Strengthening partnerships with HEIs in the Global South

An evaluation of the NORPART programme 2015/16-2020

Inger C. Nordhagen

Hanna Jones

Lisa Knatterud Wold

Arne Tostensen

Malin Dahle

Preface

This report presents the results of an evaluation of The Norwegian Partnership Programme for Global Academic Cooperation (NORPART). The evaluation was commissioned by the Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education (Diku) and has been carried out by ideas2evidence.

The main purpose of the evaluation is to assess NORPART's programme model, administration and achievements in relation to the overall aim and objectives of the programme. Furthermore, the review shall make recommendations about further development and strengthening of the programme. This purpose relates to Diku's plan to develop a programme document as a stronger governing instrument for the programme before the next call for applications in early 2021.

The evaluation covers the period from the inception of the programme in 2015/2016 until 2020 and includes all the 46 projects in the current programme portfolio.

ideas2evidence would like to thank Diku for a very interesting mission, and good cooperation throughout the evaluation. We would also like to thank the informants who contributed to the evaluation by taking part in interviews. Lastly, we want to extend our gratitude to all the students who took the time to answer the student survey. Your answers provided us with invaluable information for the evaluation.

Bergen,

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Terminology and abbreviations

Terminology

Incoming mobility: Mobility into Norway

Long-term mobility: Mobility stays with a duration of more than three months

Outgoing mobility: Mobility from Norway

Short-term mobility: Mobility stays with a duration of less than three months

Abbreviations

Diku: Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education

INTPART: Programme for International Partnerships for Excellent Education, Research and Innovation

MER: Ministry of Education and Research

MFA: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NOMA: Norad's Programme for Master Studies

Norad: The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

NORHED: Norwegian Programme for Capacity Development in Higher Education and Research for Development

NORPART: The Norwegian Partnership Programme for Global Academic Cooperation

NUFU: Norwegian Programme for Development, Research and Education

SIU: Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education, currently Diku

UTFORSK: a measure under the Norwegian Government's Panorama strategy, targeting cooperation on higher education and research with Brazil, China, India, Japan, Russia and South Africa.

Executive summary

Overall, the evaluation finds that the NORPART programme shows promising results with respect to some of its objectives. However, we argue that achievement of the overall goal of the programme would be enhanced if the goal structure focused less on the quantity of student mobilities, allowing for more resources to be spent towards activities that may have a larger effect on the quality of education at an institutional level.

Programme design

Overall, we find that NORPART is well-designed, considering the multiple, partially conflicting political aims that the programme is expected to achieve. The evaluation does, however, uncover some features of the programme's goal structure that could be changed in order to strengthen the programme's achievements.

We argue that focusing on the quantity of student mobilities draws resources away from other activities, which ultimately may have a larger effect on the quality of education. A desk study of similar programmes internationally, shows that these programmes treat mobility as a means, rather than a goal in itself. Further, we find the overall goal formulation, which implies improved quality of higher education nationally in the involved countries, to be too ambitious, as the programme does not have the necessary resources, nor expedient activities, for achieving quality enhancement at a national level. Lastly, the goal of producing ripple effects to wider society should be more clearly communicated in the calls, and further operationalised.

The evaluation argues that the environmental impact of the programme could be reduced by replacing shorter with longer mobility stays. However, such a change is at odds with the current goal structure of the programme. This dilemma should be addressed at a political level.

Administration and selection process

We find that the administration of the programme to a large degree works well. Our findings indicate that project coordinators are satisfied with the application process, the required reporting and the follow-up they receive from Diku.

Achievement of objectives

As the programme's achievements depend on the projects' achievements, and none of the projects have yet finished their funding period, it is premature to conclude regarding the programme's achievements. Our assessments of goal achievement are therefore based on whether the results so far seem promising. We find that the objective of increased incoming student mobility from the NORPART countries to Norway will not be achieved, as the planned number of mobilities for the current project portfolio is not sufficient for achieving an increase compared to the Quota Scheme. Due to lack of baseline data, it has not been possible to ascertain whether there will be an increase in the outgoing mobility from Norway to NORPART countries, but we find that the planned numbers probably will not be achieved. This may be due to difficulties with recruiting Norwegian students, especially for long-term mobilities. We find that the objectives of strengthening partnerships for education and research and enhancing quality and internationalisation of the involved academic

programmes, probably will be achieved. So far, there are more indications of quality enhancement at involved academic programmes in the South than in Norway.

Although the overall goal of the programme is quite ambitious, it seems that the NORPART programme has some potential for contributing towards enhanced quality of higher education at an institutional level. The programme also seems to have a potential for achieving ripple effects to wider society, through including non-academic network partners.

1 Introduction

On behalf of the Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education (Diku), ideas2evidence has conducted an evaluation of the NORPART programme, an internationalisation programme supporting academic partnerships and student mobility between higher education institutions in Norway and selected developing countries. The purpose of the evaluation has been to assess the programme's achievements, the programme model and design, and the administration of the programme. And, furthermore, to give recommendations for improvements to the programme. This report presents the findings of the evaluation.

About the NORPART programme

The Norwegian Partnership Programme for Global Academic Cooperation (NORPART) provides support for academic partnerships and student mobility between accredited Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Norway, and comparable HEIs in 39 selected developing countries. NORPART partner countries include 22 African countries, 10 Asian countries and seven Latin American countries. The programme is co-funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (MER) and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The programme was launched in 2016, and there have been two calls for applications so far. Altogether 46 projects have been awarded funding.

The overall aim of the programme is to "enhance the quality of higher education in Norway and developing countries through academic cooperation and mutual student mobility".[1] To reach this overall goal, NORPART has four discrete objectives:

- ♦ Strengthened partnerships for education and research between developing countries and Norway;
- ♦ Increased quality and internationalisation of academic programmes at participating institutions;
- ♦ Increased mobility of students from developing countries to Norway, including mobility in connection with work placements;
- ♦ Increased mobility of students from Norway to developing countries, including mobility in connection with work placements.

Many projects are based on network collaboration with more than one partner institution in the partner country, or partners in several countries. Network partners can be other HEIs, but also NGOs, private or public enterprises or research institutes.

Support is given to activities related to mobility and academic cooperation, but not to investment in infrastructure or research activities that do not have a clear link to education. The activities of the

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[1] Diku (2018b).

projects vary but can include, for instance, joint development of courses and educational tools and materials, staff mobility or development of joint degrees.

All projects must include student mobility, but the number of incoming and outgoing students does not have to be balanced. Emphasis is put on students from partner countries coming to Norway, and the duration of stay should be at least three months, although stays of shorter duration may also be supported. Some projects also include South-South mobility. The purpose of mobility can for instance be partaking in classes or courses, conducting fieldwork, or receiving supervision. The 2018 call for applications stated that projects should focus on the MA level. Activities for BA or PhD levels could also be included, but the programme does not support mobility at the BA level. As a main rule, students from partner countries should receive their degree from their home institution, and their stay should not exceed 12 months at the MA level or 18 months at the PhD level. Exceptions can be made from this rule if the partner university does not offer a relevant study programme, and if the project is planning to develop a MA or PhD programme at the partner university.

From the Quota Scheme to NORPART

NORPART succeeds the Quota Scheme, which ran from 1994 until 2016. The Quota Scheme supported students from developing countries, the West Balkans, Eastern Europe, and central Asia. Students received a student loan from the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund (Lånekassen) to finance studies towards a full degree in Norway, and the loan was converted into a grant if the graduates returned to their home countries after completing their studies. The scheme covered degrees at BA, MA and PhD levels alike.

The Quota Scheme was evaluated by DAMVAD in 2014. It was found that the programme had a strong developmental effect. More than 4,500 students had completed a degree under the programme, and findings indicated that the students got better jobs than what they would have otherwise without a Norwegian degree. The study also found that a large proportion of the quota students, 70 percent, returned to their respective home countries after completing a degree. On the other hand, the evaluation concluded that the contribution towards internationalisation of Norwegian HEIs was limited. The evaluation also pointed out that while such a scholarship programme can help solve capacity challenges in higher education in the Global South in the short term, it does not necessarily contribute to building institutions and increased capacity in the long run. Partner institutions were to varying degrees involved in deciding what was offered to their students, and the programme lacked systematic considerations of what was relevant and necessary for the partner country.

As part of the 2016 National budget, the Norwegian government took the initiative to discontinue the Quota Scheme, on basis of the conclusions from the evaluation report, suggesting instead that the funds be reallocated towards new partnership programmes for collaboration with selected developing countries and BRICS countries.[2] The initiative sparked debate in the Standing Committee on Education and Research, but the discontinuation was approved by Parliament. In Recommendation 12 S (2015-16), the committee noted the following:

The committee supports the ambition of a more binding collaboration than what the current Quota Scheme represents, but at the same time stresses that the Quota Scheme has given a large number of students from developing countries an opportunity to study in Norway. Student mobility is important

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[2] Prop 1 S (2015-2016). Proposition to the Storting from the Ministry of Education and Research.

for strengthening capacity and expertise in the students' home countries. The committee therefore sets as preconditions that student mobility must be a central aspect of the new programmes, and that the transition to new programmes involves that at least the same number of students from developing countries are given the opportunity to study in Norway in the future. The committee further sets as a precondition that the government will make it possible for students to complete full degree studies in Norway. [Our translation]

Two-thirds of the funds from the Quota Scheme were redirected to NORPART. One-third went to measures related to the Panorama strategy, mainly the UTFORSK and INTPART programmes. This strategy facilitates cooperation in education and research with the BRICS countries and Japan. The division into several discrete programmes signalled that cooperation with developing countries required an approach that differed from that with the BRICS countries. The Eastern European and central Asian countries which were among the Quota Scheme countries, are today covered by other programmes and are not included among the NORPART partner countries.

In the 2016 letter of allocation, the MER gave Diku the responsibility of administering and developing the programme on behalf of the MER and the MFA.

The new partnership programme shall emphasise academic quality and internationalisation and contribute to closer collaboration between HEIs in Norway and developing countries. Through this collaboration, the programme shall contribute to building expertise in developing countries. The programme shall contribute to collaborations between HEIs in Norway and developing countries about measures that can create long-term results beyond the expertise that individual students build through mobility. Academic collaboration around study programmes and teaching will contribute to strengthening the academic communities on the long term. The goal is a more equal collaboration. (Ministry of Education and Research, 2015b, our translation).

Purpose of the evaluation

Our evaluation of the NORPART programme is partly a programme evaluation and partly a process evaluation, as it assesses both the design and achievements of the programme as well as different processes and procedures in its operation (e.g. administration and selection process).

The main purpose of the evaluation is to assess NORPART's model, administration and achievements in relation to the overall aim and objectives of the programme. Furthermore, the evaluation shall make recommendations about further development and strengthening of the programme. This purpose relates to Diku's plan to develop a programme document as a stronger governing instrument for the programme before the next call for applications in early 2021.

The evaluation covers the period from the inception of the programme in 2015/2016 until 2020 and includes all the 46 projects in the current programme portfolio. The evaluation is commissioned three years after the launch of the programme, at a point when the funded projects are either in their initial phase (2018 call) or well into their five-year project period (2016 call). Thus, the evaluation must be understood as a formative evaluation aiming to assess whether the programme's model, implementation and achievements at this stage are promising – as well as identifying any needs for adjustments to realise the programme's full potential. The formative character is reflected in Diku's

explicit call for recommendations towards further development and strengthening of the programme, that would enhance its ability to achieve its overall goal.

We have structured the evaluation into four main evaluation areas:

- ◆ Programme design (chapter 2)
- ◆ Administration (chapter 3)
- ◆ Achievement of objectives (chapter 4)
- ◆ Conclusions and recommendations (chapter 5)

The main question of the first evaluation area is whether the programme is adequately to achieve its objectives. In this chapter we investigate whether the programme has a clear and formalised goal hierarchy and assess whether the programme's activities seem expedient for achieving its objectives and goals.

The second evaluation area addresses the various administrative processes of the programme, in particular the calls for applications, the selection of projects eligible for funding, the reporting requirements and the follow-up of ongoing projects. The main evaluation question of this area is whether these administrative processes are adequate and appropriate in relation to the objectives and goals of the programme.

In the third evaluation area we assess the programme's achievements thus far vis-à-vis its objectives and overall goal.

The fourth evaluation area summarises the main findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for further programme development.

Methodology and data

The purpose of all evaluations is to assess the achievements and results of a specific project or intervention. The question thus arises as to what methods of measurement are appropriate, effective, and reliable. We have chosen a research design that comprises both qualitative and quantitative data collection, as insights garnered from qualitative investigation may provide the contextual background needed to interpret quantitative information. Moreover, not all social phenomena are easily or justifiably reduced to numbers. For that reason, qualitative information as a basis for narratives is useful as a complement to quantitative information. Furthermore, we have applied a sequential data collection design, thus allowing the findings from one data source to benefit the development of data collection tools for subsequent data collection. Our design involves the following data sources:

Desk study of relevant background documents, including policy and programme documents, as well as calls, guidelines and reports related to the programme. Given NORPART's connection to the erstwhile Quota Scheme, we have also perused documents relevant to the transition between the two programmes. Furthermore, we have studied the existing project portfolio deriving from the 2016 and 2018 calls, including available data on activities implemented, such as mobilities, courses, etc. These data stem from the projects' annual reporting to Diku and describe project status as of December 2019.

Interviews with stakeholders: In the initial phase of the evaluation we conducted interviews with the programme coordinators at Diku, as well as representatives of the two funders, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We also included an interview with Norad, which has been delegated the responsibility of following up the NORPART agreement by the MFA. To shed light on the project selection process we also included an interview with the leader of the Programme Board.

Case studies: In line with recommendations in the tender specification, our research design involved field visits and interviews with key informants at selected Norwegian institutions and their cooperating partners as well as students participating in project activities in Norway and partner countries. We organised these research activities as a series of three case studies, each built around one project. The structure of each case is illustrated below:

Figure 1.1: Summary of case design

Interviews with:
- Project coordinator
- Administrative and academic management of hosting unit
- Faculty directly involved in the project
- Visiting students from partner country
- Norwegian students returned from visits to partner institution
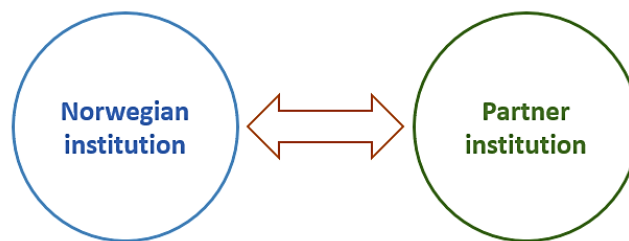
Norwegian institution ⟷ **Partner institution**

Interviews with:
- Project coordinator
- Administrative and academic management of hosting unit
- Faculty directly involved in the project
- Students returned from visits to Norway
- Visiting Norwegian students

The three case projects were all selected in accordance with the following criteria:

- *Call:* Minimum two out of three projects from the 2016 call, as 2018 projects have had less time to operate;
- *Partner country*: To reflect the distribution of partner countries, two of the projects should have a main partner in Africa, and one in Asia;
- *Academic discipline*: Some variation in academic disciplines;
- *Norwegian HEI partner*: To maximise variation, projects should be selected from three different Norwegian institutions.

Due to the measures implemented to combat the spread of COVID-19, the case studies could not be conducted as planned. Rather than face-to-face interviews at the select HEIs in the South and their partners in Norway, interviews had to be conducted through digital platforms, using WhatsApp in Africa and Asia, and Skype in Norway. The interviews were either conducted in English or in Norwegian. When we use direct quotes from interviews conducted in Norwegian, we have translated them into English.

Although all the informants were interviewed as planned, we still believe that some information might have been lost when interacting digitally rather than in person on the informants' own turf. As such, we recommend that later evaluations of the programme include field work, as was originally planned for this evaluation.

Surveys geared towards project coordinators and students: To obtain generalisable data on project participants' experiences with the programme, we conducted two surveys: one geared towards the student population and one towards the project coordinators.

The coordinator survey questionnaire was distributed among the population of coordinators in Norway and in the South, amounting to two respondents per project and a total of 92 respondents. We received a total of 70 responses, which equals 77 percent of the population. This should be considered a good response rate. The distribution between project coordinators from Norway and the South was fairly balanced, with 38 from Norway and 32 from the South. We got answers from at least one of the project coordinators for 42 of the 46 NORPART projects.

