

NORFACE
ERA-NET



NORFACE Research Programme: Re-emergence of religion as a social force in Europe

Evaluation report

Preface

The Review Panel for the evaluation of the NORFACE Research Programme “Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe” hereby submits its report. The evaluation has focused on the achievements of the programme as a whole and has taken into account all aspects of the programme: the ten research projects, the two capacity building projects and the scientific coordination activities.

The Review Panel is unanimous in its assessments, conclusions and recommendations.

Hopefully the report will give input to further work with transnational research programme activities both in NORFACE and in other ERA-NETs.

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Summary

The NORFACE Research Programme “Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe” started in spring 2007 and ended in December 2010. Ten research projects and two capacity building projects have been funded. The NORFACE Religion Programme probes the current conditions of religion in Europe against the background of European secularism and the re-kindling of religious activity brought about by the political and social changes in Europe of the past thirty years. The scientific objectives of the research programme have been to support excellent research in NORFACE partner countries; promote and support coordination between researchers from NORFACE partner countries, especially researchers early in their careers; coordinate scattered capacities funded through the NORFACE Partner Agencies within the theme of the research programme; build on an area where the NORFACE countries working together have an opportunity to contribute to the development of the social sciences globally; and increase the visibility of European social science research on a specified theme.

The NORFACE Network Board decided to implement an evaluation of the NORFACE Religion Programme. The mandate for the evaluation was decided and a review panel with three members was approved by the NORFACE Network Board during summer 2011. The objectives of the evaluation were to identify the achievements of the NORFACE Religion Programme and assess the added value of the research programme compared to national programme funding. The focus was intended to be on the collaborative programme activities, the scientific cooperation and interactions among the participants in the NORFACE Religion Programme and the quality and relevance of the scientific results.

The evaluation was intended to focus on the achievement of the programme as a whole and to take into account all aspects of the research programme: the ten research projects, the two capacity building projects and the scientific coordination activities. The evaluation was intended to give input to further work with transnational research programme activities both in NORFACE and in other ERA-NETs. Furthermore, the evaluation was intended to make the results of the research programme visible to the funding institutions, both the NORFACE partner organizations and the EU.

The evaluation started in September 2011 and was concluded early in January 2012. Relevant material was made available for the Review Panel when the evaluation started. The Review Panel had a meeting in Oslo, including an interview with the coordinator of the programme, Professor Roger Hewitt.

The Review Panel has come to the conclusion that the programme has indeed succeeded in supporting at least some excellent research in the NORFACE partner countries: Firstly, several of the principal investigators of the funded projects already have an excellent scientific reputation in the domain of empirical research. The programme has clearly attracted researchers that are recognized as being among the top scholars both in the field of the sociology/anthropology/study of religion and in other fields of social research. Secondly, the quality of the researchers and projects is higher than might be expected in a national research programme on the same topic. The reason is obviously that - other things being equal - an international programme is able to attract more top scholars in a given field. Thirdly, most of the principal investigators have published the outputs of their projects in highly ranked journals and other prestigious outlets. The Review Panel points at the difficulty of judging the exact number of top publications produced from each project. For one thing, researchers have included publications that have been published during the time of the research, but are not

based on the funded research. This is understandable, but for evaluation purposes still unfortunate. Furthermore, data produced in empirical research may be used for years to come. The list of publications is thus likely to yet become longer.

The Review Panel finds that the programme has been successful in attracting and soliciting projects characterized by scientific excellence. This was facilitated by the fact that the theme of the call was broad and researchers were invited to create their own research questions. However, the very short period of time between call and deadline may have deterred some excellent researchers from applying and may have encouraged the submission of some less well thought out projects. The Review Panel strongly suggests that the time span between call and deadline should be extended, to enable the thorough dissemination of information throughout the relevant research communities, and to maximize the chances that the best researchers will consider taking part.

The Review Panel recommends that capacity building projects in future programmes should concentrate on capacity building in the substantive area of the programme. Some kinds of generic skills acquisition might be most appropriately done by making use of existing training opportunities in summer and winter schools. But thematic programme-related training sessions and related capacity building activities are highly desirable. When it comes to documentation and reporting, future programmes should ensure that there is full documentation of all stages of the process, both on the level of the programme managing institution and of individual projects.

Overall the Review Panel concludes that NORFACE has proved to be a good instrument to stimulate excellent scientific research, develop a European research community, and tackle themes of importance for European public policy. Compared to a national programme, it is more flexible when it comes to funding international cooperation and more efficient in generating international visibility.

1 Introduction

1.1 About NORFACE

NORFACE - New Opportunities for Research Funding Agency Cooperation in Europe – is a partnership between fifteen research councils to increase cooperation in research and research policy in Europe. This partnership is built on a history of less formal cooperation and joint activities between the Nordic and UK research councils. NORFACE extends and formalises this working relationship and provides a framework and a vision for a durable multi-national strategic partnership in research funding and practice, especially within the social sciences. NORFACE receives core funding under the European Union’s ERA-NET scheme (since 2004). The ERA-NET mechanism was introduced in the EU’s Sixth Framework Programme to support collaborative working among national research agencies and programmes in furtherance of the goal of establishing a European Research Area.

NORFACE has launched two joint research programmes, the transnational research programme “Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe?” in 2006 and in 2008 a large-scale transnational research programme “Migration in Europe – Social, Economic, Cultural and policy Dynamics”.

The present NORFACE Partner Agencies are:

- **Austria:** Austrian Science Fund (FWF)
- **Denmark:** Danish Social Science Research Council (DSSRC)
- **Estonia:** Estonian Science Foundation (ETF)
- **Finland:** Academy of Finland (AKA)
- **France:** L’Agence nationale de la recherche (ANR)¹
- **Germany:** Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)
- **Iceland:** Icelandic Centre for Research (RANNÍS)
- **Ireland:** Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS)
- **Netherlands:** Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO)
- **Norway:** Research Council of Norway (RCN)
- **Portugal:** Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT)
- **Slovenia:** Slovenian Research Agency (SRA)
- **Sweden:** Swedish Research Council (VR)
- **United Kingdom:** Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)

Associated partner **Canada:** Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)

From September 2011 the NORFACE partnership continued in the shape of the NORFACE-II Support Action. The NORFACE-II Support Action aims at further deepening and strengthening the established transnational cooperation and is now in the phase of planning for a new multidisciplinary transnational research programme with the theme “Welfare State Futures”.

