

# Assessing the impact of NORFACE I

**NORFACE**

ERA-NET



# Assessing the impact of NORFACE I





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# 1 NORFACE ERA-NET

NORFACE is a co-ordinated common action of – currently – sixteen national research funding agencies. NORFACE is an acronym for *New Opportunities for Research Funding Agency Co-Operation in Europe*.

The ERA-NET NORFACE Co-ordination Action started in 2004 and has developed a close partnership and network of European national agencies responsible for funding research in the social sciences. The EU funding of the Co-ordination Action ended in 2009 (NORFACE I). For the period 2009-2012 the network received ERA-NET Plus funding for the NORFACE research programme on Migration in Europe (NORFACE PLUS). To further develop NORFACE, the network has received EU funding for an ERA-NET Support Action 2011-2013 (NORFACE II SA).

The strategic objectives for the Co-ordination Action NORFACE I:

- The **development of a durable partnership** in research funding policy and practice between the partner organisations and thereby the **creating of added value in high quality research activity** which crosses national borders.
- **Increasing co-operation between national programmes** and **developing a transnational research programme** between partner organisations.
- Building a platform for co-operation which can be **extended to other European countries and other fields of sciences** (DoW 2004: 3).

The ERA-NET NORFACE II Support Action (2011-2013) lasts for a period of 18 months and aims to further deepen and strengthen the established transnational co-operation based on the experience gained and the existing co-operation structures, but also broadening the network activities and the EU impact, in order to successfully prepare a new ERA-NET Co-ordination Action and/or an ERA-NET Plus.

## NORFACE I – a pilot in the ERA-NET scheme

The key idea of the European Research Area (ERA) is to pool national research resources with the goal of benefiting from the richness of European diversity. The ERA-NET scheme has been one of the main instruments, and the aim has been to establish long-term co-operation between national programmes, ultimately leading to joint transnational programmes with the target of achieving synergetic effects.

The NORFACE project was approved in the first series of ERA-NETs. In this respect it was a pilot in the ERA-NET scheme. NORFACE (as HERA)<sup>1</sup> is an “above programme level” ERA-NET, which means that the co-operation is not based on specific programmes, but has a broader, institutional basis.

A “leitmotiv” of NORFACE co-operation, deriving from the *Description of Work* (DoW 2004), is to “be different from existing initiatives and FP programmes and to offer a new type of co-operation – regarding contents and organisations”. In 2004 there were few experiences with the kind of co-operation that the NORFACE ERA-NET represented, even though many of the partner organisations had well-established bi- and multi-lateral connections with other funding agencies.

<sup>1</sup> HERA – Humanities in the European Research Area – is a partnership between 21 Humanities Research Councils across Europe and the European Science Foundation (ESF), with the objective of firmly establishing the humanities in the European Research Area and in the European Commission Framework Programmes.

NORFACE is an ambitious programme of communication, enquiry, sharing of experience and action. Over the years, the partners have engaged in a range of initiatives designed to deliver new levels of co-operative research policy and practice. The expected outcomes of NORFACE I are stated in the DoW 2004:

“After five years, the eight work packages will produce a tested network of transnational policy and research practice. Specific outputs will have included studies of the legal barriers to transnational science policy co-operation and ways around them and knowledge transfer across national boundaries; best practice reviews of peer review, user engagement, priority setting, and promotion of gender equality in research; forward looks for European social science, advice on comparative research methods, a Web site for information exchange and interaction, an international seminar scheme, networking between clusters of research and research programmes, and pilot programmes for research, research student mobility and capacity building. At least two other European research funding organisations will have been offered the opportunity to participate. The partners will have developed and started to implement an entirely new cross-national strategic research initiative, and provided the evidence base for the further development of institutional and individual co-operation in the European Research Area.” (DoW 2004: 24)

## **Inclusion of new partners – from 7 to 16 partner organisations**

NORFACE started with a group of seven partner organisations:

- the Academy of Finland (AKA)
- the Swedish Research Council (VR)
- the Danish Social Science Research Council (DSSRC)
- the Research Council of Norway (RCN)
- the Icelandic Centre of Research (RANNÍS)
- the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Science (IRCHSS, now IRC)
- the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, UK)

The network was based on several years of “light touch” co-operation within the Nordic Research Councils, and between the Nordic Research Councils and the ESRC of UK. This co-operation had grown as a result of trust built up gradually, and was based on recognition of valuable diversity as well as similarities in organisational structure, research interests and access to the English language. The group was diversified and strengthened by the inclusion of Ireland and Iceland.

Inclusion of new partners has been an essential task of NORFACE and the first enlargement took place in 2005, when five new councils became partners in NORFACE

- Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO, the Netherlands)
- the Estonian Science Foundation (ETF)
- Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, Germany)
- Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT, Portugal)
- the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS)

The Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) was not eligible to be a full partner but became an associate member.



Since 2005, three other partners have joined NORFACE

- the Austrian Science Fund (FWF)
- the French National Research Agency (ANR)

and the newest partner

- National Science Centre (NCN, Poland)

## The co-ordination and management of NORFACE

As most ERA-NETs, NORFACE is organised with a Network Board (NB) and a Management Team (MT). All partner organisations are represented in both bodies. For NORFACE I a Scientific Advisory Board was also set up.

The management (and the success) of the NORFACE ERA-NET has, however, been crucially dependent on the staff and the team-leadership of the Co-ordination Office (CO). NORFACE I and NORFACE PLUS were co-ordinated by the Academy of Finland (AKA). NORFACE II is co-ordinated by the Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO).

The activities of the network in the first ERA-NET have been structured around eight work packages (WP)

- WP1 Building up and managing the network
- WP2 Communication
- WP3 Analysis of context and best practices
- WP4 Building up research co-operation
- WP5 Inclusion of other partners
- WP6 Output and dissemination
- WP7 Cross border pilots
- WP8 Launching a transnational research programme

Each work package included several tasks (see Annex I for a description).

In NORFACE I the work packages were to follow a logical progression from putting the governance and good management in place, information exchange, sharing experiences on strategic issues, and comparing practices to identify best practice – to co-operation on pilots; research seminar series and a research programme, and finally the preparation of a full scale transnational research programme (see Annex II).