The student survey was originally planned as a population survey covering both outgoing and incoming students. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, we had to alter these plans in order to avoid validity problems. As campuses were closed across the world, we assumed that many students in the Global South would be without internet access, and therefore unable to respond to the survey. The lockdown would most likely have affected the response rate significantly. It is also likely that it might have resulted in biased data, as there is a presumptive correlation between socioeconomic background and access to internet outside of campus. We therefore decided to substitute the student survey directed towards incoming students to Norway with seven additional student interviews.[3]

The survey geared towards outgoing students from Norway was carried out as planned. The survey questionnaire went out to 160 outgoing students. This equals 74 percent of the total population of Norwegian students who have gone on mobility through NORPART, according to numbers recorded by Diku.[4] We received answers from 110 students. This equals 69 percent of those who received the survey questionnaire, and 51 percent of the population.

The surveys were developed towards the end of the case study period, so that the case study material could inform the development of relevant and precise survey questions and categories.

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[3] In October 2020, the student survey will be administered to students in the South, as many campuses have reopened. As the survey is administered after the evaluation period has ended, results will not be included in the report, but will be made available to Diku.

[4] The e-mail addresses for mobile students were supplied by their Norwegian home institution. Some institutions lacked addresses for some of their outgoing students from Norway, and we were therefore not able to obtain addresses for the entire population. Additionally, a few students have had several mobility stays through NORPART. These have probably been counted twice in the estimated total population but received only one survey questionnaire.

Figure 1.2: Summary of research design

Phase 1: Background	Phase 2: In-depth	Phase 3: A broader view	Phase 4: Analysis
Desk study - Documents - Project portfolio	Case studies	Survey to project coordinators	Analysis and report
Stakeholder interviews		Survey incoming and outgoing students	
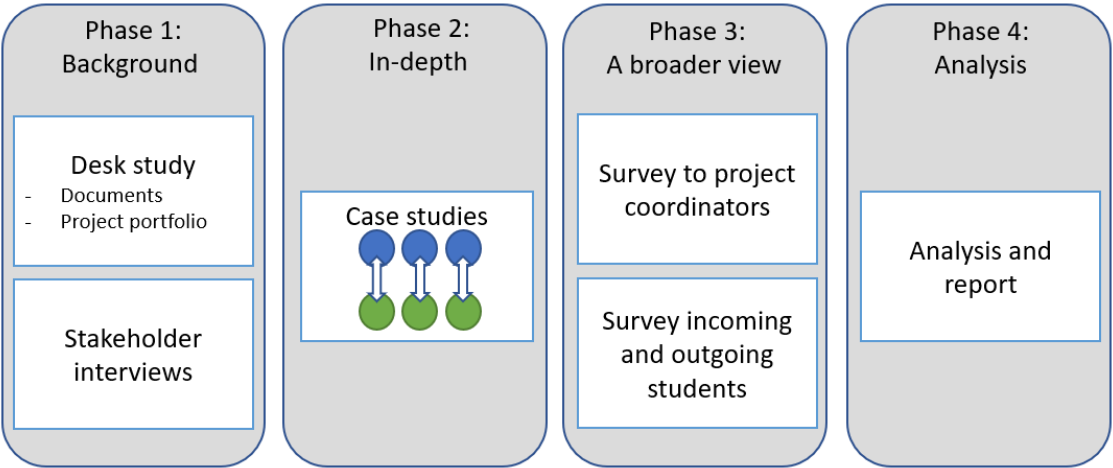
2 Programme design

This chapter discusses the relationship between the programme's design and its objectives. The overall evaluation question guiding the inquiry is the following: Is the programme adequately designed in order to reach its objectives and goals? As the programme is co-funded by the MFA and the MER, and therefore expected to contribute to both higher education and development policy goals, an important question is whether the objectives and goals might be in conflict or mutually reinforcing. Furthermore, we consider whether the activities of the programme are relevant to the objectives and goals. Finally, we have conducted a desk study of two similar programmes in order to investigate whether relevant elements or experiences from these may inform further NORPART programme development.

Review model

When conducting a programme evaluation, it is useful to develop a model that describes linkages between programme objectives, resources, outputs, outcomes and impact. A model like this is usually based on a *programme theory*, i.e. assumptions upon which an activity is expected to lead to specific results. In other words, the model illustrates a sequence or chain of cause-and-effect relationships. If the expected outcomes and impact do not materialise, the assumptions that the model is built upon may be invalid. Or, alternatively, the implementation of the programme has not progressed as envisaged.

For the purpose of this evaluation, we have developed a model for NORPART derived from generic programme evaluation models used by the OECD[5] and the Norwegian Government Agency for Financial Management.[6] The content of the model is based on our reading of relevant programme documents, including the calls for applications.

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[5] OECD (n.d.).
[6] SSØ (2007).

Figure 2.1: Programme theory for the NORPART programme

Conditions	Input	Activities	Output	Outcome	Impact
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Rooted in **higher education policy** and **development policy** goals. Programme designed to enhance academic quality at HEIs in developing countries as well as in Norway through institutional cooperation and mobility based on mutual academic interests	Financial input: Approx. 220 mill. NOK in the period 2017 – 2023 Target group: HEIs in Norway partnering with HEIs in 39 selected developing countries Main features and requirements: Funding activities for partnership establishment and student mobility with up to 5 mill. for five years	*Programme administration:* Preparation of calls for proposals; Dissemination of programme information to target group; Selection process, project follow-up, report compilation *Project activities:* Activities related to: 1) project development; 2) implementation of educational cooperation	Widespread awareness of programme in target group; Selection of the most promising and efficient projects; Sufficient information about project status Joint curricula, courses, programmes and degrees; New educational materials/methods; Better systems for credit transfer; Student mobility; summer schools, guest lecturing, work placement etc.	1) Increased mobility of students from developing countries to Norway, including mobility in connection with work placements 2) Increased mobility of students from Norway to developing countries, including mobility in connection with work placements 3) Strengthened partnerships for education and research between developing countries and Norway 4) Increased quality and internationalisation of academic programmes at participating institutions	Enhance the quality of higher education in Norway and developing countries through academic cooperation and mutual student mobility Ripple effects to wider society

Goals and objectives

In this section we review the goal structure of the NORPART programme. As the programme is based in both educational and developmental policy, central evaluation questions when assessing the design of the programme are: are the goals and objectives relevant to both Norwegian higher education *and* development policy; are the of the various aims of the programme realistic, and are the goals and objectives in conflict or mutually reinforcing?

Overall goals

Enhance the quality of higher education in Norway and developing countries

The overall goal of the programme is rooted in both national educational and developmental policy, and is stated in column 1 and reflected in column 6 of the impact model: *To enhance the quality of higher education in Norway and developing countries through academic cooperation and mutual student mobility.* The goal formulation indicates a clear departure from traditional North-South capacity building programmes, as the programme is also expected to produce positive effects on quality at the participating Norwegian institutions. To the Ministry of Education and Research, the dual focus is important:

> *Some may think of this programme primarily as a development aid programme.*
> *We do not agree with that. It is an important tool for education policy – it shall*
> *enhance quality and knowledge in Norwegian higher education.*

<div align="right">Informant, MER</div>

In higher education policy, internationalisation is used actively as a means to improve quality in education. According to a 2016-17 white paper on quality in higher education "international collaboration is a precondition for the global development of knowledge and to ensure quality in Norwegian higher education" [our translation].[7] In line with other Norwegian internationalisation programmes, NORPART is based on established principles of international academic cooperation such as *quality*, *relevance*, *reciprocity* and the *building of long-term academic partnerships*.[8]

According to the MFA, NORPART is an important tool in Norwegian development policy. Education is one of five focus areas in the Norwegian development aid budget.[9] Furthermore, NORPART contributes towards the UN's sustainable development goal number 4: Quality education, which states that: *Obtaining a quality education is the foundation to improving people's lives and sustainable development.*[10]

The MFA considers improving performance on goal number 4 a precondition for achieving the other sustainable development goals, and for achieving the UN's overall sustainability goal: to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere.[11] According to the 2013-14 white paper "Education for development"[12], investing in higher education is important for health, development of industries and businesses, and primary and secondary education in areas where qualified personnel is in great need. The white paper states that Norway supports capacity building within higher education in developing countries by funding programmes in which HEIs in Norway collaborates with HEIs in the Global South.

The programme is ambitious in its aim to enhance the quality of higher education in both Norway and developing countries. This can be interpreted as expectations that the programme will contribute to enhancing the quality of the higher education systems in the involved countries, not just the quality at the involved institutions. We find that the design of the programme does not sufficiently support such an ambitious goal. If the programme is to improve the quality of higher education outside of the directly involved HEIs, it would be necessary to design activities to ensure spreading the quality also to HEIs that are not directly involved in the projects. Furthermore, only accredited HEIs are eligible as main partners in NORPART projects, a necessary precondition to ensure high quality projects and collaboration, but at the same time a hindrance to quality improvements at HEIs in the South that are not accredited. Moreover, changes to the educational system would require activities at the national level, similar to Key Action 3: Support for Policy Reform, of the Erasmus + programme.

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[7] Meld. St. 16 (2016-2017), p. 63.
[8] Ministry of Education and Research (2015a).
[9] Meld. St. 24 (2016–2017).
[10] The UN (n.d. a).
[11] A number of studies have found a strong correlation between improved quality of education and economic growth, see for instance Hanushek and Woessmann (2012).
[12] Meld. St. 25 (2013-14).

If the ambition is in fact limited to changes at the individual institutions participating in the programme, we would suggest reformulating the overall goal to reflect this; i.e. specifying that the aim is enhanced quality of education at *participating institutions*. Several informants involved in NORPART-projects even found this to be too ambitious. In chapter 4, where we assess achievement of objectives in NORPART thus far, we have chosen to interpret the overall goal as pertaining to quality enhancement at the involved institutions, not at the national level.

One of the questions we have asked in this part of the evaluation, is whether there is a conflict between the educational and developmental aspects of the overall goal. The stakeholders we interviewed did not see any such conflict, but they emphasised the importance of balancing the two. The MFA stressed that because the new sustainable development goals are universal, and not just focusing on the developing world, channelling funding towards quality improvements also in HEIs in Norway, is not in conflict with Norwegian developmental policy. The focus on quality improvement on both sides also signals a sound departure from what the interviewees referred to as a conventional and clientelist North-South relationship.

Ripple effects to wider society

NORPART is also expected to produce ripple effects. According to the calls, *international collaboration*, and thus closer connections to global knowledge production, *will enable the partners to effectively address local and global challenges*. Input from Diku indicates that this is an important goal of the programme. However, it is not an entirely explicit part of the goal structure, which consists of one overriding goal (above) and five discreet objectives (below). If Diku wants to stress the importance of this goal, we recommend that it is emphasised further, and potentially listed as an overriding goal of the programme.

We also recommend further operationalisation of this goal in future calls, and in the development of the programme document. Input from Diku indicates that its operationalisation means that 1) the involved HEIs collaborate with organisations and businesses outside of the academic sector, thus nurturing local development processes, and 2) that the programme has ripple effects to wider society. We find that this operationalisation to a very limited degree is reflected in the two calls thus far.[13] [14] We also do not see a direct link between the current goal formulation and Diku's operationalisation.

The description of the goal could also benefit from further operationalisation of how the projects could have ripple effects to wider society. Is it through collaborations with organisations and businesses outside of the academic sector, or through other mechanisms? The evaluation indicates a need to communicate this goal more clearly to applicants and awardees, thus improving the likelihood of achieving the desired impact.

Another issue concerning this goal pertains to its measurability. In interviews, informants in both the MFA and Norad expressed that they found this goal very ambitious and questioned whether it would

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[13] Both calls state the collaborations may include network partners outside of academia, and the 2018 call mention "better links between higher education and employers or social enterprises" as an example of expected results.
[14] In the impact model above this goal is marked in green to differentiate it from the other objectives and the overall goal which are explicit parts of the goal structure.

be possible to isolate and pinpoint the effects of the programme outside of the involved HEIs. We share this view.

There are currently several elements of the programme that support this goal. First, the programme allows for network partners, which can be other HEIs, but also private and public businesses, research institutes, non-governmental organisations or other formalised organisations in the partner countries. Second, engaging in collaborations with network partners within the framework of the partnership model may lay the ground for a more mutual and long-term partnership than other types of collaborations.

Objectives

According to the 2016 and 2018 calls for applications, the overall goal of NORPART is to be achieved through four objectives. In assessing the objectives, we have asked the following questions: How are the objectives expected to contribute towards the overall goal of enhanced quality at the partnering HEIs? Are all the objectives relevant in order to reach the overall goal? Are any of the objectives conflicting, thus potentially reducing the overall goal achievement?

The programme objectives are reflected in column 5 in the impact model above:

1) Increased mobility of students from developing countries to Norway, including mobility in connection with work placements;
2) Increased mobility of students from Norway to developing countries, including mobility in connection with work placements;
3) Strengthened partnerships for education and research between developing countries and Norway;
4) Increased quality and internationalisation of academic programmes at participating institutions.

The first two objectives concern student mobility. The incoming and outgoing mobility sojourns are expected to benefit the individual mobile students, who according to the 2016 and 2018 calls for applications, will "prosper academically and gain an international understanding, intercultural competence and access to international networks". According to Diku, the incoming and outgoing mobile students are also expected to contribute towards the overall goal of the programme, first by providing a different perspective to their host institution, and second by bringing new experiences and perspectives back to their home institution, thus contributing to *internationalisation at home.*[15]

The third objective concerns strengthening partnerships. According to the calls, partnerships are expected to benefit both non-mobile and mobile students and contribute towards the overall goal of improved quality at both institutions through knowledge sharing, network building, and the development of better and more relevant academic programmes. The fourth objective is to increase quality and internationalisation of academic programmes at the participating institutions.

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[15] According to Meld. St. 14 (2008-2009), in line with expectations from the Quality reform in higher education, more emphasis should be put on integrating international perspectives into all aspects of higher education. Creating international campuses is one mechanism through which to contribute to internationalisation at home.

In reviewing the four objectives, and their relationship to the overall goal, we see the need for some clarification or adjustments. Firstly, we will argue that the four objectives are in fact at different levels in a cause- and effect chain. For example, we find a clear link between objectives 3 and 4 and the overall goal – it is plausible that increased quality of academic programmes can lead to enhanced quality in education at the institutional level. Objectives 1 and 2 (increasing student mobility) are, in our view, at a lower level, as their effect on the overall goal is indirect, mediated by objective 4. In other words, student mobility can be seen as means to increase objective 4 (internationalisation of academic programmes). Further, we believe that increasing student mobility will not in and of itself lead to enhanced quality. Rather, the effect on quality depends on other factors related to the mobility, such as the involvement of mobile students during their stay and upon their return. However, these mechanisms – i.e. how student mobility is expected to have an effect on the overall goal – are not made explicit in the model.

In reviewing the goal structure of the programme, we have also considered whether any of the objectives are in conflict. We find objective 1, which is to *increase* mobility of students from developing countries to Norway, to be somewhat in conflict with the other three, especially objectives 3 and 4, which ultimately may have a larger effect on quality improvement at the institutional level as they are more systemic and can affect more students. The cost and administration of sending and receiving a high number of students from developing countries will necessarily reduce the projects' available resources and time allotted to activities other than incoming mobility. Indeed, in the process of developing NORPART, Diku (then SIU[16]) emphasised that demands for high mobility numbers:

"[…] can lead to the institutions prioritising the recruitment of a high number of students rather than other activities that can contribute to high quality in the partnerships."[17]

The objective of *increasing* student mobility from developing countries is rooted in the provisions set by the Standing Committee on Education and Research on the approval of the discontinuation of the Quota Scheme in favour of new partnership programmes, to the effect that "*at least the same number of students from developing countries are given the opportunity to study in Norway in the future."[18]*

In order to keep the influx of students from developing countries at Quota Scheme levels, each NOK 5 million budget would need to send 35 students over the course of the five-year funding period.[19] In a letter to the MER dated 16.03 2016, SIU pointed out that they find it unlikely that NORPART will have the same levels of student mobility as the Quota Scheme, unless the budget of the programme is increased.

In the process of developing the NORPART model, Diku invited Norwegian HEIs to give input to a call draft. One of the main reservations from the sector was that although the institutions welcomed emphasis on student mobility to Norway, they were concerned that too heavy emphasis on quantity could be very limiting for the programme, as a large share of the project budgets would be tied up in

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[16] The establishment of Diku in 2018 was a result of a merger between several government agencies, among them SIU.

[17] Letter from SIU to the Ministry of Education and Research 24.02.2016.

[18] Recommendation 12 S (2015-2016). Recommendation from the Standing Committee on Education, Research and Church Affairs to the Storting.