¹ At the time of the launching of the research programme “Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe”, the French ANR was not a member of NORFACE and French researchers therefore could not take part in the research programme.

1.2 Objectives of the NORFACE Religion Programme

The NORFACE Religion Programme started in spring 2007 and ended in December 2010. Ten research projects and two capacity building projects have been funded. The total budget for the programme has been € 5.4 M.

The scientific objectives of the programme were to:

- support excellent research in NORFACE partner countries;
- promote and support coordination between researchers from NORFACE partner countries, especially researchers early in their careers;
- coordinate scattered capacities funded through the NORFACE Partner Agencies in a chosen field of research;
- build on an area where the NORFACE countries working together have an opportunity to contribute to the development of the social sciences globally;
- increase the visibility of European social science research on a specified theme.

The objectives of the capacity building projects were to:

- improve cross-border collaboration in capacity building through researcher training;
- improve the participation of young and early-career researchers in NORFACE activities;
- encourage creative thinking in developing capacity building schemes.

The programme probes the current conditions of religion in Europe against the background of European secularism and the re-kindling of religious activity brought about by the political and social changes in Europe of the past thirty years. The research projects look at the significance of religion in contemporary social life, and explore the social and cultural impacts of recent religious growth points, such as Pentecostalism and Islam.

The ten research projects and two capacity building projects

- **Transnational Southern Pentecostal Churches, Networks and Believers in Three Northern Countries: a Potential and Potent Social Force.** Professor Andreas Droogers, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology.
- **The Architecture of Contemporary Religious Transmission.** Professor Roger Hewitt, Goldsmiths College, University of London, Centre for Urban and Community Research.
- **Gender, National and Religious Diversity in Force at European Pilgrimage Sites.** Professor Wilhelmina Jansen, Institute for Gender Studies at the Radboud University Nijmegen. Faculty of Social Sciences.
- **What are the Impacts of Religious Diversity? Regions in three European Countries Compared.** Professor Wolkhard Krech, Ruhr University Bochum, Faculty of Protestant Theology.
- **Islam as a Social Force in Europe: Islamic fashion and the Politics of Presence.** Professor Annelies Moors, Universiteit van Amsterdam, International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World.
- **Ethnic Identity and Religious Mobilisation of the European Second Generation: Comparing Muslim Youth in Multicultural Cities.** Professor Karen Phaet. European Research Centre on Migration and Ethnic Relations (ERCOMER), Social Sciences, Utrecht University.
- **“Recognizing Christianity”:** How African Immigrants Redefine the European Religious Heritage. Dr Ramon Sarró, University of Lisbon, Institute for Social Sciences.

- **Religious Sources of Solidarity (EURESOURCE).** Professor Peer Scheepers, Radboud University Nijmegen, Faculty of Theology, Department of Empirical Theology.
- **Religion, Euroskepticism, and the Media.** Professor Claes de Vreese, University of Amsterdam, The Amsterdam School of Communications Research, ASCoR.
- **Extending and Enhancing the ISSP 2008 Module on Religion.** Professor David Voas, University of Manchester, Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research, School of Social Sciences.
- **Religion, mobility and place:** training and developing innovative theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of religion in Europe. Professor Andre Droogers, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology.
- **European Network on the Investigation of Religious Pluralism.** Professor Volkhard Krech, Ruhr University Bochum, Faculty of Protestant Theology.

1.3 Organisation of the NORFACE Religion Programme

The preparation of the NORFACE Religion Programme began with consultations of all Partner Agencies and their networks within research communities on the possible themes of the programme. The theme proposals were considered by the NORFACE Network Board, the body responsible for high level decision making for the network with participation from each of the Partner Agencies. Based on a decision taken by the NORFACE Network Board on 29 November 2005, the NORFACE network launched the NORFACE Religion Programme.

Applications to the NORFACE Religion Programme were processed in two stages. In the first stage, project Outline Proposals were invited on 31 January 2006 with a deadline of 31 March 2006. Eligible and acceptable Outline Proposals, totalling 63 proposals, were reviewed by an International Panel, comprising experts nominated by each NORFACE partner. The Panel recommended to the NORFACE Network Board that a shortlist of 26 applicants to be invited to submit Full Proposals.

The deadline for Full Proposals was 30 September 2006. Each Full Proposal was evaluated by three individual international referees. These evaluations formed the starting point for a joint review carried out by a specially appointed International Panel. The Panel prepared a consensus review report on each Full Proposal, which the applicant received as feedback after the final funding decisions. The Network Board made funding decisions in December 2006. One aim of the NORFACE Religion Programme has been to help the research projects develop into a coherent and cohesive structure through active exchange of information and cooperation. A programme coordinator was appointed. The core duties of the coordinator were to:

- Promote contacts between researchers and exchange of information between the programme projects and the scientific community;
- Organise seminars with the goal of promoting collaboration between researchers within the programme as well as initiating collaboration with other researchers.

2 Objectives and procedure

2.1 Objectives of the evaluation and evaluation criteria

The NORFACE Network Board decided to make an evaluation of the research programme as a dedicated Task of NORFACE II Support Action. The Research Council of Norway (RCN) was made responsible for organizing the evaluation process.

All partners were invited to suggest candidates for a review panel. The mandate for the evaluation was decided and a review panel with three members was approved by the NORFACE Network Board through written consultation in the summer of 2011. As Chair of the panel was appointed Professor Jörg Stolz (University of Lausanne, Switzerland) and as members were appointed Dr. Niamh Hardiman (University College Dublin, Ireland) and Professor Hubert Seiwert (Universität Leipzig, Germany).

