

Presenting_ **NORFACE**

**New
Opportunities
for Research
Funding Agency
Cooperation in
Europe**



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About NORFACE

New Opportunities for Research Funding Agency Cooperation in Europe (NORFACE) is a partnership of national research funding agencies in Europe dedicated to leading and developing opportunities for scientists in the area of social and behavioural sciences.

NORFACE plays an important part in responding to the grand societal challenges by promoting research of the highest quality, sharing best practices among research funders and especially by making international collaboration between social scientists in Europe possible. From challenges brought on by migration and inequality to preparing for the impact of an aging society, researchers in the social sciences in Europe are looking at the behaviour of individuals and groups, and the dynamics of institutions and societies within Europe to understand and address these societal challenges.

NORFACE offers distinctive opportunities for researchers by developing common research funding instruments, thus opening new roads for facilitating and building high quality transnational networks of research collaboration in the area of social and behavioural science. Launched in January 2004, the NORFACE network is the result of a successful bid for funding to the European Commission's 6th Framework Programme within the ERA-NET scheme.

The purpose of this brochure is to provide an overview of the goals, initiative activities and organisation of NORFACE.



1. NORFACE

About NORFACE

NORFACE (New Opportunities for Research Funding Agency Co-operation in Europe) is a collaborative partnership of national research funding agencies from European countries in the realm of social and behavioural sciences. The Network develops common research funding instruments, and acts as a forum for discussion and knowledge exchange. Since its launch in 2004, NORFACE has expanded, achieving a great deal in terms of coordination and collaboration.

NORFACE offers unique opportunities for researchers by developing common research funding instruments, thus opening new roads for facilitating and building new networks of research collaboration in the social sciences. As a transnational funding network, NORFACE is unique in focusing on thematic basic research and the strengthening of the cooperation between social scientists in Europe. By doing so, NORFACE fills a gap in the European Research Area for the social sciences, in the same way HERA does in the humanities.

Programmes with a strong impact on the European research landscape

Up till 2016 NORFACE partners jointly financed five joint research programmes with support of the European Commission with almost 40 research projects in 16 European countries with a total budget of € 53.4 million. These programmes are:

- Transformations to Sustainability (T2S) in 2016
- Dynamics of Inequality during the Life Course: structures and processes (DIAL) in 2015
- Welfare States Futures in 2013
- Migration in Europe – Social, Economic, Cultural and Policy Dynamics in 2008
- Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe? in 2006

The cumulative effect of the work undertaken by the NORFACE research programmes is firmly evidenced.

- **Impact:** the NORFACE programmes have had a strong impact on the European research landscape by promoting effective transnational pan-European research networking and synergy of research programmes, by supporting innovation and excellent interdisciplinary research, fostering European added value and a comparative perspective.
- **Publications and data:** the NORFACE programmes have resulted in high quality scientific publications in high rated peer reviewed journals, and generated insights and data that allow for further enhancing the evidence base for policy formulation on societal challenges as migration and the future of the welfare states.
- **Research capacity:** by bringing together a significant mass of high quality international research capacity from relevant scientific disciplines and knowledge holders in bold and innovative endeavours, the NORFACE programmes enable major advances in our theoretical understanding and practical knowledge. This results in bridging gaps between research domains and disciplines, between different thematic fields and between scientists, funders, citizens, practioners and decision-makers.



- **Knowledge exchange:** NORFACE is strongly committed to fund excellent research and to translate the results into social, economic, cultural and ecological benefits. Communication, dissemination and engagement activities are an integral part of all NORFACE programmes. A unique feature of the NORFACE thematic programmes is that each programme has its own Programme Coordinator to maximise the impact of the programme. The Programme Coordinator promotes cohesion and cooperation in the programme by communicating the activities, outcomes and successes of the programme to the academic and non-academic world, and in stimulating and supporting a new generation of researchers on a theme of importance to Europe.
- **Feedback loop:** another specific aspect of the NORFACE partnership is the systematic commitment to review afterwards the achievements of its thematic programmes. Each programme is reviewed by an independent review panel. The reviews make the achievements of the research programmes visible to stakeholders and funding institutions and give input to the design of new NORFACE research programme activities. This ensures a proper and systematic “feedback loop” between the previous and new NORFACE programmes.