[19] Letter from SIU to the Ministry of Education and Research 24.02.2016.

mobility, and the mobility stays would be limited in duration. Diku agreed with the concerns of the sector, and therefore suggested that no minimum target number be set for the projects.

According to the MFA informant, developing courses and improving teaching at the institutions in the South would be a more expedient mechanism to achieve capacity building than sending large numbers of students from partnering institutions to Norwegian HEIs.

These varying points of view illustrate what the evaluation of the discontinuation of the Quota Scheme called a "foundational dilemma"[20] in the development of the NORPART programme, "between developing a broadly designed partnership programme and the desire to maintain the levels of student mobility" from the Quota Scheme. Ultimately, solving the inherent conflict between the various objectives, is a policy question. As long as the programme aims at increasing student mobility from developing countries at the same time as strengthening partnerships and improving quality at the partnering institutions, the dilemma will persist. In our view, while student mobility from the South is a relevant objective, we are hesitant to whether it is the most expedient mechanism to achieve the overall goal of enhanced quality of the partnering institutions.

Are the features and activities of NORPART relevant to achieving the goals of the programme?

In this part of the chapter we will investigate some of the main features and activities of the programme and discuss their relevance to the goals of the programme.

Applying a partnership model in North-South higher education cooperation

In reviewing the main features of the programme, we are first asking whether a partnership model is an expedient mechanism to achieving the objectives and goals of the programme. Although such a model is the basis for a number of higher education collaboration programmes, such as UTFORSK, INTPART and the High North Programme, applying such a model to collaboration with HEIs in developing countries is an innovative feature of the programme.

Applying a partnership model is strongly rooted in both Norwegian development and educational policy. Within developmental policy, the aim to utilise a partnership model is anchored in Sustainable Development Goal number 17[21], and asserted in the White paper 24, *Common Responsibility for Common Future*[22], which states that Norway should attempt to establish partnerships in all fields of aid the country is involved in, and in White paper 17[23], *Partner Countries in Norway's Development Policy,* stating that Norwegian aid policy should be based on mutual partnerships with selected countries. Within educational policy, it is held that the use of partnerships can contribute to ensuring that cooperation is based on quality, relevance, and reciprocity (see White Paper 16 2016-2017, p.

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[20] Diku (2018a).
[21] "Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development".
[22] Meld. St. 24 (2016-2017), p. 63.
[23] Meld St. 17 (2017-18), p. 10.

66). The use of partnerships in global higher education cooperation is also a key point in the global dimension of the Bologna process (White paper 14 2008-2009, p. 46).

Within educational cooperation, the core idea of the model is to build the various activities on binding, long-term partnerships between institutions in one or more countries, in contrast to project collaboration of limited duration, linked to individual researchers. Cooperation within a partnership model will normally be based on principles such as mutual interest and reciprocity and thus support the idea of a symmetric relationship that caters to the needs and interests of both parties, rather than the asymmetrical relationships which are often found within developmental aid. According to a report by the Research Council of Norway and Diku (2019:30), a central aim of the partnership model is that the educational activities developed through the partnership should have a wide reach at the involved institutions through integration into the institutions' regular academic programmes. An important argument in favour of using a partnership model within higher education cooperation with the Global South is that it will build capacity at the partner institution that benefits non-mobile students and staff, not just the mobile ones. On the other hand, an argument against the partnership model is that it requires investment in a number of different activities besides student mobility, thus channelling funds away from bringing students from developing countries to Norway, which is a political expectation that weighs heavily on the programme.

When asked about the advantages of using a partnership model in higher education cooperation between the North and the South, informants from Diku, MER and Norad emphasised that basing collaborations on institutional partnerships can counteract the problem of projects becoming too dependent on individuals. Partnership models are meant to ensure anchoring of the projects to the institution's leadership and administration. Several stakeholders also point out that the model works to ensure that the needs and interests of both sides of the partnership are met, and that it entails an acknowledgement of the fact that the South can have knowledge and expertise that the North needs, not just the other way around. When asked about the disadvantages of using this model, Diku points out that while it is balanced and equal in theory, in the end the resources come from Norway. Therefore, the partner in the South can become dependent on the North in the same way as in other modes of cooperation. The MFA pointed out that partnerships are a more time-consuming way of working. It takes longer for results to manifest themselves, compared to collaborative projects of a more *ad hoc* nature. Institutionalisation does not just happen by itself – it takes time and resources to ensure that leadership and administration are invested. Still, while acknowledging that the model is not perfect, all stakeholders believe it is the best option for North-South cooperation within higher education. We find that the application of the model in this programme is well-founded, and see no sound alternative option.

Partner countries

In the two calls thus far, 39 countries have been eligible NORPART partner countries. Of these countries, 22 are African, ten Asian, and seven Latin American. These countries represent a hybrid of prioritised development cooperation countries, and countries with which Norway has a history of academic collaboration, e.g. through the Quota Programme. Vietnam and Cameroon are examples of the latter. The following countries were also added after input on the draft call from the Norwegian HEIs: The Democratic Republic of Congo, East-Timor and Guatemala.

Although there may be no conflict between the two policy areas in the overall goal, the policy areas' diverging priorities are expressed in the list of eligible partner countries. While the MER favours a broader approach, the MFA and Norad prefer to concentrate the programme on fewer countries, in line with Norwegian development policy. While all the countries can be found on OECD's DAC list of ODA recipients, the list of NORPART partner countries is also considerably longer than the prioritised list of partner countries from the 2018-18 white paper "Partner Countries in Norway's Development Policy". The white paper divided future priorities partner countries in two categories: 1) Partners for long-term development cooperation (10 countries); and 2) Partners for stabilisation and conflict prevention (6 countries).[24] All these 16 prioritised partner countries are among the eligible NORPART partner countries.

The interviewee from Norad specifically brought up the choice of countries as one of the challenges related to diverging priorities, stating that:

> *There are many interests behind the selection of countries, i.e. continuity from the Quota Scheme*

Norad

Although the policy areas have differing priorities in terms of partner countries, we find a willingness on both sides to work towards finding solutions that are acceptable in both policy areas. Both the MER and Norad raised a discussion of whether to include South Africa as a partner country as an example of a manifestation of policy mismatch, but willingness to find common ground. According to the MER, South Africa is interesting from a higher education policy point of view, as the country has a number of high-quality institutions. However, it is not among the prioritised partner countries for development cooperation. According to Norad, it is not a priority to spend development aid money on top-ranked South-African universities. At the same time, Norad sees South Africa as a potential capacity builder in South-South academic relations. The agreed compromise between the MER and MFA is to cooperate with historically disadvantaged universities, i.e. universities that were created during apartheid to cater to Africans and other non-white populations.

Activities

NORPART supports a broad range of activities, including all the main forms of internationalisation as defined in White paper 16 (2016-2017, p. 63): Student and staff mobility; teaching activities such as guest lecturing and supervision, summer schools and intensive courses; development of joint courses; and development of joint degrees. Of these types of internationalisation, mobility is regarded as the least complex, whereas development of joint degrees is the most complex.

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[24] Prioritised Partner countries, Meld. St. 17 (2017-18):
Country category 1, Partners for long-term development cooperation: Ethiopia, Colombia, Ghana, Indonesia, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Tanzania and Uganda.
Country category 2, Partners for stabilisation and conflict prevention: Afghanistan, Mali, Niger, Palestine, Somalia and South Sudan.

Mobilities versus other activities

The two calls for applications display an ambiguous approach as to what activities the projects are expected to include. On the one hand, the calls are quite open and flexible, leaving it to the projects to choose the relevant activities:

"Support may be granted to activities that contribute to fulfilling the programme's objectives. […] The applicants should design the projects in the way they consider best suited to achieve the project goals and the programme's objectives."

2016 call for proposals

Both calls include lists of typical activities eligible for support, while stating that these lists are not exhaustive. At the same time, in line with the provisions from the Standing Committee on Research and Education, the calls make clear that mobility from the South should be a priority in the projects:

Student mobility through academic partnerships is a core element in the programme, with emphasis on the mobility of students from partner countries to Norway.

Based on the mobility numbers of the 2016 awardees, the projects were on average to send 28 students on minimum three-month stays to Norway. According to the minutes from a 2017 annual consultation meeting with the two ministries and Norad, Diku considered this a high number, especially as the projects have a wide spectrum of activities and ambitious aims beyond mobilities. Diku strongly advised against further emphasis on the quantity of student mobilities to Norway in the 2018 call, as:

"This will have a less positive effects on the other objectives of the programme, and ultimately result in the programme reaching fewer students".

Another consequence SIU was concerned about was that too great emphasis on quantity could lead to a reduction in the duration of the stays, resulting in poorer learning outcomes and effects of *internationalisation at home* at Norwegian institutions.

In order to communicate more clearly to the applicants that mobility numbers comprise an important evaluation criterium in assessing the applications, the 2018 call included an even stronger emphasis on student mobility to Norway:

"All projects shall include plans for mutual student mobility, with substantial numbers of mobile students from partner countries to Norway for stays of minimum 3 months' duration."

2018 call for proposals

Design of mobility stays

Some aspects of the design of the NORPART mobility stays have met some criticism, especially the length of the mobility stays and the rates for individual financial support.[25]

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[25] Eriksen and Samdal (2019); Mo and Gornitzka (2019).

Length of mobility stays

Both leadership at UiB and UiO have argued that the mobility stays are too short.[26] They are concerned that both the mobile and the non-mobile students will benefit less from shorter exchanges, as the time to integrate academically and socially is more limited,[27] and that effects on capacity building in the South will be limited.

The case study revealed some differing views on the length of stays. Two of the Norwegian project coordinators found the available range for mobility stays to be adequate and flexible. They even argued that Diku should allow for shorter mobilities, as three months may be unfeasible for some students. On the other hand, two administrative leaders and one project coordinator held that the length of the stays are disproportionally short for many of the incoming students, considering the amount of administration associated with each incoming student from the South.

The criticism from UiB and UiO concerning the length of mobility stays are based on a comparison with the Quota Scheme. Although we do agree that capacity building through mobile students may be reduced when comparing NORPART to the Quota Scheme, we believe a more broadly designed partnership programme has greater potential for effects on capacity building.

Levels of financial support for mobilities

There has also been some concern that the level of financial support for mobilities is too low. The rates for incoming and outgoing student mobility are based on those of the State Educational Loan Fund/Lånekassen's (MA level) and the Norwegian Research Council's (PhD level) rates[28]. The rates for incoming students to Norway meet the requirements for means of subsistence set by the Norwegian Directorate for Immigration.

Findings from our empirical data collection indicate that most students are satisfied with the current level of financial support. However, as survey data from incoming students to Norway are lacking, there is more uncertainty about how the students from the South evaluate the rates.
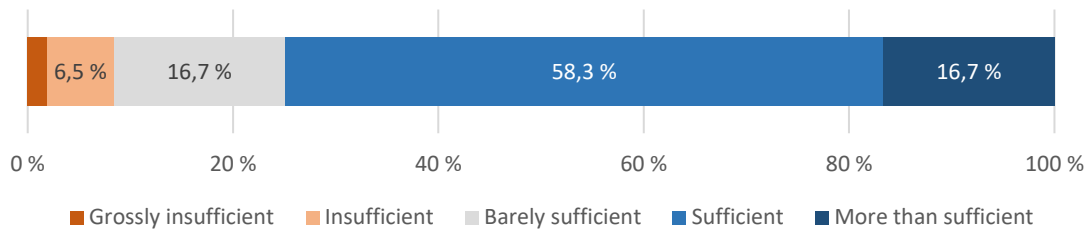
Outgoing students from Norway are in general satisfied with the stipend they receive when on mobility stays. As they are generally funded by Lånekassen, for most students the NORPART stipend is an additional funding source. According to the student survey, only 8 percent find the rates insufficient or grossly insufficient, and seventeen percent even find that the rates are more than sufficient. One student we interviewed told us he used the stipend to pay for a research assistant to help with data collection and translation.

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[26] According to the calls, student mobility stays can last 3-12 months for MA level students and 3-18 months for PhD students.
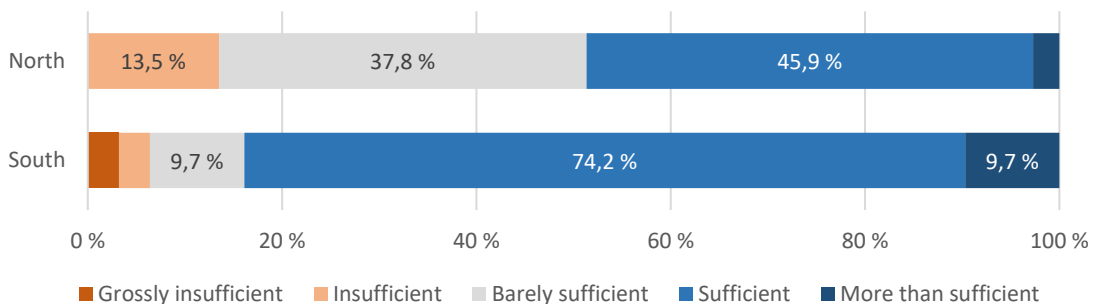[27] In chapter 4 we have investigated whether students' experienced benefits vary according to length of stay.
[28] At the MA level, rates for incoming students are up to NOK 10 825 per month, and up to NOK 6 000 per month for outgoing Norwegian students. At the PhD level, rates for incoming as well as outgoing students are up to NOK 17 000 monthly.

Figure 2.2: "How would you characterise the levels of financial support
that you received for your stay?" (N=108)

6,5 %	16,7 %	58,3 %		16,7 %

0 % 20 % 40 % 60 % 80 % 100 %

■ Grossly insufficient ■ Insufficient ■ Barely sufficient ■ Sufficient ■ More than sufficient

In assessing the rates for incoming students, we rely on interviews with a sample of students, in addition to survey data from the project coordinators. All of the incoming students to Norway we interviewed were satisfied with the stipend they received and found it sufficient to cover the costs of living. Interestingly, the graph below shows that while the project coordinators in the South mostly find the student stipends to be sufficient for students from the South, a larger share of the project coordinators in Norway believe the rates are insufficient or barely sufficient. Some project coordinators and staff in Norway raised the aspect that while outgoing students from Norway mostly have other funding sources in addition to the stipend from NORPART, such as Lånekassen, incoming students to Norway often have no other funding source, and that their stipend is just barely enough to cover the basics.

Figure 2.3: "How would you characterise the financial support for
student mobility from the partner country to Norway?" (N=68)

North	13,5 %	37,8 %	45,9 %	
South	9,7 %	74,2 %		9,7 %

0 % 20 % 40 % 60 % 80 % 100 %

■ Grossly insufficient ■ Insufficient ■ Barely sufficient ■ Sufficient ■ More than sufficient

Introduction of full degrees

One of the preconditions for supporting the discontinuation of the Quota Scheme set by the Standing committee on Research and Education was that the new programme would allow for full degree studies. Since its inception, the programme has opened up for full degrees only in situations where the partner country does not yet offer an accredited study programme at the relevant level.[29] The Standing committee's provision was followed up in a petition resolution from 2018-19, in which Parliament asked the Government to provide a response as to how the study opportunities for students from the Global South can be improved through the strengthening of the NORPART

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[29] In these cases, the mobility period(s) in Norway may be extended to 18 months (MA) or 24 months (PhD).

programme.[30] The Government responded to this request in the 2020 national budget by adding NOK 15 million to the budget, earmarked for piloting full degree studies within already awarded projects.[31]

The introduction of full degree studies into the NORPART programme is controversial. Several Norwegian HEIs strongly disagreed with DAMVAD's conclusion that the Quota students did not contribute to internationalisation at home. They found that full degree students were more integrated in the study programmes than exchange students and continued academic collaborations with faculty at the host institution upon their return. Therefore, a number of HEIs opposed the decision to discontinue the Scheme and have been avid proponents of reintroducing opportunities for full degree studies for students from the Global South.[32]

From a development policy perspective, the MFA and Norad are hesitant about full degree studies because of the risk of brain drain. According to the DAMVAD evaluation, about 70 percent of the quota students from developing countries returned home after completing their degree in Norway, indicating some brain drain, at least short term. According to the informant from the MER, representatives from African governments have expressed that scholarship programmes like the Quota Scheme are not very popular from their perspective, as the countries may lose some of their brightest minds through these schemes.