The objectives of the evaluation were to identify the achievements of the NORFACE Religion Programme and assess the added value of the programme when compared to national programme funding. The focus was to be on the collaborative programme activities, the scientific cooperation and interactions among the participants in the programme and the quality and relevance of the scientific results. The evaluation was to focus on the achievement of the programme as a whole and to take into account all aspects of the programme: the ten research projects, the two capacity building projects and the scientific coordination activities. The evaluation was to give input to further work with transnational research programme activities both in NORFACE and in other ERA-NETs. Furthermore, the evaluation was to make the results of the research programme visible to the funding institutions, both the NORFACE partner organizations and the EU. Substantially, the evaluation was to focus on three areas:

1. Scientific Quality and Visibility

- Has the programme succeeded in supporting excellent research in the NORFACE partner countries?
- Has the programme contributed to the development of the social sciences globally in the chosen field of research?
- Has the programme managed to increase the visibility of European social science research in the chosen field of research?

2. Capacity Building Activities

- Has the programme promoted and supported cooperation between researchers from NORFACE partner countries, especially researchers early in their careers?
- Has the programme improved cross-border collaboration in capacity building through research training?
- Has the programme improved the participation of young and early career researchers in NORFACE activities?
- Has the programme encouraged creative thinking in developing capacity building schemes?

3. Implementation of the Programme and the Scientific Coordination Activities

- Has the programme managed to coordinate scattered capacities funded through the NORFACE Agencies in the chosen field of research?

- What is the added value of the transnational programme compared to national programme funding?
- Has the programme been successfully implemented and organised?
- Recommendations for the future work with transnational programmes?

2.2 Evaluation procedure

The evaluation started in September 2011 and was concluded early in January 2012. Relevant material was made available for the Review Panel when the evaluation started. The Review Panel had a meeting in Oslo, at the Research Council of Norway, on 10 - 11 November 2011. At the meeting an interview with the coordinator of the programme, Professor Roger Hewitt, took place. The Review Panel has made its assessments on the basis of:

- scientific production, coordination and capacity building activities, dissemination, etc.;
- final reports made by the project leaders and programme coordinator;
- interview with programme coordinator;
- other documents and background material (the two calls, programme specifications, website, etc.).

3 Evaluation

3.1 Scientific quality and visibility

Funding of excellent research in the NORFACE partner countries

The Review Panel has come to the conclusion that the NORFACE Religion programme has indeed succeeded in supporting at least some excellent research in the NORFACE partner countries:

Firstly, several of the principal investigators of the funded projects already have an excellent scientific reputation in the domain of empirical research. The programme has clearly attracted researchers that are recognized as being among the top scholars both in the field of the sociology/anthropology/study of religion and in other fields of social research. This is also reflected by the fact that only about 16% of proposed projects were funded (10/63).

Secondly, the quality of the researchers and projects is higher than what might be expected in a national research programme on the same topic. The reason is obviously that - other things being equal - an international programme is able to attract more top scholars in a given field.

Thirdly, most of the principal investigators have published the outputs of their projects in highly ranked journals and other prestigious outlets. It is, however, difficult to judge the exact number of top publications produced from each project. For one thing, researchers have included publications that have been published during the time of the research, but that are not based on the funded research. This is understandable², but for evaluation purposes still unfortunate.³ Furthermore, data produced in empirical research may be used for years to come. The list of publications is thus likely to yet become longer.⁴ Publication strategies differ from project to project. Some projects aim exclusively for top peer-reviewed journals (e.g. Scheepers). Others publish mostly in book chapters (e.g. Krech, Hewitt). One or two projects apart, the output is very high and in qualitatively good outlets.

Adequacy concerning the call

The Review Panel has discussed the question as to whether the 10 funded projects adequately reflected the goals and research questions set out in the call for projects, specifically in the document "Specification concerning the theme of the Programme (5 October 2006)". In other words, did the programme get what it wanted? A careful reading of this document and a comparison with the projects that have finally been chosen leads to the conclusion that there is a *good fit* between call and projects. All six questions posed are addressed by at least one of the projects.⁵ It is quite another question if the call and specification should have been set up

² Top publications can normally only be published once a project has been finished, data collection and analysis have been finalized and a thorough writing up has taken place. Taking furthermore into account that publications in top journals usually have a very long lead time (often 1-2 years), one sees the difficulty of being able to present published top publications in a final report for a research program such as this one.

³ Future projects should make it very clear that only publications linked to the research are allowed in the report. We have tried to count the publications produced with data from NORFACE. According to what we can understand from the titles of the publications, we count 6 books, 4 special editions of journals, 54 articles in peer-reviewed journals (a number yet submitted) and 59 other publications. Due to the difficulties mentioned, this method is very unreliable indeed.

⁴ This is especially the case in the project by David Voas.

⁵ 1. Religion and national identity: Scheepers; 2. Non-Christian religions: Phalet, Moors, Droogers, Sarrò; 3. Determinants of religiosity: Voas, Krech; 4. Effects of religiosity: Voas, Krech, Scheepers; 5. Religion and European Union: Vreese; 6. Religious revival: Voas.

differently. If the creators of the programme had wanted more knowledge useful for example in public policy, it would have had to frame the call differently.

Development of the social sciences globally

On a very general level, it is easy to assert that the programme has indeed contributed strongly to the development of the social sciences of religion. A programme that produces more than 50 peer-reviewed articles, sometimes in the very best journals, has undoubtedly led to numerous contributions. A more precise answer concerning to where exactly the contributions lie would have to assess every project and paper individually - which cannot be done in this evaluation. Suffice it to say that the projects do cover a wide range of topics and concerns:

- Some projects address long-standing concerns and questions such as the integration of the second generation of Muslims (Phalet), the consequences of religious pluralism (Krech), Euroscepticism (Vreese), the link between religion and solidarity (Scheepers) or the nature of religious transmission (Hewitt) and pilgrimage (Jansen) with new and innovative concepts and research methodologies.
- Some projects highlight and analyze new or newly found phenomena, such as the emergence of African churches in Europe (Sarro, Droogers) or Islamic fashion (Moors).
- Some projects use quantitative (Krech, Voas, Vreese, Scheepers), some use qualitative methodology (Jansen, Droogers, Hewitt, Moors, Sarro), one project uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (Phalet).
- One project extends and enhances existing data collection (Voas, ISSP) with additional cases and variables. This is an ingenious strategy with a large payoff and is to be recommended for future research. Another project has tried to include a number of variables in a general survey (Vreese, European Election study). It is unfortunate that more studies did not try to do something similar by linking themselves to already existing data or data collection. For example, qualitative projects could benefit immensely by being linked to existing quantitative research, and vice versa. Future calls for projects may stimulate such linking strategies.