## Funding from 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> framework programme

NORFACE I, NORFACE PLUS and NORFACE II have received its core funding from the European Commission 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programmes. In addition all partner organisations have contributed in cash and kind for networking and administrative purposes, and especially for the funding of the research programmes.

NORFACE I (2004 – 2009) had total funding from EC of EUR 3.3 million over the years 2004 – 2009.

NORFACE II (2011 – 2013) has total funding from EC of EUR 300 000 over a period of 18 months.

NORFACE PLUS (2009 – 2012) received EUR 6 million from EC as a contribution to the research programme *Migration in Europe*.



## Assessing the impact of NORFACE I – The content of this report

One of the tasks in NORFACE II Support Action (2011 – 2013) is to assess the impact of NORFACE I (see Annex III, task 3.4). This report presents the results of that task.

Chapter two gives some background information and describes the set-up of the assessment.

In chapter three the impact of NORFACE I on the *research community* is addressed. The different research funding activities in NORFACE are described; the Seminar Series (2005 – 2007), the Pilot Research programme *Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe* (2006 – 2010), the Transnational Research programme *Migration in Europe* (2009-2013) and the Research programme *Welfare State Futures* (2014 – 2018). The main results from the different review- and evaluation reports on the research activities in NORFACE are presented.

Chapter four deals with the impact of NORFACE I on the *partner organisations*. The first part describes the involvement of the Management Team-members in NORFACE activities. Then the focus is on the three activities or impact areas chosen for the assessment: the Comparative Analysis of Partner Councils, the Best Practice Studies and the Staff Exchange Programme. The activities are described and we also present the MT-members knowledge of and experience with the different tasks and their opinion about the impact on individual and organisational learning.

In chapter five the results of the assessment of the impact of NORFACE I on the research community and the partner organisations are summarised.

## 2 Assessing the impact of NORFACE I

To ensure the success of NORFACE, it is important to learn from the results and to assess the impact of the various activities. Knowledge gained from assessments of NORFACE research activities will also be useful in the planning and development of future research funding activities.

The main objectives for NORFACE I have been to develop, organise and fund transnational research programmes as well as other activities for common benefit, such as best practice studies, the comparative analysis of partner organisations and the staff exchange programme. The motivation for all member councils for joining the NORFACE initiative has been twofold (Comparative Analysis of Partner Councils, NORFACE 2006):

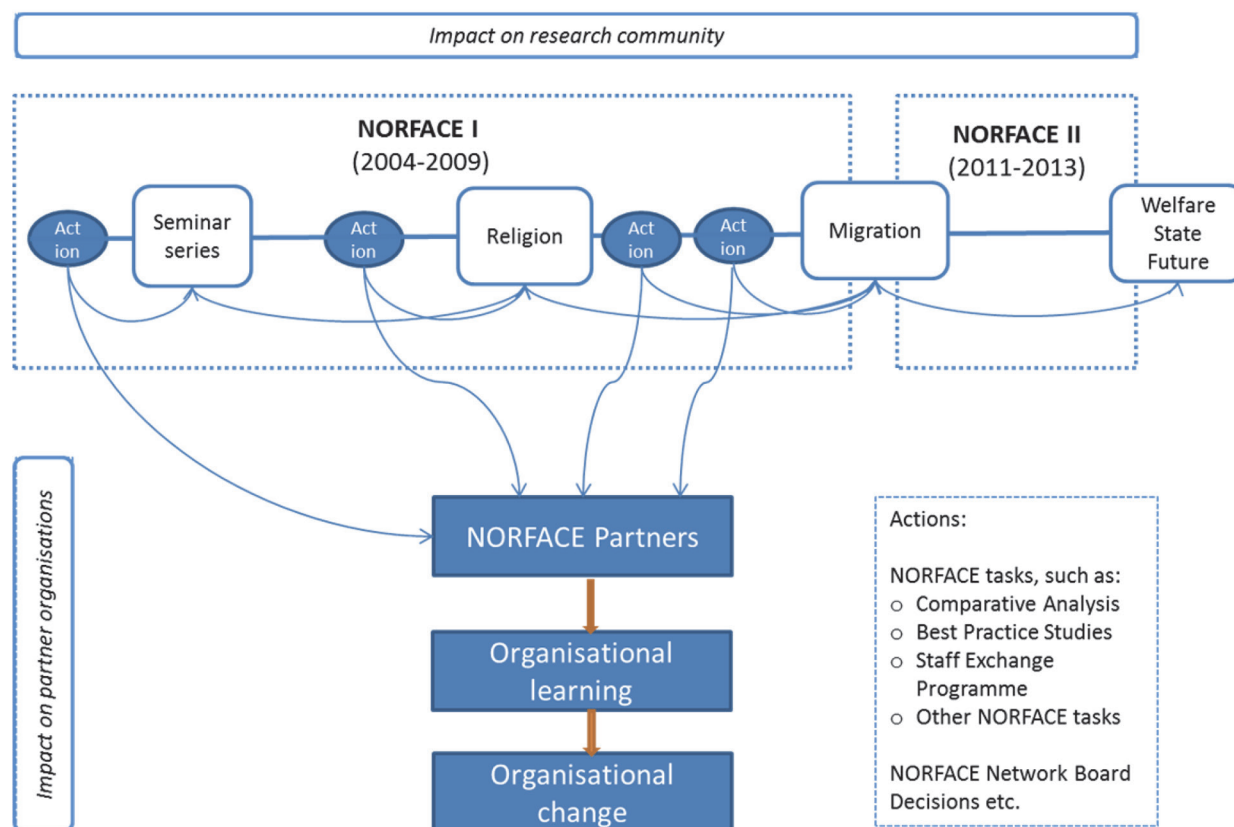
First, participation in NORFACE offers a significant chance for the exchange of experiences and good practices between different national research funding systems. International research co-operation is a high priority in all partner councils, while there is a clear consciousness that the national perspective in science is no longer sufficient, not even in the field of social sciences, which were traditionally seen as a “national matter”.

Second, an important motive for co-operation was the idea that NORFACE would lead to higher research quality. Through transnational seminar series and research programmes, NORFACE would offer European researchers a mechanism for international co-operation and networking. Through the transnational programmes, a common evaluation system would be established, meaning that all applications and applicants would be evaluated according to the same criteria.