The MFA also argues that from a development perspective, it is more important to develop courses and build capacity at the institutions in the South, than providing individual students with a full degree. The MFA and Norad are concerned that offering full degrees in Norway may undermine efforts to build capacity in the South:

> *" When you build up a master's programme at a university in a developing country, and then give out scholarships so the same pool of students can complete their degree in Norway instead, we risk undermining what we are trying to build."*

Informant, Norad

At the same time, Norad and the MFA concede that full degree studies in Norway potentially can have positive development effects if the students return home. Full degree studies allow students to become more integrated in the student body, gain more extensive networks, and learn more about the Norwegian political and social model that they can bring home, such as knowledge about democracy and anti- corruption. To Norad, what is important is that the different initiatives complement each other rather than compete. We support this notion, and recommend that when the pilot is implemented, Diku continues the application of the current criteria in the selection of students to full scholarships, i.e. that scholarships are awarded only when a relevant study programme is not available at the relevant level (MA of PhD), and when there is a plan to develop a programme at that level at the partner institution. The application of these criteria also ensures that the students can

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[30] Petition resolution nr. 198, 12, December 2018, from the treatment of Prop. 1 S (2018–2019), in line with Recommendation 12 S (2015–2016).

[31] After a call within awarded NORPART projects in the early spring of 2020, 53 students divided on 38 projects were awarded full degree scholarships. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the MFA decided to reallocate the funds in a revision to the National Budget. As per today, there is some uncertainty as to when the funds will be reallocated towards the full degree scholarships.

[32] See e.g. Diku (2018a); Mo and Gornitzka (2019); Eriksen and Samdal (2019).

contribute directly to capacity building in developing the new programme upon return to their home institution.

In the process of designing the NORPART programme, Diku on several occasions warned against putting too much emphasis on full degree studies, as they believed it would impede the programme's abilities to reach its objectives and overall goal:

Increased emphasis on full degree studies in Norway will reduce the programme's potential of reaching the objectives of strengthened partnerships, and increased quality and internationalisation of academic programmes in developing countries. Consequently, SIU does not consider it expedient to increase access to full degree studies in Norway.[33]

Some of the objections raised against full degree studies in the NORPART programme are well founded. The question is therefore whether it is possible to introduce full degree studies in such a way as to mitigate some of the expected negative effects. In the full degree pilot, the decision to send students on full degree is anchored at a project or institutional level to ensure a closer relationship between the host and sending institution. Thus, the sending institution can choose candidates based on their needs for capacity so that the students can return and contribute to capacity building at their institution. When students maintain a connection to their sending institution, the risk of brain drain may be reduced both because of student loyalty and increased likelihood of employment.

In selecting students for the full degree pilot, it is also important that efforts are made to reach marginalised groups, a priority for Norwegian development policy.

Environmental sustainability

Thus far, environmental sustainability has not been a focus of the programme. Neither of the two calls have raised the issue, and according to Diku informants, it was not a priority in the development of the programme. In line with the increased attention to the issue both nationally and internationally,[34] Diku has requested that the evaluation makes recommendations as to the programme's environmental sustainability could be enhanced.

Reducing the negative environmental impact of a programme for international cooperation raises a foundational dilemma in Norwegian higher education and internationalisation policy. It involves complex trade-offs, which ultimately needs to be tackled at a political level. According to the long-term plan for research and higher education 2019 - 2028, "research and education are a key part of the effort to reach the climate targets" (p. 22). On the one hand, high quality education is key to equipping the world's citizens with the means to fight climate change, and to contribute towards other SDG goals such as *Quality education for all* (SDG 4) and *Reduction of inequalities in and between countries* (SDG 10). On the other hand, mobility associated with international collaboration contributes to climate change, mainly due to increased emissions of CO_2 stemming from air travel. The

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[33] Letter from Diku to the Ministry of Education and Research 16.03.2016.
[34] See e.g. de Wit and Altbach (2020).

Norwegian government's goal to increase outgoing student mobility to 50 percent of all students would exacerbate that negative effect.[35]

Between 1999 and 2016, the number of students who go abroad for higher education has grown from 1.4 million to 4.8 million.[36] More research is still needed to shed light on the impact of internationalisation on climate change, although available studies show that the greenhouse gas emissions associated with international student mobility are substantial, and growing faster than overall global emissions.[37] At the same time, emissions per student is decreasing, as patterns of mobility are changing because a growing share of international students remain relatively close to their home countries. According to Shields (2019), emissions from a single long-haul flight can easily exceed the entire annual emissions of an average individual in many countries. Therefore, drastically reducing emissions from long distance travel is an essential response to climate change.[38]

Recently, the issue of reducing the carbon footprint of international education has been given increased attention from the field itself: Laura E. Rumbley, associate director at the European Association for international Education (EAIE), stated in an article earlier this year that international mobility contributes directly to the global climate crisis, and encourages the international higher education community to commit to action and create immediate solutions to offset the detrimental effects (Rumbley, 2020); The Japan Student Services Organisation has decided to stop supporting short-term exchanges as from 2021; and others have recommended drastically restricting short-term study mobility, and choosing more carbon neutral transportation.[39]

How can a programme like NORPART, which is founded on collaboration with countries geographically far apart, become more environmentally sustainable? Shifting the balance towards long-term student mobility will *pari passu* reduce the ecological footprint of the programme. However, such a shift will come at a cost of other objectives. It would reduce the programme's contribution towards the objectives of increasing incoming and outgoing mobility, as fewer students total would go on mobility stays. Furthermore, as we will discuss in chapter 4, inducing Norwegian students to embark on mobility stays has been a challenge in the projects thus far, and it seems that many of the Norwegian mobility students prefer short-term sojourns at HEIs in the Global South. Excluding short term mobility altogether as an option for outgoing mobility might therefore further discourage Norwegian students to go on mobility stays through NORPART.

Clearly, in deciding whether to continue to promote short term student mobility, an assessment of the costs versus the benefits will have to be made.

Another option is to reduce staff mobility, and substitute physical meetings with digital meetings for both staff and leadership. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic many projects will already have had to shift towards more digital meetings. As their experiences with how the pandemic has affected project collaboration has not been a topic for exploration in this evaluation, we recommend gathering input from the projects on this matter. A potential barrier to productive digital meetings is the yet uneven spread of high speed internet. High speed internet is particularly limited in rural areas in some of the

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[35] Meld. St. 16 (2016-2017).
[36] UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2018).
[37] Shields (2019).
[38] Rockström et al. (2017).
[39] De Wit and Altbach (2020).

Least developed Countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa.[40] In chapter four we will investigate the projects' use of digitalised methods of collaboration, and the project coordinators' views on the potential for these methods to replace international travel.

Comparing NORPART to other programmes for HEI cooperation with developing countries

As part of the evaluation of the design of the NORPART programme, Diku requested a comparison to other relevant programmes for higher education cooperation with developing countries. The purpose is to investigate whether the NORPART programme can benefit from elements or experiences from similar programmes.

For such a comparison to be useful, selected programmes should be similar to NORPART along core dimensions. First, the programmes should be based on a **partnership approach.** Second, and related, the programmes should have goal structures that are comparable to that of NORPART. Most importantly, the programmes should benefit **both sides of the partnership**. Lastly, we looked for programmes in countries with a **similar policy framework** to that of Norway. For instance, some countries use programmes for HEI cooperation with developing countries actively for recruitment into their national work force, whereas counteracting brain drain is an important priority in Norwegian development policy.

Based on these criteria, we selected two programmes for the purpose of comparison: The German DIES-Partnerships,[41] and the Swedish Linnaeus-Palme Partnerships.[42]

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[40] According to the United Nations Broad Band commission for sustainable development (2019), fixed broadband, that is, dedicated, physical links of high-speed internet, connected to homes, offices, and governments, has had very limited reach in Africa. Although fixed broadband penetration has continuously increased in recent years in urban areas largely because of a sharp drop in subscription charges, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa, Africa still has the lowest penetration of fixed broadband worldwide.

[41] DAAD (2020).
[42] Swedish Council for Higher Education (2020a; 2020b).

DIES-Partnerships

DIES partnerships with Higher Education Institutions in Developing Countries is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and administrated by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). Thus, in contrast to NORPART, the DIES partnerships are primarily rooted in development policy. The programme is part of the DIES umbrella, consisting of different programmes aimed at improving university management. The programme is funding mobility of staff and students; teaching; field trips; workshops and conferences; development and revision of teaching materials; and the development of digital materials for teaching. This list of activities eligible for support is similar to that of NORPART. The projects last four years and can receive a maximum of EUR 200,000.[1] This is less than half of the maximum amount that a NORPART project can receive for a five-year project period.

Desired outputs of the programme are the development of training programmes in university management; that staff at the partner institution have subject-specific and interdisciplinary qualifications; the creation of processes and structures for university management; and extension and consolidation of individual contacts between participating HEIs as well as other institutions.

The programme objectives are:

1. The quality and relevance of courses offered at partner higher institutions is improved;
2. Institutional university management is improved;
3. German higher education institutions have acquired expertise in development cooperation;
4. Subject-related, development-related networks are set up between higher education institutions and other institutions.

The stated purpose, and what we perceive as the desired impact of the programme, is to *"contribute to the sustainable development and creation of high-quality, cosmopolitan higher education institutions in Germany and partner countries"*.

Linnaeus-Palme Partnerships

Linnaeus-Palme is a Swedish programme that supports partnership projects between HEIs in Sweden and in low- and middle-income countries. The programme is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and administrated by the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR). Thus, this is also a programme rooted primarily in development policy. In contrast to NORPART, Linnaeus-Palme is not meant to cover all costs of a project but is rather a supplement to other international partnership projects that the relevant HEI has.

The programme supports the exchange of staff and students between HEIs in Sweden and those of partner countries. To qualify for funding, the partnership must have an equal number of mobilities in both directions. The programme also funds language classes, workshops, seminars, digital initiatives, or other activities that contribute towards building capacity or strengthening partnerships, but the main focus is mobility.

The programme is anchored in the *Strategy for capacity development, partnerships and methods that support Agenda 2030 for sustainable development*, published by the Swedish MFA.[1] Linnaeus-Palme does not have a programme document that explicitly outlines a goal structure for the programme, but according to the Linnaeus-Palme website, the purpose of the programme is to:

1. Strengthen partnerships between Swedish HEIs and HEIs in low- and middle-income countries;
2. Contribute towards institutional capacity development;
3. Broaden the interests for development cooperation among young people, including for teachers and students to develop an interest in and ability to contribute towards the 2030 Agenda.

These three goals can be seen as the desired outcomes of the programme. The UHR state that they also strive to offer *international exchanges and partnerships that contribute towards increased quality of education*. We interpret this as the desired impact of the programme.

Comparing NORPART to similar programmes internationally

The role of mobility

When assessing the goal structures of the two programmes in the desk study, we found that mobility plays a different role in them than in NORPART. Rather than being included at the outcome level, mobility is a means to achieve other ends. Even for Linnaeus-Palme, which is primarily a mobility programme, mobility is not an explicit objective but rather a means to achieve strengthened partnerships, capacity development and broadened interests for development cooperation. Hence, emphasis is on the *purpose* of the mobilities rather than quantity. We believe that this may ensure that mobilities are of high quality and contribute towards the overall goal of the programme.

Institutional anchoring

In the Linnaeus-Palme programme, the application for funding must be part of a framework application from the central university level that contains all the applications from the institution. This can be a useful tool to ensure that all projects are anchored at the institutional level, in line with the aim of the partnership model. Furthermore, the framework application must justify that each project fits into the institution's work on internationalisation and describe how the institution will facilitate the successful completion of the project. It is stated that the institution has the overall responsibility for making sure that the conditions are conducive for the projects being completed on time and at a high quality.

Programme scope and goals

Compared to the other two programmes, the desired outcomes of NORPART are much more comprehensive. The programmes in the desk study have a narrower scope: whereas one emphasises mobility as its main activity, the other emphasises capacity building through enhanced university management. NORPART includes a wider range of goals and activities: mobility, strengthening of partnerships and increased quality and internationalisation of education. Secondly, neither of the programmes (or any of the other programmes we considered for the desk study) combine development and educational policy goals. Thus, the expectations of the NORPART programme, that collaborations should not only contribute towards capacity building in the South, but also towards quality improvements at the Norwegian partner institutions are unique, compared to similar programmes.

Compared to the programmes in the desk study, we will argue that NORPART is a highly ambitious programme in terms of the scope and complexity of the goals and objectives that the programme sets out to achieve. While there is not necessarily a tension between goals from developmental and educational policy, or between achieving the same outcomes on both sides of the partnership, it is questionable how much it is possible to achieve within a limited budget.

3 Administration and selection process

In this chapter we will review the administration of the NORPART programme. More specifically, this part of the evaluation is an assessment of the various administrative processes of the programme. These include the calls for applications, the selection of projects eligible for funding, reporting requirements and the follow-up of existing projects. The main evaluation question is whether the administration of the programme is adequate and appropriate in relation to the objectives and goals of the programme.

Assessing the calls for applications and the application process

In this section we discuss whether the calls for applications provide relevant and sufficient information to the potential applicants. In our review we have examined whether the calls clearly state the objectives of the programme, if they include all relevant and necessary information, and whether the selection criteria are clearly defined and easily understandable. These aspects are important so that the applicants can develop relevant projects that will contribute towards the programme's goals. As NORPART is currently not governed by an overriding programme document, the calls for applications are the authoritative source of information about the programme, such as goals, objectives and activities eligible for funding. The content of the calls is therefore particularly important.

The NORPART delegasjonsvedtak[43,44] defines the administrative framework for the implementation of the programme. In this document, the MFA and the MER entrust Diku with the responsibility of establishing criteria for evaluating applications and appropriate indicators for goal achievement based on the programme's overall goals and priorities. According to the document, the criteria for goal achievement should be operationalised and defined in the calls for applications to potential grant recipients.

Calls

In our review of the two calls (2016 and 2018) we find that they include detailed information about the programme and the application process. They clearly state the objectives of the programme and the regulations concerning funding and eligible project activities. They also list examples of expected project results and elaborate the selection criteria. Detailed appendices outline application and budget guidelines, and the latter include specifications of length of stays and rates of support for mobility.

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[43] *Delegasjonsvedtak* from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research to SIU. Reference number 15/4692. Attachment 3.
[44] Neither the authors, nor Diku, are familiar with an equivalent English term. We therefore use the Norwegian word in the following paragraphs.

Selection criteria

Both calls describe comprehensive *selection criteria* which concern the project's ability to contribute to the objectives of the programme, the quality of the project proposal, the quality of the project team and collaboration, in addition to several cross-cutting issues, such as gender perspectives and equality in project activities, inclusive practices towards marginalised groups, and transparency and anti-corruption measures.

Overall, we find that the selection criteria are more easily understandable and more clearly defined in the 2018 call, compared to the 2016 call. The 2018 call organises the criteria under three points, which makes the criteria clearer for the reader: 1) their relevance to the programme's overall goals and priorities; 2) the quality of the project design; and 3) the quality of the partnership.
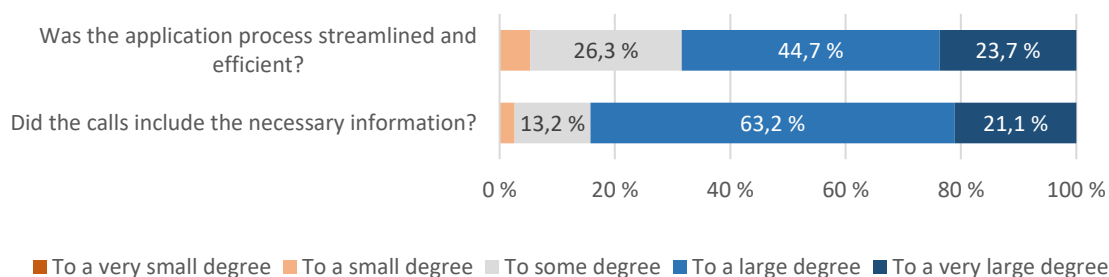
Some of the criteria have been further specified in the 2018 call, for instance: *the project's sustainability* in the 2016 call is replaced by *the potential for long-term collaboration between the partners*. New criteria were also added, e.g. *the project's feasibility, including the feasibility of the plans for student mobility,* probably due to experiences with unrealistically high mobility rates from the 2016 applications. Furthermore, the 2018 call links the cross-cutting issues to the UN Sustainable Development Goals' commitment to leave no one behind.

Both calls request the applicants to specify the *expected results* of the project. The calls each provide a list of potential project results, and the 2018 call underscores that the list is not comprehensive. While the 2016 list is longer and consists of more quantifiable results, such as the number of mobile students, we find the 2018 list to be more consolidated, refined, and improved with an increased focus on quality, e.g. with the addition of "improved learning outcomes". At the same time, such qualitative outcome level results are harder to measure, and requires a different approach to data collection than the output level data of mobility results.