Increase of visibility of European social science research

The programme has indeed managed to increase the visibility of European social sciences of religion. Again, the most important factor is that most of the principal investigators are experienced researchers who seek visibility almost by second nature.

The most important scientific dissemination takes place through publications in top journals and papers given at international conferences. Almost all projects have done this extensively and have generated significant visibility for this NORFACE research programme. Two projects have published special issues in scientific journals (Moors, Vreese). The members of the review panel can also attest to a high visibility of the programme at various conferences they attended these past years.

A second way of gaining visibility is through the programme's own website Relemerge produced by Roger Hewitt. This website is professionally done and very useful. Three of the projects (Jansen, Hewitt, Vreese) have additional websites. In general, we may say that the internet visibility of the programme is very satisfactory.

The projects vary as to other ways of seeking visibility. Six projects talk about sometimes extensive press coverage and dissemination in the media. Such coverage is always national or local and has been done by sub-projects. Two projects inform us about specific policy dissemination (Hewitt, Droogers). Again, such policy dissemination is normally

national or local in character. Whether policy influence or media dissemination is appropriate and/or feasible depends strongly on the theme and character of the research.

3.2 Capacity building activities

It was a general goal of the NORFACE Religion Programme to provide further capacity building for early-career researchers. To this end, most projects made provision for recruitment of PhD students and/or postdoctoral researchers, though the project reports do not all provide details of numbers, names, or roles of early career researchers. The following information can be ascertained from the individual project reports:

	Postdoc	PhD	MA	Involvement in Capacity-Building Project
Droogers	2	1		Religion, mobility, space
Hewitt		1	3	
Jansen		1 + 1 in UK	10	Religion, mobility, space
Krech*		3	1	Religious pluralism
Moors	1	3	several	Religion, mobility, space
Phalet		3 + 1 in UK		
Sarró		2	1	Religion, mobility, space
Scheepers**	1			
De Vrees	N/A			
Voas		1		
TOTAL	4	15	15	

* These Early Career Researchers ran the Finnish project. No information is given for the German or Slovenian projects.

** The postdoc is identified as having run the project, and his departure to take up a job caused time management problems for the PIs. While PhD guidance is noted as having been time-consuming, no numbers, names, or roles are identified.

The summary report by the programme coordinator Roger Hewitt (p.9) notes that there were 41 early career researchers involved in the programme, and that information is available on the location of 30 of these by the end of the programme:

- 15 remained or became PhD students
- 5 are now employed as lecturers in higher education institutions
- 8 are employed in full-time research
- 2 are in other forms of employment

It certainly seems highly desirable to track the involvement and progression of the early-career researchers. It would also be desirable to invite individual projects to specify who their early-career researchers were, including information about their status and research role, training and mobility opportunities, conference presentations, and participation in publications.

Network-building and research training for early career researchers

Varying degrees of detail are provided in individual project reports concerning the network building opportunities available to early career researchers. The four projects that took part in the Religion, Mobility, and Place Capacity Building Project – those led by Droogers, Jansen, Moors, and Sarró – provide most detail. The report from Phalet also provides details of study visits on the part of that project's three PhD students. Individual projects could not feasibly have set up their own research training opportunities for early career researchers. The specific Capacity Building Initiatives were set up to generate sufficient scale for training as well as networking opportunities (further details below). The research programme itself provided three kinds of opportunities for early-career researchers to build and sustain networks with others similarly positioned, as well as with more senior and established researchers:

1. Project coordination meetings
2. Annual NORFACE programme meetings
3. Specific thematic Capacity Building Projects

The most successful interchanges within projects appear to have taken place where the PIs were already strongly committed to cooperating with project partners (rather than each working in parallel) and indeed to creating links across projects where possible.

Some projects commented that the plenary NORFACE meetings were a useful framework for networking, providing good insight into the variety of research under way, and creating a sense of common purpose. Perhaps inevitably, they do not seem to have been particularly useful as a means of generating research synergies. Some project participants – especially PhD students trying to make progress with or finish dissertations – seem to have suffered from some 'meeting overload', especially in the latter stages of the programme.

The four projects that participated in the Capacity Building Project on Religion, Mobility, and Place, appear to have generated the most fruitful opportunities for networking for early-career researchers.

The two cross-project Capacity Building Projects were geared specifically towards the goals of linking early-stage researchers with one another across projects, and providing research training in substantive issues, methodological techniques, and career development planning. These were:

1. Religious pluralism in Europe (Krech)
2. Religion, mobility, and place (Droogers)

1. Religious Pluralism in Europe

This project was coordinated from Bochum. Its declared aim was to provide a focus for cross-project link-up within the NORFACE Religion Programme, focusing in particular on the quantitative aspects of studying religious pluralism and on the social consequences of religious pluralism. The project established links with programmes on related topics that were funded from sources other than NORFACE (the Danish Pluralism Project, the Religions in Finland Project, the UK Community Religions Project, and the Religions in Switzerland project). The programme coordinator's report (Hewitt, p.12) notes that 13 researchers were involved in activities organized by this project, from Germany (3), Finland (2), Norway (1), Denmark (1), Slovenia (2), Netherlands (1), Canada (1), Switzerland (1), UK (1). Four activities were reported as having been organized under the aegis of this capacity-building project:

- A conference on 'Religious Pluralisation in Europe' (Bochum, October 2009). This involved over 20 researchers; 10 presentations were given.

- Website www.plureligion.net
- A five-day Summer School (Bochum, July 2010).
- 21 PhD candidates were involved. The theme was 'Religions Pluralisation and Migration'.
- This had a strong methodological as well as comparative theoretical orientation.
- ERC Advanced Investigator Grant on 'Local religious pluralism' (submitted April 2011).

