic-Baltic touring network for dance through a series of meetings between 2012-2014. The primary aim was to lay the groundwork for a touring network model and the secondary aim was to put up a small-scale pilot tour on order to try the model out in practice.

Due to these very concrete aims, the keðja Touring Think Tank gathered directors and programmers of dance venues, festivals and organisations with a strong motivation and keen interest in both building a touring network and being a part of it in the future. Altogether 23 people from 19 different dance venues, festivals and organisations and from all eight Nordic and Baltic countries have participated in the Think

Tank. The work process was moderated by the experienced and engaging Alan Rivett (UK) director of the Warwick Arts Centre and co-founder and chair of a touring network for dance in the UK, Dance Touring Partnership. Katarina Lindholm (FI), project manager at Dance Info Finland, acted as coordinator.

The keđja Touring Think Tank has met four times during 2012–2014 in order to work toward its goals. Additionally, two sharing sessions and a seminar talk have been held during the keđja Encounters in 2013 and 2014 where the discussions and the work of the Think Tank have been shared with a wider audience consisting of members of the Nordic-Baltic dance community.

The aim of the first meeting in Helsinki was to kick start the process by mapping the possibilities of a Nordic-Baltic touring network for dance and posing the fundamental questions: what, for whom, how and why. The main questions addressed were about the benefits, possibilities and challenges of a touring network, about the passion behind starting a touring network as well as pin-pointing some good models and possible structures for a touring network.

The aim of the second meeting in Klaipeda was to move from theoretical discussions, such as the purpose of a touring network and the relationship with audiences, into dealing with practical issues, such as structure, funding options and overall coordination. Also the possibility of putting up a small-scale pilot tour was discussed.

The Think Tank work saw some considerable progress and decision-making during the third meeting in Stockholm. The aim was to start outlining the envisioned network model and forming a concrete plan for sustaining the future network. Key issues, such as network structure, membership, criteria and selection process, fundraising and the pilot tour, were discussed. Audiences were pinned down as the main focus of the envisioned touring network.

The final meeting in Copenhagen focused on preparing the network-in-the-making and its partners for future activities and next steps. Much of the meeting was spent preparing for the upcoming application round by focusing on those issues that needed to be concretized, such as the audience development activities. Also the plans for the near future, such as network coordination, economical issues as well as possible touring activities, were outlined.

The Think Tank moved from theoretical discussions to dealing with practical issues early on. The important preconditions for forming a network were identified as trust among the partners and investing time in building that trust, as well as commitment to the cause and continuity. The organizations involved were quite different in terms of scale, structure, audiences and resources, which resonated strongly in the discussions.

The keđja Touring Think Tank worked in a goal-oriented manner toward its two aims: an envisioned model for a touring network in the Nordic-Baltic region and setting up a pilot tour to test the model in practice. Even if reaching these aims proved to require more time than the two-year time span allowed for, the different steps and phases were necessary for building a strong enough foundation. The fact that the Think Tank has produced both a network (funding received in autumn 2014) and a pilot tour (scheduled for 2015), shows that the aims are being reached and that there exists a promising ground for a permanent touring network structure on the Nordic-Baltic dance field.

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## CONTACT

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 www.danceinfo.fi



## LIST OF TOURING THINK TANK PARTICIPANTS

1=Helsinki 2012, 2=Klaipeda 2013, 3=Stockholm 2013, 4=Copenhagen 2014

### DENMARK

Baltoppen LIVE, Ballerup	Ib Jensen	2,3,4
Dansehallerne, Copenhagen	Hanne Svejstrup	2,4

### ESTONIA

Estonian Dance Agency, Tallinn	Raido Bergstein	2,3,4
STÜ, Tallinn	Triinu Aron	2

### FINLAND

Zodiak – Center for New Dance, Helsinki	Maija Eränen	1,2,3,4
Zodiak – Center for New Dance, Helsinki	Harri Kuorelahti	1,3
Regional Dance Center for Eastern Finland, Kuopio	Jukka-Pekka Pohjolainen	2,3,4
	Anu Rajala-Erkut	1
Regional Dance Center of Ostrobothnia, Vaasa	Annika Sillander	2,4

### ICELAND

SL/Tjarnarbió, Reykjavik	Gunnar Gunnsteinsson	1,3,4
Reykjavik Dance Festival, Reykjavik	Halla Ólafsdóttir	1

### LATVIA

Gertrude Street Theatre, Riga	Maija Pavlova	2
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### LITHUANIA

Lithuanian Dance Information Centre / Arts Printing House, Vilnius	Audronis Imbrasas	1,2,3
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### NORWAY

Bærum Culture House, Bærum	Siri Leonardsen	1,4
	Morten Walderhaug	4
Dansearena Nord, Hammerfest	Maiken Garder	1
	Susanne Næss Nielsen	1,2,3,4
DanseFestival Barents, Hammerfest	Jørgen Knudsen	1,2,3
Dansens Hus, Oslo	Saskia Wieringa	1

### SWEDEN

Atalante, Gothenburg	Tomas Persson Carlberg	1
Dansens Hus, Stockholm	Eva Broberg	1
	Amy Fee	3
SITE Sweden, Stockholm	Anne-Sofie Ericsson	1,2,3

### Moderator:

Alan Rivett, Director at Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Chair of Dance Touring Partnership (GB)	1,2,3,4
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### Coordinator:

Katarina Lindholm, Project Manager at Dance Info Finland, Helsinki	1,2,3,4
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