Project coordinators' assessments of calls and application process

Overall, the project coordinators' assessment of the calls and application process is positive. When asked whether they find the application process streamlined and efficient, 68 percent answer *to a large*, or *to a very large degree*, and only 5 percent answer *to a small degree*. They also consider the calls as sufficiently informative. As many as 84 percent responded *to a large*, or *to a very large degree* and only 3 percent *to a small degree* when asked whether the calls included the information necessary for writing the application.

Figure 3.1: Assessments of the calls for applications and the application process (N=38)

	To a very small degree	To a small degree	To some degree	To a large degree	To a very large degree
Was the application process streamlined and efficient?			26,3 %	44,7 %	23,7 %
Did the calls include the necessary information?		13,2 %		63,2 %	21,1 %

The positive assessments are corroborated in interviews with project coordinators. The informants found the calls to be straightforward and easy to understand.

One of the coordinators that we interviewed described the application form as professional and structured. At the same time, he pointed out that the structure of the application form limits the opportunity for innovation and creativity in the projects.

Examination of the project selection process

A relevant question when assessing the administration of the programme is whether the selection process is designed and carried out in a way that ensures that the best projects are selected for funding. The selection process and the criteria for allocation of funds are the main instruments for selecting the best suited projects. We have therefore looked at how the applications are evaluated, how the various selection criteria are weighted, and finally, to what extent the overall project portfolio balances the different objectives of the programme.

The selection procedure

Each application is reviewed both by Diku internally and by an external evaluator, which makes separate recommendations of the proposals as either clearly eligible, eligible and not eligible. The final decisions about awarding of funds is to be made by a programme board appointed by Diku. The decision should be based on published criteria for selection of applications and relevant portfolio considerations. The NORPART *delegasjonsvedtak* also states that Norad is given observer status in the programme board, and, further, that Diku is to act as a secretariat for the programme board, and establishes the procedures for preparation and follow up that are necessary for the establishment of a sound award process. What is meant by sound award process is not further defined in this document. Based on criticism raised in an interview with the board leader, there may be a need to look closer at the role of the board vis-à-vis Diku, and clarify expectations and division of labour.

Weighting of selection criteria

Although the selection criteria are set and clear, the calls do not specify how each criterion is weighted. Both calls have resulted in a high number of applications, of which less than 20 percent were awarded funding in 2016, and less than 30 percent in 2018. The weighting of the criteria against each other will bear on the decisions as to which projects are awarded funding and thus on the programme's potential for reaching its objectives and goals.

The interviews with representatives from Diku and the programme board indicate that there are some disagreements about the weighting of the selection criteria between Diku and the external evaluators, on the one hand, and between Diku and the programme board, on the other.

Representatives from Diku relate that when assessing the applications, they attempt to ensure that all selection criteria are given equal weight. Diku's experience is that the external evaluators, mainly academics, favour projects with a substantial research component, and hence place greater emphasis on academic criteria and the quality of research and teaching programmes than Diku. Diku suggests

that the research bias in the external evaluations may be due to evaluators' academic background, but they also believe that the programme objectives may be unclear for the external evaluators as NORPART is not governed by a programme document.

According to Diku, the programme board has mainly followed Diku's recommendations, and has not opposed projects that Diku has highlighted as clearly eligible for support, or selected projects that Diku has nominated as ineligible for funding. However, we detect some disagreement between the two, related to the weighting of quantifiable vs. qualitative outputs of the projects. From the board leader's point of view, Diku puts more emphasis on quantifiable outputs, like number of mobilities and courses, while the board pays more attention to qualitative aspects, such as course content. According to the programme board leader, the disagreements emerged when discussing the less than stellar projects, when there was uncertainty about whether to grant them funding or not.

Prioritising between the NORPART objectives and goals

The calls for applications state that projects are awarded funding according to their relevance to the programme goals, and their ability to contribute to the objectives of the programme. However, projects are not required to emphasise all objectives equally. It is therefore likely that the project applications will emphasise different programme objectives. To achieve all programme goals, the project portfolio needs to be balanced and representative in terms of relevance to the programme goals. The choices made in the selection process are therefore crucial for the programme's likelihood of achieving its goals.

Overall, the stakeholders involved in the decision-making process (Diku, the programme board and Norad) believed that the NORPART project portfolio in total represents an appropriate balance between the various objectives and goals of the programme. Nevertheless, the interviews have identified some challenges in striking a balance between the different objectives.

Student mobility versus other objectives

Both Diku and the leader of the programme board find that too much emphasis was put on the *number of student mobilities vis-à-vis* other activities. One Diku staff member stated:

> *In the first two calls there has unfortunately been a very unilateral focus on student mobility from the South to Norway and quantity, and it has gotten in the way of the goal of increased quality of education and internationalisation.*

Several stakeholders argued that student mobilities are easy to quantify, whereas quality aspects, such as the contents of courses, are given less attention in the evaluation of applications as these aspects are harder to measure. Diku also pointed out that the focus on the number of mobilities may lead applicants to overestimate those numbers in their applications to secure funding.

Quality at HEIs in the South and in Norway

According to Diku, several high quality applications were rejected in the two rounds because they had put too much emphasis on capacity building in the South, and had failed to demonstrate how their project was to contribute to quality enhancement at the Norwegian institution. A Diku informant said

in the interview that it has been challenging to communicate to prospective applicants that the project applications should meet both policy areas in the overall goal of the programme:

> *The whole idea of a programme like NORPART was to recognise the resources and competencies that exist in the South, and that Norwegian higher education has something to learn from the South. It is a prerequisite for the entire programme […] that both goals can coexist in the programme and thus also reinforce each other.*

Diku pointed out that the proposals that were indeed successful, were precisely those able to demonstrate that they would contribute towards both the higher education and developmental policy goals.

According to Diku, the Norwegian institutions had a better understanding of the NORPART programme in the second call. Those rejected in the first call received an evaluation and gave a clearer answer to the objectives in response to the second call.

The finding demonstrates that applications that are not sufficiently balanced in terms of adhering to both sides of the dual programme goal, are less successful.

Other considerations - Relationship to other programmes

It is an explicit goal in both Norwegian higher education and development policy that various efforts build on each other, and thus facilitate continuity and synergies.[45] Although this is not an explicit objective or goal of the NORPART programme, nor a selection criterion, many of the projects that have been awarded funds, are rooted in, or somehow connected with other former or current development programmes, such as NORPART's predecessor, the Quota Scheme. Considering that a number of Norwegian HEIs used the Scheme strategically, e.g. to build partnerships, it is relevant to ask whether this has had any positive effect in the selection process in NORPART.

According to interviews with Diku and the board leader, there is no clear evidence to suggest that project applications with a link to the erstwhile Quota Scheme have been more successful than others. Although many successful applications in the selection process were based on a Quota Scheme legacy, and many NORPART project coordinators in HEIs in the South are previous Quota students, several applications with a Quota Scheme legacy have also been rejected. According to the programme board leader, one recurring reason was lack of anchoring at the institutional level at the partner institution.

Some partnerships are also based on long-term partnerships through programmes other than the Quota Scheme, such as NORHED, NOMA or NUFU. Some partnerships are rooted in several of these programmes.

Our case study supports the finding that many of the successful applicants have collaborated through other programmes previously. All three case partnerships build on collaboration through one or several of the above-mentioned programmes. Former Quota students are project managers or key personnel in two out of three cases. The following example from one of the cases illustrates how the various efforts build on each other: The person initiating the NORPART project had originally been a student through a NOMA project, later a PhD student in Norway through the Quota programme, and

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[45] See e.g. Meld. St. 24 (2016-17).

was now hired as a *post doc* at the Norwegian HEI, running a partnership with a university in his home country.

Reporting and project follow-up

Reporting and project follow-up represent the final "stage" in the administration of the NORPART programme. As part of the evaluation, we have looked at both of these processes, and how the institutions experienced them.

Reporting

The *delegasjonsvedtak* states that all projects that are awarded funding for more than one year shall submit annual reports to Diku on status *vis-à-vis* approved implementation plan, costs *vis-à-vis* approved budget, results, plus plan and budget for the next time period. The optimal project reports should give the programme administrator sufficient information about project progress as well as challenges, whilst keeping the reporting burden at a manageable level.

In Diku's own assessment, the reporting requirements are reasonable considering the size of the allocations. They are mindful of trying not to ask project managers for information that is superfluous. Diku has been going through a process of streamlining and simplifying the reporting format, and expect further changes *in lieu* of a revision of Diku' general grant scheme administration procedures.

The project coordinators do in general find the reporting requirements reasonable. In the survey, four out of five responded that the requirements are reasonable, while only one out of five find the requirements too comprehensive.
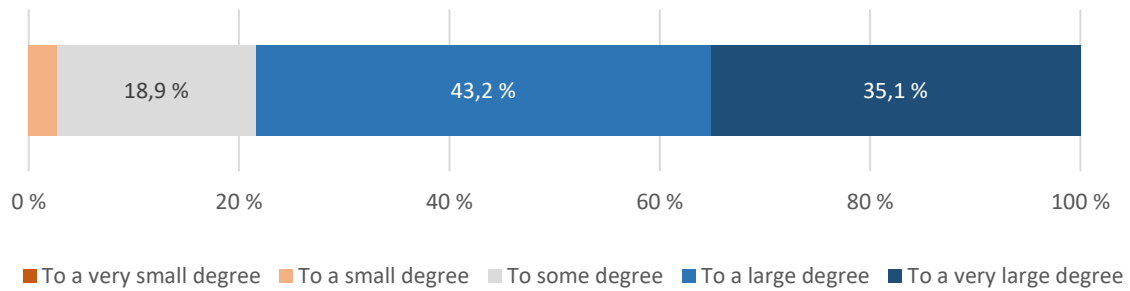
Our case study corroborates the findings from the survey. One of the coordinators even stated that he found the annual reporting to be a useful status update for the project. Another project coordinator found the annual reporting requirements sensible but argued that the format could be more narrative. A similar argument was raised by one Diku informant. She held that a more narrative approach would provide richer information about progress and status, and give a better picture than quantitative questions, e.g. about which courses have been implemented when.

Follow-up

An important question in assessing Diku's follow up of projects is whether the projects received the information and assistance they needed. In addition to individual follow-up of projects, Diku organises start-up seminars as well as annual seminars with topics based on feedback from the projects. To Diku, it is important to keep in touch with the projects, to get a more complete picture of the project portfolio than what they can gain from the annual reporting.

Projects are in general satisfied with the follow-up from Diku. Four out of five project managers find that Diku's efforts to follow up on their project to a *large degree* or a *very large degree* are adequate in order to meet the project's needs, and only 3 percent responded to a *small degree*.

Figure 3.3: "In your opinion, are Diku's efforts to follow up on your project adequate in order to meet the project's needs?" (N=38)

| 18,9 % | 43,2 % | 35,1 % |

0 %   20 %   40 %   60 %   80 %   100 %

■ To a very small degree ■ To a small degree ■ To some degree ■ To a large degree ■ To a very large degree

The positive assessments are corroborated in interviews with project coordinators. Most coordinators find that it is easy to get in touch with and get assistance from Diku. One project manager brought up both the workshops and the individual follow-up as positive:

> *The workshops have been good, to see how other are doing it, to get feedback on how things are going. We think the response from Diku is very good, and we get answers fast. There are not many people working with NORPART at Diku, but we are satisfied with the response time. The fact that this is a new programme - Diku is very flexible, they understand our challenges and issues.*

4 Achievement of objectives

The aim of this chapter is to describe and discuss the results and achievements of NORPART thus far. First, we discuss the achievements in relation to the four discrete objectives of the programme:

1) *Increased mobility of students from developing countries to Norway, including mobility in connection with work placements;*
2) *Increased mobility of students from Norway to developing countries, including mobility in connection with work placements;*
3) *Strengthened partnerships for education and research between developing countries and Norway;*
4) *Increased quality and internationalisation of academic programmes at participating institutions.*

Second, we discuss whether the results of the programme thus far seem promising for achieving the overall aim: "to enhance the quality of higher education in Norway and in developing countries through academic cooperation and mutual student mobility".

Because the NORPART projects are either in their initial phase (2018 projects) or in the middle of their project period (2016 projects), it is too early to conclude regarding the programme's achievements. Therefore, the main purpose of this chapter is to assess whether the programme so far seems to be on the right track toward achieving its objectives. Furthermore, the discussion will relate mainly to short-term achievements, i.e. the outcomes of the programme (column 5 in figure 2.1). Assessing the long-term impact is premature at this stage and will only be discussed briefly.

Student mobility

In this section we describe and discuss the programme's achievements in relation to objectives 1 and 2. For each objective, we describe the quantifiable outputs, i.e. the number of mobilities, and assess whether the results so far are promising with regards to achieving the goal of increased mobility. We then discuss the quality aspect in terms of how the students benefit from their mobilities, and the benefits of work placements specifically.

Our assessments of the quantifiable outputs related to student mobility are based on the projects' annual reporting to Diku from December 2019. Because the 2018 projects are still in the early stages of their project period, we have chosen to assess the progress of the 2016 projects only. It is worth noting that for some of the 2016 projects, Diku has approved a reduction in the number of planned

mobilities.[46] Our discussion is based on the planned number of mobilities *after* this reduction, not the number that the projects originally planned in the applications.

Increased mobility of students from developing countries to Norway

Almost 1 300 incoming student mobilities are planned for the NORPART projects. This equals an average of 28 incoming students to Norway per project. According to the project plans, students from the partner countries come mainly for long-term mobilities: more than 90 percent will stay for three months or longer. The main purpose of the incoming mobilities is semester exchange, and about 80 percent of the mobilities are at the MA level.

The projects seem to be on track towards achieving the planned number of incoming mobilities. In December 2019, with 60 percent of the project period completed (three of five years), the 2016 projects had completed 54 percent of the planned incoming mobilities. According to Diku, many projects plan to increase the number of mobilities for the last years of their project period.[47] Thus, we consider that the planned number of incoming mobilities is achievable within the five-year project period. The planned number, however, is not sufficient to achieve an *increase* in mobility from the NORPART countries to Norway. According to a letter from SIU to the MER, in order for the number of outgoing mobilities in NORPART to be equal to that of the Quota Scheme, an average of 35 mobilities per project is needed.[48] Thus, we conclude that it is unlikely that this objective will be achieved by the 2016 projects, as the average number of incoming mobilities per project is 28.

However, as discussed in chapter 2, we question the relevance of this objective to achieving the overall goal of the programme. Furthermore, we also question the relevance of a direct comparison of the mobility numbers of NORPART to those of the Quota Scheme. When the Quota Scheme was discontinued, the standing committee on church affairs, education and research expressed a desire that *at least as many* students should come to Norway from developing countries through the new programmes that followed the Quota Scheme, implying that the number of mobile students should be compared directly to that of the Quota Scheme. However, a direct comparison of the number of mobilities in NORPART and in the Quota Scheme is misleading. First, whereas the Quota Scheme funded mobility only, the NORPART projects also receive funding for activities that benefit the non-mobile students, with the goal of having a greater impact at the institutional level than what was achieved through the Quota Scheme. In other words, the NORPART programme benefits more students than the mobile ones. Second, whereas the Quota Scheme supported full degrees, NORPART primarily supports exchange stays. This means that regardless of the total number of mobilities through NORPART, the students stay in Norway for a shorter period than under the Quota Scheme, arguably contributing less towards "internationalisation at home".

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[46] This can be due to, for instance, unexpected costs or changes in the length of stays.
[47] SIU (2017).
[48] Letter from SIU to the Ministry of Education and Research 24.02.2016.

Increased mobility of students from Norway to developing countries

About 880 outgoing mobilities are planned for the NORPART portfolio, averaging 19 students per project. The outgoing mobilities are mainly at the MA level. Whereas the incoming mobilities are mainly long-term, the outgoing mobilities have a slight overweight of short-term stays (about 60 percent). The most frequent purposes of the outgoing mobilities have been joint courses; data collection; and summer schools, intensive courses, or research schools.