The assessment of the impact of NORFACE I will focus on these two aspects of NORFACE, and according to the *Description of Work* (2011) for the *NORFACE Support Action* the following impacts will be assessed:

- impact of the NORFACE research funding on the research community and users
- impact of the NORFACE Co-ordination Action best practises tasks and other joint activities on the Partner organisations

Figure 1 illustrates the two impact areas of the assessment and the stepwise development of NORFACE programme activities and learning structures.



**Figure 1. Stepwise development of NORFACE activities and learning structures**

## 2.1 Assessing the impact of NORFACE on the research community

This part of the assessment focuses on the impact of NORFACE on the research community. NORFACE has funded a number of research activities since its start in 2004. A new research programme on welfare state futures was launched in the beginning of December 2012 with the publication of the call for Outline Proposals, and even though this initiative took place after the period of NORFACE I, it is briefly presented.

The value of reporting and evaluating NORFACE activities is mentioned as one of the recommendations in the comparative analysis report published in the NORFACE series (2006):

*“Reporting is a significant way of legitimising the results of NORFACE activities. Partner councils are strict in assessing proposals and have very rigorous ex-ante procedures. However, many are much weaker in assessing outputs and especially the outcomes of research. As a result, we recommend that an international expert panel is used to evaluate the scientific results of research activities as well as to evaluate the sustainability of procedures used”*

Two of the NORFACE research programmes have been evaluated by international expert panels; The NORFACE research programme *Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe* was evaluated in 2010, and a mid-term evaluation of the NORFACE research programme *Migration in Europe: Social, economic, cultural and policy dynamics* was undertaken in 2012. The two evaluation reports are the main input to the assessment of the impact on NORFACE on the research community. The seminar series has not been evaluated in a strict sense, but the report on this task (DoW 2005, task 7.3) gives a short analysis of the scheme and is an important input to the assessment.

Given the sources available, the NORFACE Network Board agreed to limit the ambition for this part of the assessment to give a description of the NORFACE activities related to the Seminar Series and the two research programmes, as well as a summary of the main results of the review and evaluation reports.

## 2.2 Assessing the impact of NORFACE on the partner organisations

This part of the assessment aims to capture the organisational learning which has evolved through partner organisations' participation in NORFACE. The considerations and conclusions presented in the report build upon the NORFACE Co-ordination Action report on *Comparative Analysis of Partner Councils* (2006), as well as the outcome of the Best Practice Studies (2004-2006) and the Staff Exchange Programme (2005-2009).

The key questions in this review of the impact of NORFACE on partner organisations are:

- What organisational learning has taken place?
- How far has best practice been shared?
- What other activities and benefits have resulted from participation in NORFACE?

As indicators of impact of NORFACE activities on the partner organisations we look at:

- Organisational and individual learning about
  - other partner organisations in NORFACE
  - differences and similarities between the partner organisations
  - opportunities and challenges for international co-operation between funding councils
- How and to what extent this learning may have led to
  - adjustments or changes in assessment procedures, peer review systems, eligibility rules etc.
  - adjustments or changes in programme development and management, thematic orientation of programmes etc.
  - adjustments or changes in policy areas such as gender equality



## 3 Assessing the impact of NORFACE I on the research community

This chapter addresses the impact of NORFACE I on the research community. The background to this has been described in the second chapter. The focus is on the impact of the three activities NORFACE has organised; the Seminar Series, the Pilot programme on Religion and the Migration programme.

### *Data and methods*

The assessment is based on desk research of

- relevant NORFACE activities addressing the research community
- facts and figures related to the calls, such as the budget, the number of applicants, how many projects were funded etc.
- the main findings from the analysis and evaluation of the research initiated and funded by the activities

### 3.1 The Seminar Series (2005 – 2007)<sup>2</sup>

“In conclusion, the Seminar Series have been a highly valuable experience as the pilot programme of the NORFACE partnership and the first activity to directly address the scientific community. The Seminar Series have raised the awareness of NORFACE in the partner countries, and the scientific communities of the social sciences now look also to NORFACE for research funding. Though limited in scale and relatively inexpensive, the Seminar Series programme gave NORFACE a good start paving the way for future transnational co-operation.” (Draft Report on NORFACE Pilot Programmes 2005 – 2007, page 14)

#### **3.1.1 Successful networking – valuable experiences for NORFACE**

The Seminar Series was the first funding instrument of the NORFACE partnership and as such the first NORFACE activity to directly address the scientific community in the NORFACE partner countries.

The Seminar Series scheme was launched in 2005 and three calls for proposals were published in the three consecutive years from 2005 to 2007. The scheme was set up to support research networking in the social sciences within strategically chosen themes. The objectives of the Seminar Series were to:

- Improve cross-border collaboration in existing areas of strength and excellence of the NORFACE partners.
- Promote areas of new emerging research and areas where added value of NORFACE co-operation could be demonstrated.
- Include young researchers in order to improve their opportunities for cross-border collaboration between researchers.

The report assessing the Seminar Series concludes that it has been a highly valuable experience as a pilot programme of the NORFACE partnership and the first activity to directly address the scientific communities. Though limited in scale and relatively inexpensive, the Seminar Series gave NORFACE a good start, paving the way for future transnational co-operation.

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<sup>2</sup> This part of the report is based on the analysis of the two NORFACE pilots which is presented in the NORFACE deliverable “Draft Report on NORFACE Pilot Programmes 2005 – 2007” (DoW 2005, task 7.3). The analysis of the Seminar Series was not a traditional evaluation since it had some clear limitations on range and scope and was done by a task force in NORFACE and not by an external expert panel.

### 3.1.2A pilot for the common pot funding model

#### A “common pot” funding model

The scheme was jointly funded by the partner organisations from a “common pot” without “juste retour”. The Network Board agreed on a funding model with funding shares of the individual partners calculated according to an algorithm with factor-adjusted population and GDP. In 2005, seven NORFACE partners participated to provide a maximum sum available per award of EUR 80 000 incl. overheads for a period of two years. With twelve partners participating in the scheme from 2006, the sum was increased to EUR 100 000 incl. overheads in 2006 and 2007.