The plan to generate linkages not only between programme projects but with other international projects is commendable. The Capacity Building Project evidently did generate the opportunity for researchers in related areas but working on different projects to interact and collaborate. However, a number of questions arise over whether all these activities are really capacity-building exercises in the sense identified by the NORFACE Religion Programme:

- It is not clear from the final report how many of the NORFACE projects were linked into this network.
- It is not clear how many of the 13 scientists mentioned above were in NORFACE projects and how many were drawn in to create synergies across other research programmes.
- The website makes no reference to NORFACE, and appears to be an already-existing website for the research centre for religious studies in Bochum university.
- It is not clear who initiated the ERC Advanced Investigator Grant, or whom it would benefit.
- It is not clear how many, or indeed if any of the 21 PhD candidates involved in the Summer School were recruited from NORFACE projects.
- It is not clear whether the external project links existed prior to the NORFACE initiative.

2. Religion, Mobility and Place

This network was coordinated from Amsterdam, and brought together four of the NORFACE projects (Droogers, Jansen, Moors, Sarró). Two of these had PIs who were based in Amsterdam, another was in Nijmegen, while the fourth was in Lisbon. This project gave rise to four activities, including three summer/ winter schools:

- Amsterdam, three days, December 2008
- Nijmegen, three days, June 2009
- Utrecht, three days, February 2010
- A special follow-up meeting was held to organize a special issue of a journal in which both senior and early-stage researchers were to be involved. In addition, some surplus funds were redirected toward funding of two Nijmegen-based postgraduate students.

The summer/ winter schools covered methodological issues and interdisciplinary practices as well as various substantive topics. The Utrecht meeting had a special focus on career development for early career researchers, with two invited experts who advised on presentation skills and grant writing. This network functioned as a direct outgrowth of the NORFACE Religion Programme. PI reports accord a clear priority to integrating early-stage researchers into activities, and providing them with both substantive and transferable skills. The sessions seem to have been well planned to maximize participation of young researchers

and to provide them with specific training. The strong Dutch focus may have made it easier to coordinate the project. But it may also have made it more difficult to integrate people from other countries, though this is not specifically mentioned in the report. The final report notes that the capacity-building instrument was received ‘with much enthusiasm’ by the projects, and that it has been important in building ‘a strong network of early career researchers and senior researchers’. This is very commendable.

It is not quite clear exactly how many of the participating PhD and MA students were involved in the four projects in question. There is mention of the fact that ‘many of the PhD students have now completed their thesis, or are in the process of completing’. There is reference also to the participation of MA students who had been able to work on topics relating to the funded projects. The summer and winter schools were clearly very well received and much appreciated by the early career researchers who took part in them.

The manifest successes of this Capacity Building Project suggest that some of the practices could usefully be mainstreamed in future research programmes, and be made available to all early-career researchers in the programme – particularly the thematic and sub-disciplinary methodological training. Although some aspects of PhD training might be thought to be best provided by university-based PhD training programmes, there is also scope for a pooled programme-wide provision of training in career development, grant-writing, and public presentation in the specific thematic areas of the programme. Finally, these thematic methodological and substantive training opportunities clearly functioned well as networking opportunities for the rising generation of young researchers, fulfilling a dual function in capacity-building.

3.3 Coordination activities

Coordination of scattered capacities

The success of the programme in coordinating scattered capacities funded through the NORFACE Agencies may be considered on three levels:

- at the level of the whole programme
- at the level of the individual scientific projects
- at the general level of promoting scientific cooperation, including research not funded by the NORFACE Religion Programme (which is, however, not part of the mandate of the Review Panel).

Coordination at programme level

Professor Roger Hewitt was appointed as a programme coordinator to coordinate activities at the level of the whole programme. His core duties as coordinator were specified as follows:

- Promoting contacts between researchers and the exchange of information between the programme projects and the scientific community;
- Organising seminars with the goal of promoting collaboration between researchers within the programme as well as initiating collaboration with other researchers;
- Promoting the attainment of the objectives of the programme.

It should be noted that Professor Hewitt was also the PI of one of the scientific projects. The coordination activities of the programme were as follows:

- two all-project conferences,
- two cross-programme thematic seminars/workshops,

- four capacity-building, cross-project events,
- one public end-of-programme conference,
- one joint conference mounted in cooperation with the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council/Economic and Social Research Council's Religion and Society programme
- launching a Relemerge Website.

Concerning support to individual projects, feedback from the participants is unanimously positive. Coordination of the programme level was well organised.

The *two full programme conferences* were held on 22 – 23 April 2009 and on 2 – 3 June 2010. Given the fact that the individual projects started in 2007 and were finished in 2010, these conferences obviously could not aim at promoting cooperation between the individual projects but were primarily concerned with describing the progress and the results of each project. The final report does not document the programme and participants of the first conference, while it contains the programme of the second conference and summaries of the papers presented.

The first of the *thematic workshops* (on the concept of “social force”) took place following the first full programme conference in London (i.e., April 2009). Its programme is not documented in the reports, but the conference was audio recorded and was made available on the project website. The second one was organized on 15 January 2010 (“Secularization in Europe: Rethinking concepts and debates”). The three speakers of the workshop apparently were not members of any of the individual projects. The public *end of programme conference* took place on 4 June 2010, i.e., the day after the second full programme conference.

The *capacity-building activities* include the project “Religion, mobility, and place” with three summer/winter schools (Amsterdam December 2008, Nijmegen June 2009, Utrecht February 2010) and the project “Network on the investigation of religious pluralism in Europe” with one international conference (Bochum October 2009) and a summer school (Bochum July 2010). The summer/winter schools in the Netherlands seem to have been successful in terms of capacity building. Given the fact that research projects from the Netherlands are disproportionately represented in the NORFACE Religion Programme, it is understandable that the majority of the participating early career researchers came from Dutch universities, which however reduces the impact on international academic cooperation. The conference and the summer school of the Bochum research network had hardly any participants from the programme. The Capacity Building Project certainly contributed to promoting international contacts and cooperation, but the conferences could as well have been organized without the programme.

The joint conference (“Innovative Methods in the Study of Religion”, 29 - 30 March 2010) mounted in cooperation with the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council/Economic and Social Research Council's Religion and Society programme, brought some of the NORFACE projects to the attention of researchers in these much larger programmes.

The scientific coordinator administers a website for the whole NORFACE Religion programme (<http://www.relemerge.org/>), which informs on the aims of the programme, presents the individual projects and their publications, and lists events connected with the programme. The website is informative and well designed.