The status as of December 2019 indicated that the 2016 projects were somewhat behind schedule: 43 percent of the planned outgoing mobilities had been completed. The lag relates particularly to long-term mobilities. Only 22 percent of the planned long-term mobilities from Norway to partner countries had been completed. Several informants in the case study pointed to problems in recruiting Norwegian students. Other studies have also found that recruiting Norwegian students for mobility to non-western countries can be challenging.[49]

Assessing whether the number of mobile students from Norway to developing countries has increased is challenging. In assessing the development in number of *incoming students*, the Quota Scheme numbers can be used as a point of comparison, although there are differences in the nature of exchanges between the two programmes as discussed above. For outgoing mobilities, there is no similar point of comparison to assess whether an increase has taken place. An option is to compare the total number of outgoing mobilities to the NORPART countries before and after the NORPART programme was introduced. However, there is currently few available statistical data on short-term mobilities, as it is not mandatory to report such mobilities to the Database for Statistics on Higher Education (DBH). A recent evaluation of the Panorama strategy made an effort to combine available data from the DBH and projects' reporting to Diku, in order to estimate whether there had been an increase in student mobility between the Panorama countries and Norway after the introduction of the Panorama strategy.[50] Making similar estimations has been outside the scope of this evaluation. However, to assess achievement on objective number 2 in the future, a similar effort should be made to establish a data material on student mobility from Norway to the NORPART countries.

Personal gains from mobilities

In addition to assessing the quantity of mobilities we have assessed how the mobile students benefit individually from their stays.

Incoming students

Overall, the incoming students to Norway that we have interviewed are very satisfied with their stays. Our main impression is that they benefit greatly and encounter few problems. Most of them emphasise the academic gains as the most important benefit of their stay. A recurring theme in the interviews was that their stay provided them with opportunities they would not have had at home, such as academic courses that are not offered at their home university, library resources, lab facilities or software.

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[49] See Dahle et al. (2019); Nordhagen and Wold (2018).
[50] See appendix 1 in Dahle et al. (2019).

The students also appreciated the opportunity to meet new people and experience a different culture. Several emphasised that gaining international experience was an important motivation behind their choice to go to Norway. Through their stay they were acquainted with new perspectives and were given an opportunity to share their own views and experiences:

> *"Because we are in Europe, it was a lot of European points of views and data […]*
> *I always got to contribute from my point of view, which was very different from*
> *the European students' point of view".*

-Incoming student

As we do not have quantitative data for the incoming students (see chapter 1, page 12), we have not been able to systematically compare the benefits of long and short stays. However, many of the interviewed students wished their stays had been longer. One person pointed out that a longer stay would make it easier to overcome language barriers, and it would enhance the learning outcomes of their studies.

Outgoing students from Norway

Overall, the Norwegian students are very satisfied with their stay, and we find no systematic differences between long- and short-term mobilities.[51] For both groups, about 95 percent answered that, overall, they were satisfied or very satisfied with their stay. Furthermore, about 95 percent in both groups stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their *learning outcomes.*

Figure 4.1 shows that around 55 percent of the students have gained knowledge and experiences relevant to their further studies to a large or very large degree. About 60 percent have gained knowledge and experiences relevant to their future career to a large or very large degree. A report from Diku and NOKUT,[52] found similar results regarding the academic relevance of exchange stays to all parts of the world: around 55 percent of exchange students agreed that their stay was academically relevant to their studies at home.[53]

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[51] We have compared stays of less than three months with stays of three months and more. The survey data do not allow us to make a more fine-grained comparison of different lengths of stays, as this would give a very low N in some categories.
[52] Diku and NOKUT (2018, p. 23-24).
[53] Question wording: «Det er god faglig sammenheng mellom utvekslingsoppholdet og emnene i studieprogrammet hjemme».

Figure 4.1: "To what degree did the stay in [country] give you..." (N=108)

	Not at all	To a small degree	To some degree	To a large degree	To a very large degree
Knowledge and experiences that are relevant for my further studies			35,2 %	20,4 %	36,1 %
Knowledge and experiences that are relevant for my future career			24,1 %	31,5 %	32,4 %
A contact network that can be useful for my future career		29,6 %	30,6 %	15,7 %	19,4 %
Increased knowledge about other cultures			25,9 %		67,6 %

■ Not at all   ■ To a small degree   ■ To some degree   ■ To a large degree   ■ To a very large degree

Furthermore, the figure indicates that many students benefit more culturally than academically from their stays. This finding is also mirrored in the reports by Diku and NOKUT.[54] Figure 4.1 shows that about 95 percent state that they have increased their knowledge about other cultures. Other findings from our study support this assumption as well: In the survey we included an open text box asking students to elaborate on their satisfaction with the stay, and many emphasised the cultural experience rather than the academic benefit:

> *"I think the stay in [country] gave me more of a cultural education, than a profession specific education, but I think the total of all the experiences have strongly contributed to my personal growth."*

Outgoing student

Work placements

The two objectives related to student mobility include mobility in connection with work placements. So far, 49 students have completed work placements through the NORPART programme: 16 incoming, 29 outgoing and 4 internally in Norway.

In both interviews and in the survey, both incoming and outgoing students who have had work placements as part of their mobility, express great satisfaction with this opportunity. An incoming student described the placement with a Norwegian company as "valuable". For the two outgoing students we interviewed who had work placements as a part of their stays, this opportunity was an important motivation behind the mobility. One of them emphasised that the internship provided him with the opportunity to use in practice what he had learned theoretically during his education, and to experience how the international office of a Norwegian business works.

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[54] Diku and NOKUT (2018, p. 30).

Strengthened partnerships for education and research

Indications of strengthened partnerships

Overall, our findings indicate that the projects are well under way towards strengthening the partnerships. The partners are satisfied with their collaboration, and a large share have implemented institutional structures that can make it easier to collaborate in the future. However, we also find that administrative challenges and lack of administrative capacity, especially in the South, may be barriers to continuing the partnerships after funding from NORPART ends.

The current NORPART project portfolio is to a large degree based on existing collaborations. As many as 77 percent of the respondents in the survey answered that funding from NORPART had allowed them to extend or intensify existing collaborative activities. This is slightly higher than for the partnership programmes UTFORSK and INTPART, where 70 percent of the projects are based on existing collaboration.[55] Interestingly, most of the NORPART project coordinators (71 percent) answer that they have collaborated with their main partner for 10 years or more.

The fact that most of the current NORPART partnerships are based on pre-existing relationships, often between individual academic staff, may increase the possibility that partnerships will sustain after the project period. Arguably, the previous personal relationships that evolved into NORPART partnerships were reinforced through their activities. In turn, this reinforcement would provide a solid basis for continuation and sustainability of the partnership.
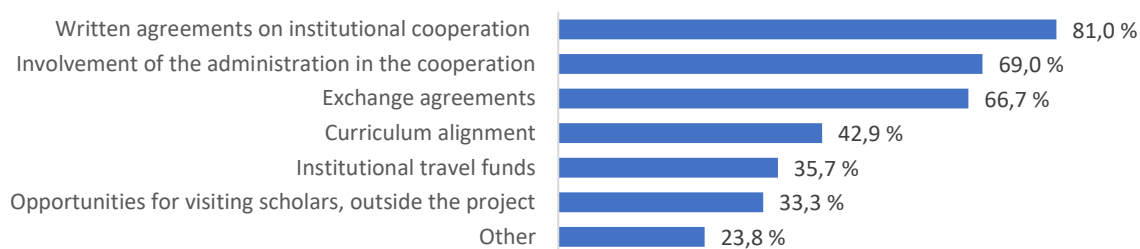
Most survey respondents (about 80 percent) also answered that they plan to continue the collaboration after the current project period is over. Furthermore, the project coordinators are positive to the prospect of expanding cooperation to other academic disciplines, and one-third of the projects already have expanded. Moreover, 65 percent of coordinators in the South, and 50 percent in the North, think it is likely that cooperation will expand to include other academic disciplines in the future. We see these results as an indication that many of the partnerships have already been strengthened, and that it is likely that many will be further strengthened in the future.

RCN and Diku (2019) point out that establishing structures that facilitate student and staff mobility are key elements in the early phases of establishing robust partnerships. The survey shows that in many cases, structures for institutional cooperation have been established as a result of the NORPART project (see figure 4.2).[56] Two-thirds of NORPART projects have established exchange agreements, whereas one-third have established opportunities for visiting scholars outside the project.

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[55] Dahle et al. (2020, p. 61).

[56] Figure 4.2 shows answers from Norwegian project coordinators, as they have the main responsibility for the project and most likely have the most overview over which structures have been implemented. For the projects where we have an answer from the coordinator in the South but not the Norwegian coordinator, we have included answers from the South. This concerns four projects.

Figure 4.2: "As a result of the NORPART project, have any of the following
structures for institutional cooperation been established between the
partner institutions?" (N=42)

Written agreements on institutional cooperation	81,0 %
Involvement of the administration in the cooperation	69,0 %
Exchange agreements	66,7 %
Curriculum alignment	42,9 %
Institutional travel funds	35,7 %
Opportunities for visiting scholars, outside the project	33,3 %
Other	23,8 %

Furthermore, other evaluations underline the role of administration in partnerships projects.[57,58] The involvement of the administrative set-up in the cooperation can be an important strategy for making the partnerships long-lasting, as the administration can relieve academic staff of administrative project tasks and establish routines for mobility of staff and students.[59] Altogether 69 percent answered that they have involved the administration. Interestingly, this is a larger share than in INTPART where Diku explicitly require projects to involve administrative resources. Only 46 percent of the INTPART projects had adhered to this requirement, according to a survey conducted by Diku.[60] The share of NORPART projects that has established exchange agreements, is also larger than in INTPART (67 vs. 50 percent).

Are the partnerships balanced?

Satisfaction with the collaboration is an important prerequisite for continuing the partnership after current funding ends. The overall impression from the survey, as well as from the case studies, is that project coordinators on both sides of the partnership are satisfied with the way in which the cooperation works. This is illustrated in figure 4.3, which presents project coordinators' views on three different statements about the character of the partnership: balance, relevance and equal benefit. Project coordinators on average agree that the partnership is balanced, although coordinators from the South agree slightly more than those from Norway. Both groups also agree that the partnership is relevant to their department's or institution's strategy and that the partnership yields equal benefits for the involved partners, which may motivate further collaboration. In total, project coordinators at partner institutions view the partnership as slightly more balanced, relevant, and with equal benefits for both parties.
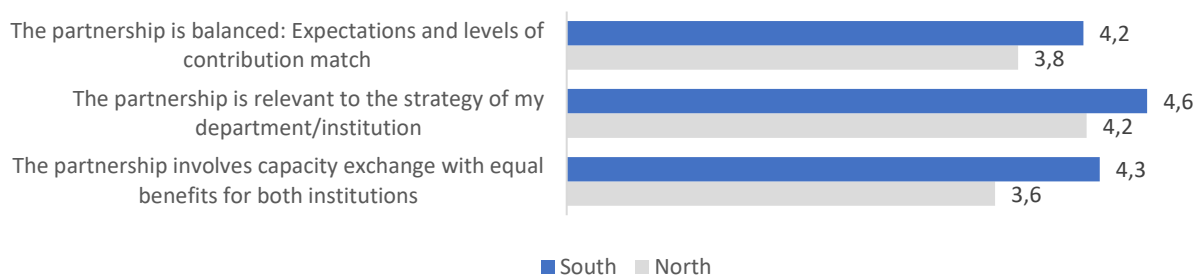
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[57] Dahle et al. (2020).
[58] Diku often expects partnership projects to involve administrative resources at the institution, this is for instance the case for INTPART.
[59] RCN and Diku (2019, p. 45).
[60] RCN and Diku (2019).

Figure 4.3: "Please indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements about your partnership:" (mean, scale from 1-5. N=68)

	South	North
The partnership is balanced: Expectations and levels of contribution match	4,2	3,8
The partnership is relevant to the strategy of my department/institution	4,6	4,2
The partnership involves capacity exchange with equal benefits for both institutions	4,3	3,6

■ South   ■ North

Challenges in the partnerships

Previous evaluations have identified some common challenges in international collaboration projects in the educational sector, such as differences in academic quality, systemic differences (e.g. start/end of semesters, transferral of study credits, systems for approval of new courses and challenges related to infrastructure).[61] The survey asked the project coordinators to indicate the degree to which they had experienced any of these challenges in the partnership. In general, most respondents experienced only minor challenges. Therefore, we here present only the challenges that stood out the most.

Differences in administrative systems is one of the most common challenges. But only 20 percent of coordinators in both Norway and the South experienced this as challenging to a large or very large degree. Administrative challenges were also a recurring theme in interviews. As mentioned previously in this chapter, several projects have for instance experienced that the bureaucracy in the partner country in the South makes it time-consuming to get approval for new courses or degrees. In the survey, 16 percent of project coordinators from Norway saw bureaucracy at the partner institution as challenging to a large or very large degree.

Different administrative systems also affect the students. For instance, an incoming student told us that the study credits from the stay in Norway would not be approved by her home university, and therefore her home-based studies were delayed by one semester due to the exchange. Improvement of systems for approval and recognition of educational credits from partner institutions (credit transfer) is listed as a potential project activity in the calls. However, it is possible that the high expectations regarding mobility numbers can motivate projects to start with mobilities before systems for credit transfer are in place.

Although a majority of the projects has involved administrative resources (se figure 4.2, page 41), limited administrative capacity is a challenge for some projects. Inevitably, some administrative work will fall on project coordinators, and 45 percent of coordinators in Norway and 25 percent of their counterparts in the South feel they lack staff resources to a large or very large degree. Furthermore, in both the interviews and the open text field in the survey, project coordinators from both sides call for the programme to provide more funding for administration.[62] A Norwegian project coordinator in one of the case studies saw lack of administrative capacity in Norway as well as at the partner institution as

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[61] Dahle et al. (2020, p. 69).

[62] The calls for applications state that "the cost of salaries, renumeration of consultants, honorariums and indirect costs cannot exceed 20 percent of the total project budget".

the single most important barrier to continued cooperation, and another stated that they would probably not have applied for NORPART if they had known how much administrative work it would entail.

Lack of funding for administrative tasks is a common feedback in Diku funded projects.[63] However, based on the above examples we argue that this is an especially salient challenge for HEI cooperation with the Global South. Because of the systemic differences and comprehensive bureaucracies at partner universities, the implementation of cooperative activities seems to be extra cumbersome. Without sufficient staff capacity to follow up on these processes at the partner university, bureaucracy can cause delays in the implementation of project activities. One may therefore argue that NORPART should allow more funding to be spent on administration. Some of the additional funds could be allocated to the partner university if needed. This should, however, be followed by demands for reporting, to avoid misuse of funds.

Increasing quality and internationalisation of academic programmes at participating institutions

In this section we discuss the NORPART programme's achievements in relation to objective 4: "increasing quality and internationalisation of academic programmes at participating institutions". We first provide an overall assessment of *whether* the projects have contributed to this objective. Second, we discuss *how* the different activities funded by NORPART can contribute towards achieving this objective, i.e. student mobility, staff mobility and other project activities.

Overall assessment

The overall impression from the survey to project coordinators, as well as from the case studies, is that the projects do contribute towards internationalisation and increased quality of education for the involved academic programmes, but to a larger degree for institutions in the South than in Norway. Figure 4.4 shows how project coordinators assess their project's contribution towards increased quality of education at their department. The higher the mean score, the more the project coordinators consider that the project contribute to increased quality, on average. The assessments of the Norwegian project coordinators and their partners from the South diverge substantially. Project coordinators from the South have a mean score of above four, indicating that they, on average, believe that the project to a large degree contributes towards increased quality at their department. Norwegian project coordinators have a mean score of 3.2 indicating that they on average find that the project contributes to increased quality only to some degree.

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[63] See for instance Dahle and Nordhagen (2017).

Figure 4.4: "In your opinion, to what extent does your project
contribute to increased quality of education at your department?"
(mean, scale from 1-5. N=68)

This finding from the survey was mirrored in several of the interviews with project coordinators, from Norway as well as from the South. For instance, a project coordinator in the South stated that:

> *It is not balanced, because it benefits mostly our students. Now we send many students to [Norwegian partner university], so I feel that many of our students get benefits from the programme.*

<div align="right">Project coordinator, South</div>

A Norwegian project coordinator stated that:

> *"South probably benefits more than us. […] For us it is more about smaller changes. We have pre-empted development of courses that otherwise would have taken us longer, pedagogical development with online courses. But we probably would have done this on our own eventually. But I think it would have been worse for [partner institution] to develop a master programme without the project".*

<div align="right">Project coordinator, Norway</div>

This project coordinator also pointed out, however, that he would have been disappointed if it were the other way around – that the Norwegian institution benefited more than the one in the South. Thus, he saw it as reasonable that the institution in the South benefited more.

Student mobility

International student mobility is held to contribute towards enhanced quality and internationalisation of higher education. Outgoing students from Norway gain new insights while they are abroad, and incoming students contribute with international perspectives that can be shared with non-mobile staff and students in classroom discussions and the like, thus contributing towards what is known as *internationalisation at home*.