#### The selection of the research themes

The NORFACE Network Board found, given the modest amount of funding available for the activity, that an open call would run the risk of heavy oversubscription and decided to go for thematic calls. For the first round of the Seminar Series, the selection of research themes was prepared by the Management Team and the Network Board, based on an informal consultation with the national partners. Based on the feedback on the first round, the transparency of theme selection processes was enhanced. Thus, the NORFACE International Advisory Panel participated in the development of themes for the second and third round of seminar series as did the partner councils through a national consultation process, providing thematic suggestions for the NORFACE Network Board. The following themes were selected, two each year, over a three year period:

| Year | Selected themes in the NORFACE Seminar Series                                 |   |
|------|---|---|
| 2005 | “Security Challenges”   | “Science Policy and Science in Society” |
| 2006 | “Immigration and Demographic Challenges in Europe”                            | “Social Aspects of Language Diversity”  |
| 2007 | “Transforming Europe – Consequences of Globalisation and European Integration | “Politics and Evidence Based Knowledge” |

#### The organisation of the calls and management of the programme

The Seminar Series were organised as rotating calls, where the NORFACE partners in turn took on the administrative responsibility as a lead partner. Two lead partners were selected for each seminar series, each operating one theme. The announcement of the seminar series had a dual purpose: To attract applications, and also to promote and raise awareness of NORFACE and ERA-NET co-operation.

Eleven proposals were received in 2005, twelve proposals in 2006 and 2007, a total of 35 proposals over the three year period.

The applications were reviewed and rated by an International Review Panel set up within each thematic call. The funding decisions were made by the Network Board. In total nine research networking projects were funded.

### 3.1.3 Lessons learned

The report assessing the Seminar Series gives several concluding comments, both related to the quality of the projects funded and the organisation and management of the programme.

The scheme proved to be a valuable springboard to further intensify co-operation in NORFACE, and to develop funding instruments. One of the most significant achievements was the experience gained in operating a transnational funding scheme. In particular, the establishment of a common pot was a considerable NORFACE achievement.



The rotating calls, where partners in turn took the administrative responsibility as leading partners, proved to be very workable and effective in distributing the administrative responsibility among the partner organisations.

The review process was subject to some criticism from the applicants. Some had experienced a lack of transparency. For the success of future NORFACE activities, it was a lesson learned to render the review process more transparent.

### 3.2 The Pilot programme (2006 – 2010)

*“...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”*

(NORFACE Research Programme: Re-emergence of religion as a social force in Europe. Evaluation report, page 26)

The Pilot programme was the second funding instrument of the NORFACE partnership launched in 2006, and the first NORFACE research programme. The Pilot programme was launched under the theme *Re-Emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe?*

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 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

#### 3.2.1 Call for proposals and the management of the Pilot Programme

The Pilot programme continued the common pot funding model. EUR 5.4 million was made available for the programme, of which EUR 400 000 was reserved for the scientific co-ordination of the programme. As funding for the Pilot programme was considerably higher than the Seminar Series, the decision to employ a common pot model was not uncontroversial. However, the positive experience of the Seminar Series paved the way for an iteration of the common pot model, whereas an employment of a less ambitious model could have been conceived as a setback to the perspective of the network.

The programme theme was decided by the Network Board on the basis of a thorough consultation process with the national research councils and the advice of the International Advisory Panel. The partner organisations had been asked to submit suggestions for possible themes, and suggestions for eleven themes were received. The Network Board also invited expert consultancy papers from leading academics on two themes

- Private and Public Responsibilities
- Secularisation and the Re-emergence of the Religion

The Network Board was presented with two draft programme specifications. Based on the feedback from the NORFACE partners, the Network Board decided to launch the reformulated theme “Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe?”

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 should 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 Pilot programme has been to help the research projects develop into a coherent and cohesive structure through active exchange of information and co-operation. To reach this aim, 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

The Pilot programme started in spring 2007 and ended in December 2010. Ten research projects and two capacity building projects have been funded. Professor Roger Hewitt, one of the project leaders in the programme, was selected as programme coordinator.

### The ten research projects and two capacity building projects in the NORFACE Pilot programme on religion

- **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 Volkhard 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.

The Pilot programme was managed by NORFACE Co-ordination Office at the Academy of Finland in consultation with the NORFACE partners. The administrative duties were to serve as a contact point for potential applicants, receive and process the applications, nominate the international panels in consultations with the partners, manage the peer review process, and finally, manage the administration of the grants.

### 3.2.2 The evaluation of the Pilot programme

The NORFACE Network Board decided to implement an evaluation of the NORFACE Pilot programme. An international Review Panel was set up to evaluate the programme. The evaluation was finalised in January 2012.<sup>3</sup>

The objectives of the evaluation were to identify the achievements of the NORFACE Pilot programme and assess the added value of the programme compared to national programme funding. The focus was on the collaborative programme activities, the scientific co-operation and interactions among the participants in the programme and the quality and relevance of the scientific results. The evaluation focused on the achievement of the programme as a whole and took into account all aspects of the programme; the ten research projects, the two capacity building projects and the scientific coordination activities.

The Review Panel concluded that the Pilot 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. The quality of the researchers and projects is higher than might be expected in a national research programme on the same

<sup>3</sup> NORFACE Research Programme: Re-emergence as a social force in Europe. Evaluation report can be found on the NORFACE website.

topic. The reason is obviously that – other things being equal – an international programme is able to attract more top scholars in a given field. The programme has been successful in attracting and soliciting projects characterised 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. 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 co-operation and more efficient in generating international visibility.

The Review Panel's recommendations for the future calls in NORFACE were:

- The 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. It was suggested 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 maximise the chances that the best researchers will consider taking part.
- 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.
- 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.