Coordination at project level

Coordination activities at the level of the individual scientific projects were led by each PI and consisted of research teams from at least three different countries. The final reports are not always explicit as to the form and extent of cooperation between the teams participating in

a project. In general, cooperation could take the form of one or several of the following activities:

- regular meetings of the participating research teams
- joint workshops
- designing common methodologies and research questions
- cooperation between members of different teams in empirical research and exchange of data
- launching a common website
- joint publications or presentations
- planning for future cooperation - sustainability of the cooperation.

As it is not the mandate of the Review Panel to evaluate the individual projects but the programme as a whole, we shall confine the comments to some general observations.

Most projects report that they had regular team meetings or joint workshops. Furthermore, all seem to have been in physical contact with each other during the conferences of the NORFACE Religion Programme.

It may be assumed that on the occasion of these meetings and workshops, common methodologies and research questions have been discussed. However, only in a few cases this has been made explicit in the reports. Occasionally it appears that mainly the team of the PI has carried out a project while the teams in other countries were only marginally involved. But there were also other cases, e.g. members of the participating teams making joint field visits. Some reports do not specify which countries have been involved.

As to joint publications, it might still be too early to judge the publication output. It appears, however, that joint publications involving authors from teams in different countries are the exception. In one case a collective volume has been produced, in another a special issue of a journal is in preparation.

One project explicitly refers to sustainable cooperation in the respective field of research involving not only participants in the NORFACE Religion Programme but also researchers from other countries. In two other cases the research is connected with a pre-existing research network on global Pentecostalism. Most reports do not mention plans to continue cooperation after termination of the programme.

More general coordination activities

Although this evaluation report is primarily concerned with reflecting on coordination activities *funded through the NORFACE Agencies*, it may be useful to include cooperation with researchers not participating in the NORFACE Religion Programme, since several projects engaged in scientific cooperation beyond the programme itself

- A joint conference with the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council/Economic and Social Research Council's Religion and Society was organized; a thematic workshop was also held which featured guest speakers from outside the programme.
- The capacity building project "Network on the investigation of religious pluralism in Europe" has organised two conferences to promote contact among researchers in the field and to launch a proposal for an ERC (FP7) programme.
- Some individual projects have contributed to building or strengthening research networks in their fields.

Added value of the transnational programme

The Review Panel has been asked to discuss the added value of the transnational programme compared to national programme funding. This question can be considered from different points of view, including scientific quality and visibility, capacity building and scientific coordination.

Scientific coordination and cooperation on a transnational level is the domain where a transnational programme most obviously can do better than national programmes. The NORFACE Religion Programme produced a significant number of cooperation activities and results. This is most evident on the level of programme coordination, while on the level of individual projects there seem to be considerable differences in the intensity of international cooperation.

Given the fact that the NORFACE Religion Programme was a pilot project, it is not surprising that there are some points that could be improved. As it is observed in the final report, scientific coordination activities started with some delay and the overall conferences were therefore initiated after the individual projects were already well under way. On the other hand, the themes of the individual projects are - with two exceptions - so diverse that it could not reasonably be expected that much cooperation or coordination between the projects would have developed had the conferences been held earlier.

Hence, the main result of the programme conferences seems to have been intensified scientific contact and exchange on an international level, which is of course a significant contribution. It may be asked, however, whether similar results could not be reached with other programmes such as funding a series of international workshops in certain research areas without financing the individual research projects. A well-designed programme for European network building, which encouraged existing research projects in different countries to exchange experiences, results and possibly also researchers, could promote substantial and sustainable international cooperation.

It may be worth reflecting on the extent to which international cooperation in the individual research projects meets the expectations of the NORFACE Religion Programme. In many cases it appears that actual cooperation between the international teams in different countries was limited to occasional meetings, and in a number of final reports the visibility of the research teams not under the direct supervision of the PI is weak or non-existent. It may be possible to modify the programme in a way that prompts the participating international teams of a project to cooperate on an equal footing. Each project had one PI and each national team had a leader (a national PI), but this is not fully reflected in the final reports; at a minimum the contribution of each national team to the common project should be specified in the final reports.

Implementation and organization

The implementation and organization by the scientific coordinator on the basis of the NORFACE Religion Programme specifications was very good. The scientific coordinator carried the double burden of being at the same time the PI of one of the projects. He had to administer the website, to organize conferences, and to give support to the single projects, which he did very well. However, the scope available to him to actively promote the attainment of the objectives of the programme was probably quite limited in view of the multiple demands of his time.

It appears that the time span between the call (31 January 2006) and the closing date for submitting proposals (31 March 2006) was too short. To draft a substantial proposal for a cooperative project involving partners from three different countries within two months is challenging and certainly demands freeing up time resources that many excellent researchers may not have available at such a short notice.

4 Conclusions and recommendations for the future

Programme design

The Review Panel has come to the conclusion that the overall programme design has considerable merit. But we also think it is worth noting that the NORFACE research programmes wished to promote at least three goals, (outlined in Programme specification, p. 2), which may not all have been consistent with one another:

- scientific excellence: "world class social science on a continental scale"
- cooperation goals: creation of a "transnational collaborative framework"
- contribution to public policy: a "theme of importance to Europe"

The existence of three simultaneous goals suggests that it may be difficult to attend to all three simultaneously, and that choices may be necessary, which may entail some trade-offs between competing objectives. Depending on which goals are given priority, the overall structure of the programme may need to be modified. As we see it, the current programme design used the following priority ordering:

1. scientific excellence
2. cooperation
3. public policy

This can be inferred from the fact that the call was researcher-driven, open to all kinds of research questions in a bottom-up fashion, after which the selection of successful projects was based on the academic merit of the proposal. If this was indeed the top priority intended by the creators of the programme, the outcomes can be deemed to have been successful. Promoting cooperation was also identified as a high priority objective. This means that the core themes identified in the initial call were not necessarily going to be addressed in full, and that the public policy relevance of the programme is perhaps somewhat compromised as a result.

It is possible to envisage a different order of priorities in programme design and project selection. For example, if public policy objectives were to be prioritized, the core themes of the research programme would serve as the filter for selecting projects. Some projects of considerable scientific merit would be discarded as irrelevant, and cooperation would loom less large as a requirement. If this ranking of priorities were to be adopted, projects would need to be elicited and selected in a more tightly controlled top-down process.