NORFACE knowledge platform

Alongside developing research programmes with high scientific and societal value, NORFACE has become a forum for discussion and knowledge exchange among funding agencies. The NORFACE network is an important platform for sharing thoughts about both national and international research collaboration and research policies, and learning from each other’s best practices and experiences. The NORFACE partners have been involved in best practice studies that have helped the partner councils to familiarise themselves with each other’s research activities and deepen the cooperation.

Towards 2020 and beyond

In 2015 NORFACE presented the [NORFACE Roadmap: 2015-2020](#). After reviewing the impact and legacy of its achievements so far, and discussing its ambitions for an enhanced role in the future, the NORFACE partners jointly agreed that transnational, multidisciplinary, thematic programming was and will be the backbone of NORFACE.

In addition, the following ambitions were identified to increase excellence in research and to lower barriers between researchers in working together.

- To scale up the discourse around impact of the social sciences.
- To develop plans for an increased advocacy and advancement role of the social sciences.
- To streamline and improve procedures for thematic calls.

NORFACE will foster and explore collaboration with other international networks² to avoid duplication of work, and add real value for stakeholders, funders, researchers and European society in general. In these ways NORFACE is a key player in a broader landscape that is helping to shape and redefine the role of the social sciences in the context of Europe and the wider international scene.

² E.g. Joint Programming Initiatives (JPI's), Trans-Atlantic Platform (T-AP), Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA), European Committee (EC), Belmont Forum, Science Europe, League of European Research Universities (LERU), the federation of All European Academies (ALLEA), European Alliance for Social Sciences and Humanities (EASSH).

2. NORFACE Research Programmes

NORFACE organises transnational, thematic research programmes, based on competitive calls for proposals. In these programmes, NORFACE funds basic research in which teams from at least three participating countries cooperate in an integrated research project.

NORFACE has launched the following research programmes:

- **Transformations to Sustainability (T2S)** (M€ 15) in 2016

Climate change, environmental degradation and resource pressures have created unprecedented situations for societies worldwide. The slow progress on many pressing challenges of global environmental change and global development has led to increasing emphasis, both in research and policy, on the need to go beyond the study and encouragement of incremental change. The objective of this programme on Transformations to Sustainability is to support research projects that enhance our understanding of how societies can transform their relationship with the environment to achieve a sustainable future. It will investigate processes through which such transformations take place, globally, regionally and locally, by looking at how they unfolded in the past, what drives such processes and with what outcomes. Both current circumstances and historical cases with clear relevance to contemporary societal dynamics will be considered relevant. This programme is a joint action of the Belmont Forum and NORFACE.

- **Dynamics of Inequality during the Life Course: structures and processes (DIAL)** (M€ 20) in 2015

Existing and rising inequalities pose fundamental challenges to European societies and economies. The increasing gap between rich and poor, exacerbated by the recent financial and economic crises, is a key concern. The sources of inequalities in contemporary societies are complex and highly intertwined and they and their consequences can only be understood by comprehensive research activities. The NORFACE DIAL programme is focused on understanding the dynamics of inequalities as they unfold over the life course, causal processes and drivers in relation to these inequalities, the impact of these inequalities on social cohesion, and the identification of opportunities for policy intervention to increase possibilities for social mobility and to reduce inequalities.

- **Welfare States Futures** (M€ 19) in 2013

Welfare states are at a critical turning point. The development of welfare systems was one of the defining characteristics of the 20th century, especially in Europe. However, in times of change, it is important to re-think “the welfare state” with a programme of innovative research designed to ask and answer fundamental questions about the design, delivery and experience of welfare in the 21st century. In this NORFACE programme 15 European research projects are finding answers to the question how welfare states should evolve in the 21st century. Researchers scrutinize everything from healthcare to immigration, to design new systems fit for a post-crisis Europe that is facing challenges such as austerity economics, an ageing society and increased migration.