### **3.2.3 Lessons learned**

Concerning the planning and implementation of the Pilot programme, one of the reports from NORFACE I gives the following recommendations for the future programme activities:<sup>4</sup>

- More time, 12-8 months, is required for the development of the programme theme and specification.
- All partners should be involved in the process to develop the programme theme and specification.
- All partner agencies, which put money into a “common pot”, should target the relevant research groups in their countries with information about the NORFACE call.
- The time between publication of the call and the submission deadline for outline proposals should be at least three months.
- A two stage call is best suited for transnational programmes.
- Application forms and guidelines should include more detailed information for budget calculations and clear guidelines on overhead costs.
- A maximum amount of funding available per project encourages realistic projects.
- At least two days need to be reserved for evaluation panel meetings.
- The panellists should be nominated at an early stage, preferably some three months before the panel meeting date.
- The evaluation panel should have an independent chair.
- The panel should evaluate, among other aspects of the proposal, the programme-fit of the projects, the project's contribution to the programme.
- The second stage panel will be invited to rank the shortlisted proposals.
- The applicants should be given the opportunity to give comments on the independent evaluation report.

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<sup>4</sup> NORFACE Pilot Research Programme: Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe? Lessons Learned.

### 3.3 The Transnational Research Programme on Migration (2009 – 2013)

*“The projects are excellent and much valuable work is being done; the programme will undoubtedly produce a wealth of valuable results, which will be of general value to the academic community”*

*“The highly ambitious goals of the programme, such as the focus on investing in the future of the field, to encourage coherence and capacity building and the strong focus on advances in terms of data and methods, make a four year investment by NORFACE by necessity a “seed” activity. The future perspective is therefore very important in the next phase of the programme, as the achievement of the longer-term goals of the programme lies beyond the direct funding phase”*

(Evaluation panel for the midterm evaluation of the Migration programme, December 2012 )

The NORFACE programme *Migration in Europe: Social, economic, cultural and policy dynamics* is a “full scale” transnational research programme. The objectives of the programme are

- to advance globally excellent theoretical and methodological disciplinary, inter-disciplinary and comparative research on migration which builds synergistically on a pan-European basis
- to take advantage of and develop the present informal laboratory of experience, knowledge and data which migration in Europe currently presents
- to motivate and support excellence and capacity building for research on migration on across-national basis throughout the NORFACE countries
- to develop understanding and promote research-based knowledge and insight into migration for issues of societal, practical and policy relevance, with theoretical foundations but worked on jointly with relevant users and experts

The programme emphasises three main themes: Migration, Integration, and Cohesion and Conflict. Projects that focussed on innovation in the area of data and methods were specifically encouraged.

#### 3.3.1 Call for proposals and the management of a full-scale transnational programme

The NORFACE partners and the European Commission made EUR 29 million available for the funding of the research programme. The contribution by the NORFACE partners was based on the same funding shares as the previous programmes. EUR 2.2 million was reserved for the costs of the coordination of the programme, by the programme director and the coordination office at the Academy of Finland. As with the Pilot programme, the funding model for the Migration programme was a common pot, which means that the contributions from the different parties were allocated purely based on the assessment of the quality of the research proposals by the assessment panel, regardless of the nationality of the researchers involved in the proposal. This model has as its benefits that it is straightforward and a ranking drawn up by an assessment panel can be followed directly. The risk for partners in the programme that they contribute more to the programme than “their” researchers receive, makes this model less appealing.

The selection of the theme of the programme was made by the NORFACE Network Board. National partners put forward possible themes for the programme; fourteen in all were suggested. Three of these were selected by a working group for further discussion by the Board in December 2006. The Board voted to reduce the number from three to two, and expert groups were organised to prepare those two themes for final decision-making. Two papers were produced in the spring of 2007 and at its meeting in July 2007, the Network Board decided on Migration as the theme for its next transnational research programme.

The practical aspects of the call were decided by the Network Board in November 2007. A two-stage call was agreed upon, requesting outline proposals in the first stage, and inviting a limited number of applicants to submit a full proposal in the second stage. The Board decided to invite projects ranging from EUR 500 000 to EUR 4 million, and expressed its preference for a balance of smaller and a limited number of large projects.

The deadline for outline proposals was 10 September 2008. 240 Outline proposals were submitted. An international panel of experts assessed these during a meeting in October 2008. 45 Proposals were selected for the second stage of the procedure, and their authors were invited to submit a full proposal before the deadline of 30 January 2009. These 45 proposals were assessed by external reviewers, and the assessment panel reconvened in May 2009 to assess the applications. The panel drew up a shortlist of 12 proposals which they recommended for funding, and the NORFACE Network Board followed this recommendation. Contract negotiations were carried out by the Coordination Office of the programme (the Academy of Finland) during the summer of 2009.

#### The twelve research projects in the NORFACE Migration Programme

- **Understanding Migrants' Choices.** Project leader: Dr Jackline Wahba, University of Southampton (United Kingdom)
- **Children of Immigrants. A Longitudinal Study in Four European Countries.** Project leader: Professor Frank Kalter, University of Leipzig (Germany)
- **Integrated Modelling of European Migration.** Project leader: Dr James Raymer, University of Southampton (United Kingdom)
- **500 Families: Migration Histories of Turks in Europe.** Project leader: Dr Ayse Guveli, University of Essex (United Kingdom)
- **Migrant Diversity and Regional Disparity in Europe.** Project leader: Professor Peter Nijkamp, VU University Amsterdam (The Netherlands)
- **Migration: Integration, Impact and Interaction.** Project leader: Professor Jonathan Wadsworth, CReAM, University College London (United Kingdom)
- **Nordic welfare states and the dynamics and effects of ethnic residential segregation.** Project leader: Professor Mari Vaattovaara, University of Helsinki (Finland)
- **Causes and Consequences of Early Socio-Cultural Integration Processes Among New Immigrants in Europe.** Project leader: Professor Claudia Diehl, University of Goettingen (Germany)
- **Social Integration of Migrant Children: Uncovering Family and School Factors Promoting Resilience.** Project leader: Dr Birgit Leyendecker, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany
- **Transnational child-raising arrangements between Africa and Europe.** Project leader: Professor Valentina Mazzucato, Maastricht University, The Netherlands
- **Temporary Migration, integration and the role of Policies.** Project leader: Professor Giovanni Facchini, Centre for Economic Policy Research, (United Kingdom)
- **Theorizing the Evolution of European Migration Systems.** Project leader: Professor Robin Cohen, University of Oxford, United Kingdom.

The first projects started in the autumn of 2009, the last project is scheduled to be completed in January 2014. The duration of projects varies from 24 to 48 months.