Call

Given that the top priority of the programme seems to have been scientific excellence, it was a good idea to use a very wide call for projects, leaving room for practically any social scientific research question in the domain of the sciences of religion. Yet some of the successful proposals were far from explicit about their research design, and the rationale for international cooperation was not clearly stated in all project reports. For future programmes, therefore, we suggest that the following considerations should be given due weight:

- There should be more emphasis on an integrated research design in assessing applications (that is, central question – theory/state of the art – method – validity issues), and a greater emphasis on cumulative, systematic investigation (whether mixed or single method).
- Applicants should be required to provide an explicit rationale for collaboration. The call should make it clear that intensive collaboration among members of the research project across all three countries is expected, that the rationale for such collaboration has to be explained, and that collaboration will have to be thoroughly documented.
- Therefore, a substantially longer time span between call and deadline in the first round for the outline proposal (at least 6 months) would be desirable. Realistically, researchers have to take the most important decisions for the proposed research at this early stage. They need therefore enough time to consider and research the options for their research design and to find the right partners in other countries. As a longer time frame for submitting proposals will predictably increase the number of applications, the call should be very explicit as to the above mentioned requirements and their documentation to facilitate the work of the evaluation panels.

Scientific excellence

The programme has been successful in attracting projects characterized by scientific excellence. This was facilitated by the fact that the theme of the call was broad and that researchers were invited to create their own research questions. However, the very short period of time between call and deadline may have deterred some excellent researchers from applying and may have encouraged the submission of some less well thought out projects. As noted above, we recommend that the time span between call and deadline should be extended, to enable the thorough dissemination of information throughout the relevant research communities, and to maximize the chances that the best researchers will consider taking part.

Capacity building

Capacity building projects in future programmes should *concentrate on capacity building in the substantive area* of the programme. Some kinds of generic skills acquisition might be most appropriately done by projects availing themselves of existing training opportunities in summer and winter schools. But thematic programme-related training sessions and related capacity building activities are highly desirable. The activities initiated by the Amsterdam-based capacity-building network were clearly very successful. This project could provide a template for programme-wide activities in future. Capacity building projects should be *closely monitored for relevance and involvement*. Projects should be required to state very clearly *how many and what kind of early career researchers have benefited from the programme*. Capacity building projects must not use programme resources in order to finance conferences or other activities that would have been provided anyway, and that do not have as their primary concern the capacity building of early career researchers.

Coordination

If the top priority continues to be scientific excellence with a bottom-up selection, *inter-project coordination should be light*, to maximize the time available for each project to build up inter-group within-project interaction. Too many meetings and conferences only add additional time costs for researchers. It would be better to have few (e.g. 2) all-programme conferences with a strong emphasis on capacity building, and strong pressure on all researchers involved to attend, and to drop all other cross-programme thematic activities. On the other hand, more emphasis should be put on collaboration between the partners in the

projects themselves (a point that should also weigh heavily at the project selection stage). It is at the level of the individual projects that a "European research community" is best created. Future programmes should be encouraged to develop an excellent website, as has been the case in this programme.

Role of programme coordinator

Future programmes should change some details concerning appointment and role of the programme coordinator:

- The programme coordinator should be appointed based on a clear procedure and as early as possible. In this NORFACE programme, the coordinator was appointed in an informal way by asking PI's who would be interested.
- The coordinator should not at the same time be a PI. Otherwise, the work load becomes too onerous. Also, an independent coordinator will have more authority if needed.
- The coordination activities should be planned in advance; in this programme, they only started with considerable delay.
- If bottom-up scientific excellence is the main priority, the role of the coordinator may stay light as has been the case in this NORFACE Religion Programme. If the programme prioritizes the creation of a European research community and/or the development of public policy, the coordinator will have to be given greater authority over the work practices of individual projects than has been the case in the current programme.

Documentation & Reporting

Future programmes should ensure that there is full documentation of all stages of the process, both on the level of the programme managing institutions and of individual projects:

- The NORFACE consortium agreed on beforehand, that the Academy of Finland would be responsible for organizing the call and administration of the grants, i.e. all the administration regarding the programme and its projects up to the end of the programme, and that another partner of the consortium, the Research Council of Norway, should be responsible for managing the evaluation of the programme. It is important that the responsible agency can document all stages of the process, including, for example, authorship of the call, the time-line of all decisions taken, the organization of the process, decision-making on initiatives such as the appointment of the programme coordinator, and so on. To ensure full transferability of administration between the National Science Foundation agencies, it is recommended that the agency responsible for the research programme makes a short note describing the organization of the research programme, with references to relevant documents.
- The project leaders should be required to adhere to close guidelines in their final reports, including the following requirements:
 - (1) only report publications that have been using programme-produced data, and
 - (2) only report activities clearly linked to the programme.
- The format for final reports should be changed. It should include sections on (1) central question (2) method (3) central results (4) publications and activities (only linked to program) (5) exact details concerning partners and researchers involved in the three different countries (6) exact number and role of early career researchers.

Overall

Overall it may be said that NORFACE has proved to be a good instrument to stimulate excellent scientific research, develop a European research community, and tackle themes of importance for European public policy. Compared to a national programme, it is more flexible when it comes to funding international cooperation and more efficient in generating international visibility.

Appendix 1



EVALUATION OF THE NORFACE PILOT RESEARCH PROGRAMME 'RE-EMERGENCE OF RELIGION AS A SOCIAL FORCE IN EUROPE?'

TERMS OF REFERENCE

I Introduction

The NORFACE Network Board has agreed on a final evaluation of the Pilot Research Programme 'Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe?'.

The Pilot Research Programme started in Spring 2007 and will end in December 2010. Ten research projects and two capacity building projects have been funded. The total budget for the programme has been M€ 5.4.

The basis for the evaluation is the defined objectives for the Pilot Research Programme.

The scientific objectives of the programme were to:

- support excellent research in NORFACE partner countries;
- promote and support co-ordination between researchers from NORFACE partner countries, especially researchers early in their careers;
- co-ordinate scattered capacities funded through the NORFACE Partner Agencies in a chosen field of research;
- build on an area where the NORFACE countries working together have an opportunity to contribute to the development of the social sciences globally;
- increase the visibility of European social science research on a specified theme.