- **Migration in Europe – Social, Economic, Cultural and Policy Dynamics** (M€ 29) in 2008

Migration is currently at the top of the European agenda due to the large-scale flows of asylum seekers. At the same time, migration has been part of Europe's history, evidenced by Europe's substantial share of immigrant (first and second generation) populations. To engage fruitfully with these diverse realities, Europe is in dire need for high-quality research on migration to develop coherent migration policies. This is what the NORFACE Migration programme provided: large-scale, comparative, multi-disciplinary and multi-level research, offering valuable insights on migration in Europe – at the national, European and international level. The NORFACE Migration programme successfully brought together researchers on migration from various European countries and from different disciplines to stimulate cross-fertilization. As a result, the NORFACE Migration programme has fostered a global debate among migration researchers, with a specific focus on European migration research. Primary data collection combined with the harmonisation of the data infrastructure in Europe, allowed for further enhancing the evidence base for policy formulation and a solid base for new research projects.

- **Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe?** (M€ 5.4) in 2006

The programme Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe probed the condition of religion in Europe against the background of European secularism. Also the programme investigated the re-kindling of religious activity brought about by the political and social changes in Europe. The ten innovative and methodologically varied academic research projects investigated the significance of religion in social life, and explored the social and cultural impacts of religious growth points, such as Pentecostalism and Islam. New theories and methods were designed to explain the ways in which religion and faith are re-emerging.

3. NORFACE Governance

The NORFACE governance structure is designed to facilitate the objectives of NORFACE, which are to develop and manage research programmes and act as forum for discussion and knowledge exchange among funding agencies. The structures and procedures have been designed to ensure a collective responsibility for the overall governance of NORFACE and a clear division of labour between the consortium partners. The management organisation of the network is composed of the following bodies.

NORFACE Network Board

The Network Board, in which all NORFACE partners are represented, is assigned with strategic responsibilities and is the highest authority in decision making. It takes the final decisions on funding matters and decides on all internal operations and procedures. The Board acts as a sounding board for the Management Team and members of the board contribute to the visibility of NORFACE by promoting activities, for example in the context of other networks and organisations.

NORFACE Management Team

The NORFACE Management Team advises the Network Board on the implementation of its strategy. The Management Team consists of one staff member from each partner and is the forum for joint consideration of the implementation, management and monitoring of the NORFACE research programmes.

NORFACE Coordination Office

The NORFACE Coordination Office has the responsibility for the overall coordination of the Network. The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) currently acts as the Coordination Office.

4. NORFACE Partners

The NORFACE Network has developed a close partnership and network of national research agencies. The consortium represent most of the major European and European-Associated research (funding) organisations as well as key organisations dedicated to leading and developing opportunities for scientists in the area of social and behavioural sciences. With partners from all over Europe, covering all European regions, NORFACE is geographically balanced.

The programme activities are embedded within the priorities of all partner organisations. Sufficient resources and efforts are allocated to ensure high standards of scientific excellence throughout the activities of the Network.

The following research funding agencies are part of the NORFACE Network:

- Austrian Science Fund (FWF)
- Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS)
- Danish Social Science Research Council (DSSRC)
- Estonian Research Council (ETaG)
- The Academy of Finland (AKA)
- L'Agence Nationale de la Recherche, (ANR), France
- Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)
- The Icelandic Centre for Research (RANNÍS)
- The Irish Research Council (IRC)
- Research Council of Lithuania (RCL)
- The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO)
- The Research Council of Norway (RCN)
- The National Science Centre (NCN), Poland
- Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), Portugal
- Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS)
- The Swedish Research Council (VR)
- Swiss national Science Foundation (SNSF)
- The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), United Kingdom

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada is associate partner and participates in several NORFACE programmes.

The following organisations act as observers:

- European Commission
- NordForsk
- The Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO) of Belgium
- Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR)
- The Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (MINECO) of Spain



Become a partner in NORFACE?

Closer co-operation in Europe is essential for encouraging effective, structured and coherent international scientific co-operation in social science disciplines. NORFACE, therefore, intends to further expand to include other partner organisations. If you would like to find out more about how to join NORFACE or become involved in any of its activities, please contact us.

Contact us

For further information on the NORFACE Network and its research programmes, please contact:

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This brochure is part of the series Presenting NORFACE. Other available brochures are:

Presenting NORFACE: **Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe?**
Presenting NORFACE: **Migration in Europe – Social, Economic, Cultural and Policy Dynamics**
Presenting NORFACE: **Welfare States Futures**

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