The coordination of the programme is divided between two parties; the programme director and the Coordination Office. The programme director, Professor Christian Dustmann of University College London, was selected after an open call ahead of the start of the first projects. The tasks of the programme director concern the internal and external communication in the programme, the promotion of co-operation between researchers and other parties, and to enhance the added value of the transnational research programme. The Coordination Office takes care of the administration of contracts, reports by the research projects and the reporting of progress to the European Commission. Both parties regularly discuss the progress of the programme with the Network Board.



### 3.3.2 Evaluation of the programme

As with the Pilot programme, the NORFACE Network Board decided to implement an evaluation of the Migration programme, and chose a light touch midterm evaluation in 2012 and a final evaluation in 2015. An international panel of experts was set up for the evaluation, consisting of two panel members for the midterm evaluation. For the final evaluation the panel will be enlarged to consist of four experts.

The report of the midterm evaluation of the migration programme has been finalised in December 2012.<sup>5</sup> The panel focussed on the achievement of the programme as a whole and took into account both the twelve research projects and the scientific coordination activities. The evaluation aimed to give input to further work with transnational research programme activities both in NORFACE and in other ERA-NETs. The evaluation also aimed to make the results of the research programme visible to the funding institutions, i.e. the NORFACE partner organisations and the European Commission.

The evaluation panel praised the highly ambitious goals of the programme, such as the focus on investing in the future of the field, to encourage coherence and capacity building and the strong focus on advances in terms of data and method. The panel considered it a great strength of the programme that so much new primary data is being collected. The projects are excellent and much valuable work is being done. The programme will undoubtedly produce a wealth of valuable results, which will be of general value to the academic community. The evaluation panel stressed that the ambitions of the programme in terms of data and method are great, and access to the data collected forms an important legacy of the programme.

Given the amount of data that is being collected, most output in terms of publication and outreach activities is expected in the coming period. The panel anticipates many interesting publications to appear in the coming years, and is convinced that the results of the programme will be of use to many policy makers and other parties.

The research programme brings together a large group of migration researchers from a wide variety of countries and disciplinary backgrounds. The panel recommended that every opportunity is taken to encourage and develop integration and cohesion, both on programme level but also within projects themselves. Capacity building is another specific and highly prioritised aim of the programme, and a way in which the legacy of the programme can be realised. Capacity building is therefore similarly recognised by the panel as an important aspect of a transnational programme of this kind. In this respect too, the panel encouraged participants in the programme to utilise the opportunities to its fullest extent.

## 3.4 The Programme on Welfare State Futures (2012 – 2016)

The Programme on the Welfare State Futures is the third NORFACE research programme – and the second full scale transnational research programme. The research programme on Welfare State Futures was launched early in December 2012.

This programme has three major objectives:

- To advance globally excellent theoretical and methodological research on welfare state futures, which may be multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary and comparative, and which builds synergetically on a pan-European basis.
- To motivate and support excellence and capacity building for research on welfare state futures on a cross-national basis throughout the NORFACE countries.

<sup>5</sup> As this involves a midterm evaluation, the results will be shared with the programme director and the project leaders in the programme, and the European Commission, but not be made public.



- To develop understanding and promote research-based knowledge and insight into welfare state futures for issues of societal, practical and policy relevance, with theoretical foundations but worked on jointly with relevant users and experts.

The call is accompanied by a programme text in which five different themes are addressed:

1. People and the welfare state
2. Inequalities, diversity and welfare states
3. Rethinking the economics of the welfare state
4. The future politics of the welfare state
5. Shifting responsibilities for welfare

Fifteen NORFACE partners have allocated EUR 15 million to the programme.<sup>6</sup> The Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research has made a contribution of EUR 1.1 million. A contribution from the European Commission will be sought via an ERA-NET Plus application. This may lead to an extra contribution of EUR 6 million. The budget is therefore currently EUR 16 million and may increase to EUR 22 million.

### *Planning and launching the call – adjusting established procedures*

Contrary to the previous two NORFACE research programmes, the Welfare State Futures programme works with a mixed mode funding model, rather than a common pot. In this model the majority of the NORFACE partners contribute on the basis of a common pot system – so they contribute regardless of the number of applications from their country that are funded. The other partners contribute on the basis of “juste retour”. They only fund projects from researchers in their own country, and their final contribution will therefore depend on the success rate of their researchers. Additional funds, such as those contributed from the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research, and the possible contribution from the European Commission, are accessible to projects from all NORFACE countries.

From earlier experiences NORFACE learned that it was important in a large transnational research programme to give researchers enough time to gather international co-operation partners together. For this reason a preannouncement of the call was published in the summer of 2012, several months before the call itself was published.

The procedure for the call consists of two stages. Outline proposals are invited before the deadline of 16 April 2013. A limited group of applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal before 16 January 2014. Proposals need to include partners from at least three NORFACE countries. First projects are expected to start in the autumn of 2014. Projects can last for up to 36 months, so the programme is expected to finish at the start of 2018. A programme director will be appointed at the start of the first projects, as the experience in the previous research programmes with programme directors was positive. The programme will be evaluated midway and at the end of the programme.

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<sup>6</sup> The SSHRC, an associated partner in NORFACE, was not able to participate in the programme.

## 4 Assessing the impact of NORFACE I on the partner organisations

This chapter addresses the impact of NORFACE I on the partner organisations. The background to this task has been described in Chapter Two. The focus is on the impact of the *Comparative Analysis* study, the Best Practices Studies and the Staff Exchange Programme.

### *Data and Methods*

Data for this study have been collected in three ways.

#### **Desk research of NORFACE documents and reports**

This part of the assessment has focused on:

- What activities took place (workshops, case studies, data collection and analysis)?
- What were the objectives for these activities?
- Who were engaged in the tasks, and who participated in workshops and seminars?
- What were the main questions addressed in these activities?
- Were some recommendations given or suggestions for follow-up?
- How were these activities reported?

The desk study analysed the following documents:

- *Description of Work* (DoW) – NORFACE I and NORFACE II
- Minutes from NORFACE Network Board and Management Team meetings
- Papers prepared for the NORFACE Network Board and Management Team
- NORFACE reports and other deliverables

### *Questionnaire sent to the present NORFACE MT-members*

As part of the data-collection for this report, a questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire focuses on the activities and reports developed in NORFACE I, the effects of these on the organisation, and the overall impact of NORFACE on the organisation where respondents work (see Annex V).