Project participants in both Norway and the partner countries hold that **visiting students** contribute towards internationalisation of the academic programmes they attend. During their stay they share perspectives from their home country and region, thus contributing to "internationalisation at home". This effect is especially beneficial for study programmes that focus on developing countries or that are in other ways international in nature. One Norwegian faculty member described that:

Faculty member, Norway

Most of the interviewed **students from the South who returned from stays in Norway** think their mobility stay can improve the quality of education at their home institution. This was also brought up by several other project participants. Familiarisation with teaching methods, software, equipment, and subjects not taught at home, can be shared when they return. Upon return, several of the students from the South have been asked to share their experiences through holding presentations for fellow students, or in meetings with staff and leadership. For instance, one project coordinator in the South told us that when the mobile students return, they work in groups with non-mobile students and share what they have learned through using lab facilities in Norway that they do not have access to at home. Another project recruited mobile MA students as lecturers at the BA level upon return.

The **Norwegian students who returned from stays in the South** are more in doubt as to whether their mobility stay can benefit their home institution. By contrast to the students from the South, the Norwegian students have to a small degree been asked to share their experiences upon return. Findings from the survey show that half of the students have not at all or only to a small degree experienced that their home institution have used their experiences and knowledge upon return to Norway. Thus, there seems to be an unexploited potential for spreading the knowledge and experiences of Norwegian students who returned from stays through NORPART.

Staff mobility and other activities

NORPART funds mobility for staff and different cooperative activities such as guest lecturing and supervision; summer schools and intensive courses; development of joint courses; and development of joint degrees. Based on the project portfolio, it seems that most projects have a mix of shorter activities such as summer schools and more comprehensive endeavours such as the development of courses or degrees.

Staff mobility has a positive impact on institutions in the South, both through staff returned from visits to Norway and visiting Norwegian staff. In interviews, returnee staff frequently emphasised that experiences and knowledge from their visits in Norway can feed into teaching at their home university, both in their own teaching and research as well as that of colleagues. One mobile staff member told us that she had learned a new research method during her stay in Norway. Later, she and a visiting Norwegian staff co-hosted a seminar about this research method at her home university, and now this method is taught at their department by several staff members.

In another case project, it was an important goal for the partner in the South to increase the share of staff with PhD level training, as only 40 percent of the staff had PhDs. Through the NORPART project, some staff undergoing PhD training could attend PhD level courses in Norway. Academic leadership at the institution used mobile PhD students and staff strategically for capacity building at the institution, and described that:

> *We will use these people [mobile staff and PhD students] to improve capacity and research, and we will expose our students to these people that have built their capacity. Teaching will be very much improved.*

<div align="right">Academic leadership, South</div>

Thus, staff mobility contributed to improved quality of education at the department.

The case studies have revealed several examples of visiting Norwegian staff having a significant impact on the quality of education at institutions in the South. In one of the case projects, Norwegian staff visited the partner institution to hold a **short course** in pedagogy. This course had been held several times and was attended by staff members from the entire institution, thus having an impact on the quality of teaching beyond the department that hosted the NORPART project. All the informants from the partner institution emphasised the positive impact this seminar had on the quality of education at their institution. In yet another case project, Norwegian visiting staff had held a seminar on research and publication at the partner institution, which was attended by academic staff from the entire country. Several interviewees from the partner institution praised the benefits of the seminar. One of the staff members who attended pointed out that this course benefited a larger number of students than the number of students who benefit from student mobility:

> *"We need more research skills, and this is what the project has been providing. They [the seminars] have benefitted more candidates than those [students] who have been moving around. Indirectly this has more impact [...]"*

<div align="right">Faculty member, South</div>

Mobile Norwegian staff relate that their stays have been beneficial for the host institution and the individual staff member. It allows the mobile staff to gain insight into the context in the partner countries, which adds to their competence as researchers and lecturers. However, our case studies indicate that these sojourns to a lesser degree benefit the Norwegian home department beyond the specific project. We have for instance seen no examples of staff systematically sharing their experiences upon return for them to benefit non-mobile students and staff.

NORPART also funds **the development of courses and degrees.** For the 2016 projects a total of 43 courses and six degree programmes are planned. The corresponding numbers for the 2018 projects are 50 courses and seven degree programmes. Many of the projects also include revision and improvement of existing courses. It is a time-consuming task to develop courses and degrees, and several projects have experienced delays in the implementation of courses or degrees due to comprehensive bureaucratic processes at the partner institution. It is therefore premature to assess their contribution towards increased quality and internationalisation.

Long-term impact

## Enhanced quality of higher education in Norway and developing countries

In this section, we briefly discuss the NORPART programme's achievements in relation to the overall goal of the programme: "Enhancing the quality of higher education in Norway and developing

countries through academic cooperation and mutual student mobility". This goal refers to changes that are expected to manifest themselves in the long term, i.e. the expected durable *impact* of the programme.

Given that many projects are still at an early stage, we only briefly consider whether the results of the projects thus far seem promising for achieving this overall goal. As discussed in chapter two, we perceive this goal as very ambitious, and argue that the programme currently lacks activities directed towards the national level.

The overall goal implies that NORPART is expected to result in quality improvements not only at the departmental level, but also at an institutional level and further to the national system for higher education. We asked the project coordinators to assess to what extent they think their project contributes towards enhanced quality of education at their institution, beyond the department(s) directly involved in the project. For both sides of the partnerships, coordinators are less convinced that their projects have an effect at this level than at the departmental level (see figure 4.5). Norwegian coordinators have a mean score of 2.4, indicating that they on average think the project contributes to a relatively small degree. Coordinators in the South experience that the projects have a greater effect on the quality of education at their institution, with a score of 3.6.

Figure 4.5: In your opinion, to what extent does your project contribute to increased quality of education at your institution, beyond the involved departments? (mean, scale from 1-5. N=67)
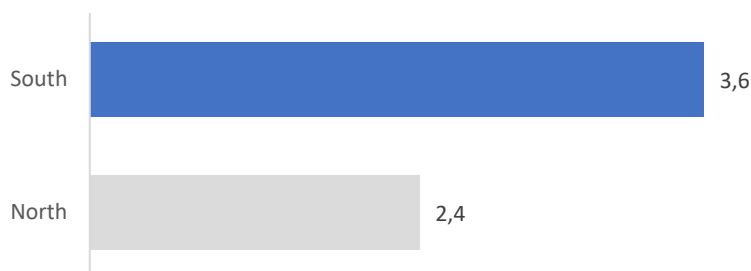
We have also analysed project coordinators' assessment of their project's impact on the quality of education at their institution, in relation to how institutionalised the cooperation is. The degree to which the projects have implemented structures for institutional cooperation can be used as an indicator of institutionalisation (see figure 4.2, page 41). We find that coordinators of projects that have implemented two or fewer structures, tend to experience less impact on the quality of education at the institutional level than coordinators of projects that have implemented more than two structures. This finding indicates that institutionalisation of the cooperation does indeed facilitate impact at the institutional level, and that the projects should be encouraged to establish such structures.

As projects mainly take place at the departmental level, the aim to improve the quality of education at the institution and nationally may seem overambitious. At the same time, we have seen examples of project activities that contribute to quality enhancement beyond the department directly involved in the project, at least in the South. The two seminars on pedagogy and publication discussed earlier in this chapter are examples of such activities. One of these was open for institutions in the entire country. The effects of student mobility, on the other hand, seem to be confined to the departmental

level, as this is primarily where the sharing of experiences and international perspectives takes place. While acknowledging that mobility of students play an important role in institutional partnerships, it is our assessment that placing too much emphasis on the sheer mobility numbers reduces the flexibility of the programme, and potentially leads projects to prioritise funds for mobility at the expense of activities that would have more impact at the institutional and national levels. Increased flexibility would allow the projects to adapt their activities more freely to the context and needs of each of the partners, thus potentially providing greater impact.

Ripple effects to wider society

As argued in chapter 2, the aim to enable the partners to effectively address local and global challenges could be more clearly stated in programme documents, and further operationalisation of the goal is needed. Based on feedback from Diku, we have interpreted the aim to entail that 1) the involved HEIs collaborate with organisations and businesses outside of the academic sector, thus nurturing local development processes, and 2) that the programme has ripple effects to wider society.

It is our assessment that it is too early to conclude regarding the potential effects of the programme on this goal, as it is far to the right in the impact chain; activities have to be implemented, and results and outcomes achieved in order for the potential impact to materialise. This was also pointed out by several project coordinators in the interviews when the issue of ripple effects was broached. Furthermore, several informants pointed out that this goal is difficult to measure, as it is hard to isolate the effect of the NORPART project alone from other causes.

Project data show that most of the projects have at least one network partner, which can be an important step to achieve this goal. In interviews, several project coordinators in the South stated that their project has made their university better known outside the academic sphere, which may be a first step towards closer interaction with other parts of society. It is important to point out, however, that it is primarily non-academic network partners that are relevant for achieving effects outside the academic sphere. Therefore, to enhance achievement of this goal, Diku should consider encouraging applicants to include non-academic network partners.

Potential for improved environmental sustainability: Experiences with digitalisation

As discussed in chapter 2, environmental sustainability is not an explicit part of the NORPART goal structure. Still, it is an important issue in Norwegian higher education policy, which has gained more attention since the NORPART programme was first developed. Diku has requested that the evaluation makes recommendations as to how to enhance the environmental sustainability of the NORPART programme. Increased use of digitalised meetings and teaching is one way that the programme can improve its environmental sustainability. Therefore, in this section we look at 1) the extent to which digitalised methods of collaboration have been used in the projects thus far, and 2) project coordinators' experiences with such methods, and their views on, the potential for these methods to replace international air travel.

Digitalisation is listed as one of the educational activities that can be supported by NORPART in the two calls. Survey data show that half of the projects include the production of digital tools/resources

for teaching and collaboration. The tools include online courses and course materials; websites; blogs; and digital supervision. Many projects also point out that they use digital tools for communication as an integral part of the day-to-day project administration.

Findings from the case study as well as from the comment field in the survey indicate that the implementation of digital tools by and large has worked well. However, project coordinators point out some barriers against increased digitalisation replacing international travel in the projects. Firstly, replacing physical meetings with digitalised communication works better in well-established relationships than in new project collaboration. To build trust between the partners and a mutual understanding of the project, several project coordinators point out that physical meetings are essential. As a large share of the projects that have been funded by NORPART so far are based on long-term collaboration, there seems to be a good foundation for replacing some physical meetings with digital ones. However, increased demands for digitalised rather than physical meetings can make it harder to establish well-functioning projects in cases where one or more partners are new to each other.

Availability and stability of high-speed internet connectivity can, as discussed in chapter 2, be a challenge in many countries in the Global South. Importantly, the digital divide exists both *between* and *within* countries.[64] Internet coverage may be better in urban than in rural areas, which entails that the use of digitalised communication may make collaboration with some participants more cumbersome.

Finally, several project coordinators point out that meeting physically is important not only for academic staff, but also for students. Digitalised and streamed courses come at the cost of reduced interaction and cultural exchange. This benefit of physical mobility is to a large degree lost if students take online courses offered by a partner university, rather than travelling physically. As discussed previously in this chapter, it seems that the Norwegian students who have gone on mobility stays through NORPART have benefited more culturally than they have academically, and some expressed discontent with the academic level at the partner institution. We are therefore hesitant as to whether digitalised courses offered by partner universities in the South would be an attractive option for Norwegian students. Furthermore, the opportunity to use physical resources such as lab facilities and libraries, which was highlighted by many students from the South, is also lost.

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[64] Rivera-Illingworth and Renken (2020).

5 Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter summarises the main findings of chapters 2-4 and recommends changes to NORPART that could strengthen the programme and enhance its ability to reach the overall goal.

Overall, we find that the NORPART programme shows promising results with respect to some of its objectives. Available empirical evidence indicates that the programme contributes to strengthening partnerships, and towards enhancing the quality of education of involved academic programmes at participating institutions, especially in the South. The programme will, however, not reach its objective of increasing the number of incoming students, compared to the Quota Scheme level. The evaluation also points to challenges in recruiting Norwegian students for mobility to the partner countries.

Furthermore, the evaluation indicates that the programme has potential to enhance the quality of education at the institutional level, in line with the overall goal of the programme. It is too early, however, to conclude on this matter.

Programme design

We find that Diku, in collaboration with the MFA, the MER and Norad, has done a good job of designing a programme expected to meet multiple, partly conflicting policy aims. However, we find the goal formulation too ambitious, as the programme does not have the necessary resources and activities[65] available to achieve quality enhancement at a national level. We argue that limiting the goal formulation to *quality enhancement at the involved institutions* increases the realism and achievability of the goal. Although not heavily emphasised in the calls, the programme is also expected to produce ripple effects to wider society.

We find the objective of *increasing* mobility of students from developing countries to Norway to be somewhat in conflict with the other three objectives. As the number of students coming to Norway through the Quota Scheme was quite high, increasing those numbers might hinder the achievement of the other three objectives, especially the objectives of strengthened partnerships and increased quality and internationalisation of academic programmes, which ultimately may have a larger effect on quality improvement at the institutional level.

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[65] Activities aimed at the policy level. Relevant examples are Key Action 3 activities from the Erasmus+ programme.

As the objective of increasing student mobility from developing countries is rooted in the provisions set by the Standing Committee on Education and Research, a decision to reduce the ambitions concerning incoming student mobility has to be made at the political level.

Partner countries: The policy areas' diverging priorities are expressed in the list of eligible partners in which several of countries can hardly be defined as developing countries. While the MFA wants to consolidate the list to concentrate the efforts on fewer countries, the MER prefers a broader pool of potential collaborators. Both ministries seem willing to compromise to accommodate the sometimes-conflicting priorities.

Introduction of full degrees: One of the preconditions for discontinuing the Quota Scheme set by the Standing Committee on Research and Education was that the new programme would allow for full degree studies. While many Norwegian HEIs are proponents of the introduction of full degree studies, the MFA and Norad believe it is more important to build capacity at HEIs in the South and are concerned about brain drain. A positive design feature of the new element of full degree scholarships is that students would then be recruited by partner institutions, which may reduce the risk of brain drain and contribute to capacity building when the students return home.

Environmental sustainability: Although international collaboration can contribute towards high quality education, which is a prerequisite to equipping the world's citizen's with the means to fight climate change, the objectives of increasing student mobility to and from developing countries are directly at odds with the aim of environmentally sustainable development. This paradox needs to be tackled at a political level.

Comparison of NORPART to similar programmes: The desk study of DIES Partnerships and Linnaeus-Palme identified several elements that can be useful inputs for NORPART. First, while increased mobility is a NORPART objective, DIES Partnerships and Linnaeus-Palme use mobility as a means to achieve other objectives. Assigning this role to mobility in the goal hierarchy highlights the purpose of the mobility and focuses attention on quality aspects, rather than quantity. Second, Linnaeus-Palme requires projects to apply through a framework application, to ensure anchoring of the project at the institutional level, in line with the partnership model. Another observation from the desk study is that compared to other programmes, NORPART appears to be very broad and ambitious.

Based on our review of the programme design, we recommend that:

- ♦ The ambition of the **overall goal is reduced from the national to the institutional level.**
- ♦ **The objective of *increasing* incoming student mobility is reconsidered**, as it is channelling focus and resources away from other activities that may have a greater effect on the overall goal of the programme. Such a decision has to be made at the political level. Alternatively, stakeholders may consider establishing a partly separate funding scheme that funds mobility only and works as a supplement to other funding sources, inspired by the model of Linnaeus-Palme.
- ♦ The calls and the forthcoming programme **document further emphasise and operationalise the goal of *ripple effects of programme to wider society*, and encourage projects to collaborate with non-academic network partners**.
- ♦ **Environmental sustainability and the development of digital tools for cooperation is given a central place in the next call for applications and project selection process**, for

instance by rewarding projects that develop digital tools for cooperation and/or replace some physical with digital meetings.

♦ **Consider shifting the balance towards longer student mobility stays** to reduce the adverse environmental impact of programme.

♦ In order to complement rather than compete with capacity building efforts: **Continue the application of strict award criteria in the selection of students for full degree scholarships:** only award scholarships when no relevant study programme is available at the relevant level at the student's home institution, and when there are plans to develop such a study programme.

Administration and selection process

The calls for applications: We find that the two calls for applications (2016 and 2018) include sufficient and relevant information about the programme aims, its regulations and eligible activities. The selection criteria are clearly stated and improved from the first to the second call. Most project coordinators find that the calls include the necessary information and find the application process to be streamlined and efficient.