The objectives of the capacity building call were to:

- improve cross-border collaboration in capacity building through research training;
- improve the participation of young and early-career researchers in NORFACE activities;
- encourage creative thinking in developing capacity building schemes.

II Objectives of the Evaluation

The objectives of the evaluation are to identify the achievements of the Pilot Research Programme and assess the added value of the programme when compared to national programme funding.

The focus should be on the collaborative programme activities, the scientific co-operation and interactions among the participants in the Pilot Research Programme and the quality and relevance of the scientific results.

The evaluation should concern the achievement of the programme as a whole and must take into account all aspects of the programme: the ten research projects, the two capacity building projects and the scientific co-ordination activities.

The evaluation should give input to further work with trans-national research programme activities both in NORFACE and in other ERA-NETs and the evaluation should make the results of the research programme visible to the funding institutions, both the NORFACE partner organisations and the EU.

III Mandate for the Review Panel

The evaluation of the Pilot Research Programme should focus on scientific quality and visibility, capacity building activities and scientific co-ordination activities.

1. Scientific Quality and Visibility

- 1.1 Has the programme succeeded in supporting excellent research in the NORFACE partner countries?
 - *Numeric and content-related evaluation of scientific publications (coverage, quality and quantity; disciplinary, inter-disciplinary, comparative); seminars and workshops that have these aims as focus.*
- 1.2 Has the programme contributed to the development of the social sciences globally in the chosen field of research?
 - *Development of theory and methods, research themes (coverage, relevance, innovativeness), research groups and networks and co-operation.*
- 1.3 Has the programme managed to increase the visibility of European social science research in the chosen field of research?
 - *Dissemination of results, publication strategies, outreach exercises, information leaflets, PR-activities, the number of these, policy seminars, use of website; user database; visibility to a wider academic society, policy makers, civil society?*

2. Capacity Building Activities

- 2.1 Has the programme promoted and supported co-operation between researchers from NORFACE partner countries, especially researchers early in their careers?
 - *Nature and content of the capacity building activities; different activities designed and implemented within capacity building; how far and how wide have they reached the research community; the scope of participants' countries, degrees and inter-disciplinary background; cross-programme activities.*
- 2.2 Has the programme improved cross-border collaboration in capacity building through research training?
 - *Initiatives; improved and increased meeting places for doctoral students / young researchers; training schools; research seminars; cross-project exchange and collaboration.*
- 2.3 Has the programme improved the participation of young and early career researchers in NORFACE activities?
 - *Number of young researchers participating in the research projects, how they have been involved?*

- 2.4 Has the programme encouraged creative thinking in developing capacity building schemes?
- *What type of capacity building schemes have been created and used in the programme?*

3. Implementation of the Programme and the Scientific Co-ordination Activities

- 3.1 Has the programme managed to co-ordinate scattered capacities funded through the NORFACE Agencies in the chosen field of research?
- *The nature and the content of the scientific co-ordination activities; cross-project exchange and collaboration; programme co-ordinator's role and achievements.*
- 3.2 What is the added value of the trans-national programme compared to national programme funding?
- 3.3 Has the programme been successfully implemented and organised?
- 3.4 Recommendations for the future work with trans-national programmes?

IV Organisation and Background Material

The Network Board has decided that the evaluation should be light. An international Review Panel (two to three members) will be appointed to work according to the mandate. The evaluation will start in September 2011 and will be concluded by the end of December 2011. The result of the evaluation will be a written report, which will be presented to the Network Board for approval.

The Review Panel will have a one-day meeting where the interview with the Programme Co-ordinator takes place. All relevant material will be made available for the Review Panel when the evaluation starts. The Review Panel should make their assessments on the basis of

- a) scientific production, co-ordination and capacity building activities, dissemination, etc;
- b) final reports / self assessments made by the research leaders and Programme Co-ordinator;
- c) interviews with Programme Co-ordinator and if necessary, telephone interviews with some of the project leaders;
- d) other documents and background material (the two calls, programme specifications, website, etc).

Appendix 2



NORFACE RESEARCH PROGRAMME:

Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe?

List of background material for the Review Panel

1. Call for Project Outline Proposals
2. Programme specifications
 - a. Programme Specification. 31 January 2006
 - b. Programme Specification. Restricted Call. 2nd Round – Submission of Full Proposals
 - c. Specification concerning the theme of the Programme
3. Final management reports – Research projects
 - a. Transnational Southern Pentecostal churches, Networks and Believers in Three Northern Countries: a Potential and Potent Social Force.
 - b. The Architecture of Contemporary Religious Transmission.
 - c. Gender, Nation and Religious Diversity in Force at European Pilgrimage Sites.
 - d. What are the Impacts of Religious Diversity? Regions in Three European Countries Compared.
 - e. Islam as a Social Force in Europe: Islamic Fashion and the Politics on Presence.
 - f. Ethnic Identity and Religious Mobilisation of the European Second Generation: Comparing Muslim Youth and Multicultural Cities.
 - g. “Recognizing Christianity”: How African Immigrants Redefine the European Religious Heritage.
 - h. Religious Sources of Solidarity (EURESOURCE).
 - i. Religion, Euroskepticism and the Media.
 - j. Extending and Enhancing the ISSP 2008 Module on Religion.
4. Final reports from the Capacity building projects
 - a. Religion, mobility and place: training and developing innovative theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of religion in Europe.
 - b. European Network on the Investigation of Religious Pluralism.
5. Final Report on the Scientific Co-ordination of the NORFACE Research Programme: Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe (Relemerge). By Professor Roger Hewitt.
6. Other conferences of interest:

- a. A kick-off event of NORFACE research programme: “The Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe”.
 - b. NORFACE Conference “Bridging Knowledge: Social Sciences Collaboration in Practice”.
 - c. NORFACE 2009 Conference “Crossing Boundaries in Social Science Research”.
7. Independent Observer’s Reports
 - a. Independent Observer report. Dr. Dagmar Kutsar. May 12, 2006.
 - b. Independent Observer report. Associate Professor Knud Erik Jørgensen.
 8. List - International Evaluation Panel
 9. Link to the programme website [Relemerge](#) and to [NORFACE ERA-NET](#)