All current members of the NORFACE Management Team received the questionnaire in October 2012. Of the 16 questionnaires sent out, ten were returned.

### *Interviews with former members of the NORFACE Management Team*

Additional interviews were done by phone with some of the former members of the NORFACE Management Team and the Co-ordinator of NORFACE I, in November 2012 – January 2013.<sup>7</sup>

The interviews gave an opportunity to further explore certain details about the experiences and impressions from those who took part in the activities and the possible impact the different tasks may have had on the NORFACE partner organisations.

### *Some challenges in assessing impact on partner organisations*

To identify the impact of NORFACE I on partner organisations and isolate it from the impact of other sources, we have taken three steps: 1) the study is limited to the unit or the department that has been the active partner in NORFACE, 2) we have concentrated on specific NORFACE activities and impact areas, and 3) we have used multiple sources of information (questionnaire, interviews, desk study of documents and reports).

<sup>7</sup> Annex VI presents a list of the persons interviewed.

The NORFACE co-operation has been extended. This implies that some of the present partner organisations were not engaged in NORFACE when the activities took place.

NORFACE MT-members have frequently changed over the years. Few of the present MT-members have participated in the tasks organised during NORFACE I because they were not in their current job at that time. For some of the partner organisations the MT-members were stable during the whole period, for others there were several changes. One partner organisation changed the MT-member three times during the first period of NORFACE.

Many years have passed since the first activities in NORFACE took place. Thus it can be hard for respondents to remember what activities they took part in, what reports they have read, and what impact the activities may have had on their organisation.

## **4.1 Management Team-members involvement in NORFACE**

The Management Team meets twice a year. In addition all or some of the members of the MT will meet once or twice a year during seminars and workshops. In average, the present MT-members have been involved with NORFACE for about 3.5 years. Half of the respondents, however, have been with NORFACE for less than two years, which means they were presumably not in a position to participate in the activities organised in the context of NORFACE I. To which extent they are familiar with the outcomes, is, however, relevant for the purpose of the task.

Former MT-members report that the work load and intensity of the activities in NORFACE I was high in periods. For most of the partner organisations, NORFACE represented a new level of engagement in international co-operation. In the most intensive periods the Management Team members were in contact with the Co-ordination Office (CO) and/or other colleagues in NORFACE daily or once a week.

The present MT-members also report that they are in contact with other NORFACE colleagues frequently, weekly or monthly, more often related to tasks and meetings. Contact with colleagues in other countries is not limited to NORFACE, but is also based on other networks and ERA-NETs such as HERA. MT-members also contact each other over other issues, such as Horizon 2020, new international initiatives, and suggestions for reviewers. The regular and face-to-face contact in NORFACE is helpful in working together long-distance, and on more difficult issues. Several of the former MT-members have mentioned that the NORFACE network perhaps could be used more often – for instance in their efforts to find reviewers.

## **4.2 Comparative Analysis of Partner Councils**

### ***4.2.1 Objectives, participants, topics discussed*** ***The Comparative Analysis of Partner Councils***

One of the first tasks in NORFACE I was a comparative analysis of partner organisations. The aims of the analysis were 1) to share detailed information about partner organisations, 2) to identify barriers to NORFACE co-operation which may follow from differing legislation, policies, structures and practices, 3) to offer recommendations on how to overcome the identified barriers. The analysis was also supposed to establish a platform for the partners to learn about each other and provide a reliable source for further analysis, which could also be used for planning future NORFACE activities. The analysis was based on data collection and interviews.

The analysis is presented in the NORFACE report “*Comparative Analysis of Partner Councils*” (NORFACE 2006).<sup>8</sup> A CD with profiles of national research council was also produced and gave more detailed information on council structure and activities.

The report is divided into three broader clusters; a) an introductory part; b) a comparison of the council’s characteristics in national institutional designs; and c) partner councils through the NORFACE perspective, where the barriers, challenges and recommendations are presented.

An important issue for NORFACE was to develop a uniform understanding of central concepts – such as social sciences, research projects and research programmes. The first part of the report discusses these concepts. The chief function of all partner organisations is to fund research, but the analysis shows that there are a multitude of funding mechanisms, instruments and national practices. These instruments and the national funding practices are analysed.

The topics discussed in the report are such as:

- What are the characteristics shared by all partner organisations in NORFACE?
- How big are the differences between partner organisations in NORFACE?
- What are the conditions required for joint activities?
- What are the vital challenges and how to work out a strategy for overcoming these challenges to joint activities?
- How to overcome problems with “loss of control” over national research funding?
- How to create an innovative and operational system for co-operation?

### **Workshop in Bled, Slovenia, 1 – 2 March 2007**

As part of the dissemination of the results of the report to the NORFACE partners, and a broader public, the workshop “*Supporting and Managing Research – Workshop on Comparative Aspects of Research Councils*” was arranged by the Slovenian Research Agency March 1-2 2007 in Bled, Slovenia. 29 people participated in this workshop, ten of the twelve NORFACE partners were present and there were also contributions from other transnational co-operation initiatives – European Science Foundation and EUROHORCs.

The workshop addressed various aspects of different national systems. “Good practices” from national systems were presented, and discussed as potential models for others. There were also contributions from other transnational co-operation initiatives, from the European Science Foundations and EUROHORCs. An EC representative put ERA-NET as an instrument into a broader context of EU science and research policy.

During the workshop three break-out sessions took place and addressed the following questions:

#### *Break-out session 1 – impact on the project activities in NORFACE:*

- How can best practice exercises influence project/programme activities in NORFACE?
- What are the most important elements, covered in *Comparative Analysis*, which should be further developed and used in a full transnational programme?
- Do the comparative/country profiles tasks increase the transparency of procedures and partners and do they increase the legitimacy of the project?
- Break-out session 2 – impact on the national (domestic) systems:
- Do (and how) comparative best practice exercises influence the development of domestic systems – adaptation, new structures?

<sup>8</sup> The report can be found on the NORFACE website.