Project selection process: The evaluation indicates a need to look closer at the roles and the division of labour between Diku and the programme board. Both Diku and the programme board find that too much emphasis is put on the number of student mobilities *vis-à-vis* other activities in the selection of projects. There are also concerns that qualitative aspects such as course contents are given less attention in the selection process as they are not as easily measurable.

Our findings indicate that many projects that succeed in the selection process are based on partnerships through other similar efforts, among them the Quota Scheme, NUFU and NOMA.

Reporting and project follow-up: Most project coordinators find the NORPART reporting requirements reasonable. In general, they are also satisfied with the follow-up by Diku and find that the follow-up meets their projects' needs.

Based on these findings, we recommend that:

♦ **The current system for reporting and follow-up be continued**, as project coordinators express a large degree of satisfaction with these features.

Achievement of objectives

As programme success depends on project success, and the first project period is not yet over, it is too early to conclude as to whether NORPART has achieved its objectives. In line with standards for midterm evaluations, we have therefore assessed whether the results so far seem promising. We find that the NORPART programme is well underway to achieve objectives 3 and 4 to some degree, while delivering on objective 1, increased incoming mobility is unlikely, and ascertaining achievement on objective 2, outgoing mobility, is not possible with the available data. Furthermore, our findings

indicate that the institutions in the South benefit more from the programme than the Norwegian institutions.

Objective 1: We find that the objective of **increased incoming student mobility** will not be achieved. Even though the projects are well underway towards achieving the planned number of incoming mobilities, the planned numbers are not sufficient for achieving an increase compared to the Quota Scheme. We find that the incoming students to Norway benefit greatly from their stay, and that many have shared their experiences upon return to their home institution, indicating that their stay can also benefit non-mobile students.

Objective 2: The projects have had somewhat less progress towards their planned number of outgoing mobilities, especially long-term outgoing mobilities. Whether the planned number constitutes an **increase in outgoing student mobility** has not been possible to ascertain within the scope of this evaluation. We find that the outgoing students from Norway are very satisfied with their stay, although many emphasise the cultural rather than the academic benefits. We find no systematic differences in self-reported benefits between shorter and longer stays. We find some underused potential in the dissemination of the experiences of students returning from mobility stays.

Objective 3: Our findings show that the programme is well underway towards achieving **strengthened partnerships for education and research**. This is supported by the fact that most project coordinators are satisfied and wish to continue the collaboration, and that many of the projects have established mechanisms that facilitate institutional cooperation. The project coordinators in the South view the partnerships as somewhat more balanced than coordinators in the North. Furthermore, we find that systemic differences and lack of administrative capacity are important barriers to strengthened partnerships. We argue that this is an especially important issue for HEI cooperation with countries in the Global South.

Objective 4: Available evidence indicates that the NORPART programme does contribute towards **enhanced quality and internationalisation** of the involved academic programmes, but more so in the South than in Norway. We find that staff mobility and other activities such as courses and workshops can have a significant positive impact on the quality of education at institutions in the South. This can benefit the non-mobile students, for instance through higher quality of teaching. It is our assessment that these activities have a greater beneficial impact on the institutions in the South than student mobility.

Impact: Although the overall goal of the programme is ambitious, it seems that the NORPART programme has some potential for contributing towards enhanced quality of higher education in Norway and in developing countries. We have seen examples of activities that contribute towards quality improvement at the institutional level, and even other institutions in the country. We have also seen that the effects at the institutional level are the greatest for the more institutionalised partnerships. However, we believe that the programme would have a greater impact if it put less emphasis on increasing student mobility. The current emphasis on the quantity of student mobilities reduces the programme's flexibility and diverts funds away from activities that could have had a greater positive impact on the quality of education in Norway and the partner countries alike. Furthermore, we find that it is too soon to assess the ripple effects of the projects to wider society but

argue that the use of non-academic network partners is an expedient mechanism for achieving this goal.

Environmental sustainability: We find that around half of the projects already include the development and use of digitalised tools for cooperation. Experiences from project coordinators indicate that the use of digitalised platforms rather than physical meetings works better for well-established partnerships than for projects where the partners are relatively new to one another. As the NORPART projects are mainly based on pre-existing cooperation, we believe that there is a potential for increased use of digitalised communication. At the same time, some positive effects may be lost when replacing physical with digital meetings, such as networking opportunities, and this should be weighed against the benefits of increased digitalisation.

Based on these findings, we recommend that:

◆ **If Diku wishes to assess achievement of objective number 2, a data set that enables this should be established.**
◆ Diku should **consider increasing the maximum allocation for project administration.** It could also be considered whether some of the extra funds should be allocated towards project coordinators in the South. If implemented, this should be accompanied by demands for reporting and transparency to forestall the misuse of funds.

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Appendix 1: Survey for mobile students

Introduction

Welcome to this survey about your stay in [country name]
The survey is part of an evaluation of the NORPART programme. It will take about 10 minutes to complete. Participating in the survey is voluntary. All information about you will be anonymised.

Length of stay

How long was your stay in [country name]?

If you have had several separate stays in [country name] through NORPART, please enter the total number of months you have spent in [country name] so far.

[drop-down menu, from less than one month to more than 18 months]

Spring 2020

Did your stay take place during the spring of 2020?

❍ Yes
❍ No

Completion of stay

Were you able to complete the planned stay, or was the stay cut short due to the spread of COVID-19?

❍ I was able to complete the planned stay
❍ The stay was cut short due to the spread of COVID-19
❍ I am still on my exchange stay

Activities

Which activities did you take part in during your stay?

Please select all relevant options.

❑ Summer school/intensive course/field course/research school
❑ Fieldwork or other data collection
❑ Workshop/seminar/conference
❑ Work placement/internship
❑ Taking courses offered at the host institution
❑ Receiving supervision
❑ Other, please specify:_____

Satisfaction with activities

How satisfied are you with the activities you participated in during your stay?

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Summer school/intensive course/field course/research school					
Fieldwork or other data collection					
Workshop/seminar/conference					
Work placement/internship					
Taking courses offered at the host institution					
Receiving supervision					

Financial support

How would you characterise the levels of financial support that you received for your stay?

❍ Grossly insufficient
❍ Insufficient
❍ Barely sufficient
❍ Sufficient
❍ More than sufficient

Overall satisfaction with learning outcomes

Overall, how satisfied are you with your learning outcomes from your stay?

❍ Very dissatisfied
❍ Dissatisfied
❍ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
❍ Satisfied
❍ Very satisfied

Satisfaction with specific learning outcomes

How satisfied are you with the learning outcomes of your stay, regarding:

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Not relevant
Theoretical knowledge						
Knowledge of scientific work methods and research						
Experience with research and development work						
Discipline- or profession specific skills						
Critical thinking and reflection						
Cooperative skills						
Communication skills						
Innovative thinking						
Ability to work independently						

Benefits of stay

To what degree did the stay in [country name] give you…

	Not at all	To a small degree	To some degree	To a large degree	To a very large degree
Knowledge and experiences that are relevant for my further studies					
Knowledge and experiences that are relevant for my future career					
A contact network that can be useful for my future career					
Increased knowledge about other cultures					
Improved language skills					

Host institution

Did your host institution/department in any way make use of your competence or experience as an exchange student during your stay?

(E.g. include you in classroom discussions, invite you to give a talk, invite you to social gatherings etc.)

❍ Not at all
❍ To a small degree
❍ To some degree
❍ To a large degree
❍ To a very large degree

Home institution

Has your home institution/department in any way made use of your experience as an exchange student in [country name] after your return?

(E.g. asked you to share experiences from your stay in classroom discussions, invite you to give a talk, etc.)

❍ Not at all
❍ To a small degree
❍ To some degree
❍ To a large degree
❍ To a very large degree

Problems

During your stay, did you experience any problems with the following:

	Not at all	To a small degree	To some degree	To a large degree	To a very large degree
Language barriers					
Communicating with and receiving sufficient information from the host university					
Inadequate university infrastructure (computers, labs, internet, library etc.)					
Financial restraints					
Academic quality					
Cultural differences					
Differences in the educational/academic system (e.g. start/end of semester, course credits)					
Practical issues (e.g. accommodation, visa/study permit, bank account, transfer of money)					

	Not at all	To a small degree	To some degree	To a large degree	To a very large degree
Security					

Challenges

You answered that [...] was a challenge related to your stay. Please elaborate:

Language barriers   _____

Communicating with and receiving sufficient information from the host university   _____

Inadequate university infrastructure (computers, labs, internet, library etc.)   _____

Financial restraints   _____

Academic quality   _____

Cultural differences   _____

Differences in the educational/academic system (e.g. start/end of semester, course credits)   _____

Practical issues (e.g. accommodation, visa/study permit, bank account, transfer of money)   _____

Security   _____

Overall satisfaction with stay

Overall, how satisfied/dissatisfied are you with the stay in [country name]?

❍ Very dissatisfied
❍ Dissatisfied
❍ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
❍ Satisfied
❍ Very satisfied

Elaboration of overall satisfaction

Please elaborate:

Greatest personal benefit

What has been the greatest benefit of the exchange stay through the NORPART programme for you personally?

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Alumni network

If an alumni network for NORPART students was established, how interested would you be in becoming a part of this network?

○ Not at all interested
○ Somewhat interested
○ Interested

Appendix 2: Survey for project coordinators

Introduction

Welcome to this survey about your NORPART project [project title]
This survey is part of a review of the NORPART programme. You will be asked questions about how you have experienced the project collaboration and the achievements of your project so far.
The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary.

Part 1

Part 1: The project collaboration

Significance of funding

Which of the following statements most accurately describes the significance of the funding from the NORPART programme?

❍ The funding enabled us to extend or intensify existing collaboration activities with one or more of the project partners
❍ The funding enabled us to initiate an entirely new collaboration

Start of collaboration

When did you first start to collaborate with your main partner?

❍ Before 2000
❍ 2001 - 2005
❍ 2006 - 2010
❍ 2011 - 2015
❍ 2016 or later

Without the funding

Would you have been able to implement the same collaborative activities without funds from NORPART?

❍ Yes, to the same extent
❍ Yes, but to a lesser extent
❍ No

Activities

Which of the following activities are included in your NORPART project?

Please select all relevant alternatives

❑ Incoming students on semester exchange (3 months or more)
❑ Outgoing students on semester exchange (3 months or more)
❑ Incoming students on shorter stays (less than 3 months)
❑ Outgoing students on shorter stays (less than 3 months)
❑ Development of joint educational activities (e.g. joint curricula, courses, programmes)
❑ Workshops, seminars, conferences
❑ Joint teaching and supervision (including guest lectures)
❑ Training for academic and administrative staff
❑ Development of administrative systems, library facilities or other support systems
❑ Institutional visits
❑ Other, please specify:_____

Digital tools

Does your project include the development of digital tools/resources (e.g. digital courses) for teaching and/or collaboration?

❍ Yes
❍ No

Digital tools follow-up

What kinds of digital tools/resources will be developed through your project?

Please elaborate.

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Description of cooperation

Which of these terms best describes the cooperation with your main partner?

❍ Very challenging
❍ Challenging
❍ Neither easy nor challenging
❍ Easy
❍ Very easy

Partnership characterised by

Please indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements about your partnership:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The partnership involves capacity exchange with equal benefits for both institutions					
The partnership is relevant to the strategy of my department/institution					
The partnership is balanced: Expectations and levels of contribution match					

Structures for institutional cooperation

As a result of the NORPART project, have any of the following structures for institutional cooperation been established between the partner institutions?

Please select all relevant alternatives.

❑ Written agreements on institutional cooperation
❑ Exchange agreements
❑ Curriculum alignment
❑ Involvement of the administration in the cooperation

❑ Institutional travel funds

❑ Opportunities for visiting scholars, outside the project

❑ Other, please specify:_____

Problems

To what degree have you experienced problems with any of the following in the cooperation with the main partner?

	To a very small degree	To a small degree	To some degree	To a large degree	To a very large degree
Bureaucracy at main partner institution/in the partner country					
Bureaucracy at my institution/in my country					
Academic quality at main partner institution					
Infrastructure at main partner institution					
Differences in administrative systems (e.g. start/end of semesters, transferral of study credits, systems for approval of new courses)					
Lack of commitment from main partner					
Lack of staff resources from our main partner					
Lack of staff resources from our side of the partnership					
Political/societal conditions in the main partner country (e.g. political instability, surveillance, corruption) [only for Norwegian project coordinators]					

Other challenges

Have you experienced any other challenges in the collaboration with the main partner?

Please elaborate.

Challenges prevent long-lasting partnership

In your opinion, can any of these challenges prevent a long-lasting partnership with the partner institution?

❍ Yes
❍ No
❍ Don't know

Elaboration

You answered that some of the challenges you have experienced can prevent a long-lasting partnership with the partner institution.

Please elaborate.

Expand new diciplines

In your opinion, is it likely that the current cooperation can expand to other academic disciplines?

❍ The cooperation has already expanded to other academic disciplines
❍ The cooperation has not expanded to other academic disciplines yet, but I think it is likely that it will happen in the future
❍ No, I do not think it is likely that the cooperation will expand to other academic disciplines

Expand new partners

In your opinion, is it likely that the current collaboration can expand to include new partners?

❍ The cooperation has already expanded to include new partners
❍ The cooperation has not expanded to include new partners yet, but I think it is likely that it will happen in the future
❍ No, I do not think it is likely that the cooperation will expand to include new partners

Continue collaboration

Do you plan to continue the collaboration with one or more of the partner institutions outside of Norway after the project period ends?

❍ Yes
❍ No
❍ Don't know

Reason for not continuing partnership

What is the reason you do not plan to continue the collaboration?

Please select all relevant alternatives.

❑ The collaboration was always meant to be limited in time
❑ The collaboration has not been satisfactory
❑ Other reasons, please elaborate:_____

Part 2

Part 2: Administration and follow-up [for Norwegian project coordinators only]

Application process

In your opinion, was the application process streamlined and efficient?

❍ To a very small degree
❍ To a small degree
❍ To some degree
❍ To a large degree
❍ To a very large degre

Calls for proposals

In your opinion, did the calls for proposals include the information that is necessary to develop/write the application?

❍ To a very small degree
❍ To a small degree
❍ To some degree
❍ To a large degree
❍ To a very large degree

Improve calls for proposals

Please elaborate on how you think the calls for proposals could be improved.

Diku

In your opinion, are Diku's efforts to follow up on your project adequate in order to meet the project's needs?

❍ To a very small degree
❍ To a small degree
❍ To some degree
❍ To a large degree
❍ To a very large degree

Diku improvement

Please elaborate on how you think the follow-up from Diku could be improved.

Reporting requirements

In your opinion, are the reporting requirements of NORPART…

❍ Too comprehensive
❍ Reasonable
❍ Not comprehensive enough

Part 3

Part 3: Project activities and achievement of objectives

Contribution of project

In your opinion, to what extent does your project contribute to:

	To a very small degree	To a small degree	To some degree	To a large degree	To a very large degree
Increased quality of education at your department					
Increased quality of education at your institution beyond the involved department(s)					
Increased quality of education at the partner institution					
Increased internationalisation of academic programmes at your institution, outside of the project					
Strengthened relationships with organisations and businesses outside the academic sector					

Improved quality of education department

In what way does your project contribute to improving the quality of education at your department?

Please elaborate.

Improved quality of education institution

In what way does your project contribute to improving the quality of education at your institution beyond the involved department?

Please elaborate.

Benefit non-mobile

To what degree does your project benefit non-mobile students?

❍ To a very small degree
❍ To a small degree
❍ To some degree
❍ To a large degree
❍ To a very large degree

Benefit non-mobile in what way

In what way does your project benefit the non-mobile students?

Please elaborate.

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Benefit non-mobile staff

To what degree does your project benefit non-mobile staff?

❍ To a very small degree
❍ To a small degree
❍ To some degree
❍ To a large degree
❍ To a very large degree

Benefit non-mobile staff how

In what way does your project benefit the non-mobile staff?

Please elaborate.

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Level of financial support

How would you characterise the levels of financial support for student mobility from Norway to the partner country?

❍ Grossly insufficient
❍ Insufficient
❍ Barely sufficient
❍ Sufficient
❍ More than sufficient

Financial support south

How would you characterise the levels of financial support for student mobility from the partner country to Norway?

○ Grossly insufficient
○ Insufficient
○ Barely sufficient
○ Sufficient
○ More than sufficient

Improvements

Do you have any suggestions for changes that could be made to the NORPART programme in order to further improve quality of education at the involved Higher Education institutions?

Please elaborate.