- Do the comparative tasks have any influence on the domestic systems?
- Are leaders/governing bodies of the institution informed about the findings of the comparative tasks or are the results limited on project participants only?
- Do results of comparative tasks have any potential for changing national systems?

*Break-out session 3 – impact on the broader context (creation of ERA):*

- Do NORFACE provide a new value in creating ERA through open method of coordination? Are comparative best practice exercises the main tool for creation of that or is system created by ad hoc actions?
- What can NORFACE, as a tool for partner coordination, offer to the other EU projects and creation of ERA?

#### **4.2.2 MT-members' knowledge of and opinion about this task**

All the persons interviewed, and two-thirds of the present MT-members, are familiar with, and have read the report. All have found it very useful and many say they regularly turn to the publication. Especially for those that were to work with NORFACE, the report has been very useful. Several have mentioned that the report is a unique document since it presents a comparative analysis of the social sciences in twelve different research councils.

The report is described as important for the work in NORFACE, because the analysis made it possible to discuss in a more systematic way what could be possible to achieve, the barriers one could anticipate in the work with the programme activities, and what problems that would need to be solved. The analysis made it possible to address the issues of what practices and procedures could be acceptable to all partner organisations in NORFACE.

Four of the persons interviewed and one of the present MT-members, participated in the workshop in Bled. They all found the workshop interesting and several have said that the report and the workshop made a good start for the further work with the programme activities in NORFACE.

Several have pointed to the fact that gathering the data in the partner organisations was a considerable amount of work, but that the data collection was also a useful learning experience since it revealed the difficulties in gathering these types of data.

Some have mentioned that they were surprised that the partner organisations were so different. Others have pointed to the fact that the differences were smaller than expected and that there were fewer formal barriers to co-operation than they had presumed.

### **4.3 Best Practice Studies**

The topics for the best practice studies were to be the object for a deeper analysis of best practices among partner councils. Five best practice studies have been completed

- evaluation and peer review of research
- promotion of gender equality in research
- user engagement
- priority setting and development of new initiatives
- programme development and management

The best practice studies were organised by a task force that was responsible for the accomplishment of each analysis. For each study a joint workshop was to be organised to review best practices across the organisations and to elaborate recommendations for the partner councils. The workshop involved a broad participation of councils and staff members, as well as staff from the European Commission and invited academic experts.

### 4.3.1 Evaluation and peer review

#### *Activities, participants, topics discussed and recommendations*

##### **Workshop in Dublin, Ireland, 26 – 27 October 2004**

The objectives of the workshop on evaluation and peer review were to centre on a mapping of current procedures, the exchange of information and the facilitation of comparative benchmarking of processes and the provision of recommendations to inform future NORFACE research programmes. The workshop activities and discussions are summarised in an internal NORFACE report.

The workshop took place at the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS), in Dublin on 26 – 27 October 2004. All NORFACE partner organisations were represented (seven, at that time) and also four of the Councils that later were to become new partners in NORFACE, a total of 38 people.

A preliminary presentation of the individual organisational perspectives provided a synthesis of peer review mechanisms employed by the partner organisations. Examples of topics that were addressed at the workshop

- different types of funding modes where peer review is used, such as responsive mode research projects, targeted/thematic programmes and research centres.
- the use of panels and individual referees and various combinations
- experiences with two or one phase assessment processes
- finding a balance between national and/or international reviewers
- number of reviewers required and what the optimal size of review panels
- considerations when selecting reviewers
- organising the feedback as a learning process and as support for transparency
- the experiences with the use of ICT in peer review systems

##### **Some remarks and recommendations**

- The best practice model of peer review is difficult to achieve, as it is not a case of “one size fits all”.
- A balance must be achieved between mainstream and unconventional research, and funding budget and the actual cost of the peer review process.
- Different funding schemes require different approaches to the peer review process.
- The review process requires transparency, both in terms of reviewers and their selection, and applicants, to support high level of operational integrity.
- The process with selection of reviewers is the most important aspect of the total process and should be handled skilfully to avoid conflicts of interest.
- Each application should be reviewed by at least 2-3 individual reviewers to underpin impartiality in the evaluation process.

It was suggested that each research council took the workshop report as a basis for an internal meeting to discuss its own peer review processes. Each discussion should be structured along similar lines to facilitate further comparative dialogue within NORFACE at a later stage. A possible list of issues and questions would be:

Does it make sense to see peer review as a part of a larger context? If so, does this impact on options and actions to be pursued?

- How do our systems compare with each other?
- How could systems be improved in terms of:
  - Effectiveness for our purpose?
  - Promoting accountability?
  - Fairness?

- Validity and reliability?
- Responsiveness to external change?
- Taking advantage of ICT opportunities?

A last recommendation was that the outcomes of these discussions by the NORFACE partners in their own organisations could be fed back to a second peer review workshop.

MT-members' knowledge of and opinion about the task

Two of the former MT-members interviewed had participated in the workshop. Few of the current MT-members were involved with NORFACE at the time. Only one respondent to the questionnaire participated in the workshop, but the report has been read by almost half of the group.

Several of the former MT-members have mentioned that this was the first workshop arranged in NORFACE. This was also the first time the Councils that later were to become members of NORFACE, participated in an activity and met the other partner organisations and the workshop was an important arena to meet and get to know each other better.

The topic was a good choice for the first joint activity in NORFACE since evaluation and peer review is highly relevant and well known to all participants. The focus on mapping different practices in evaluation and peer review was therefore a good starting point for the NORFACE co-operation. The report is described as a useful document on a topic that is always relevant and to all partners equally.

#### **4.3.2 Gender Equality**

##### *Activities, participants, topics discussed and recommendations*

##### **A collection of data on gender**

As part of the best practice study on gender equality, a collection of data on the gender of applicants and beneficiaries in the social sciences over a five year period (2000 – 2004), was undertaken. The work with gathering these data was more problematic than assumed. In many cases the data was not available in the partner organisations and the numbers and figures were also difficult to compare. Even if the comparison was a bit challenging the results gave an indication of significant differences between the partner organisations in NORFACE.

##### **Workshop and conference in Reykjavik, Iceland, 20-22 October 2005**

A workshop and a conference took place in Reykjavik 20 – 22 October 2005. Representatives from eight of the NORFACE partner organisations, as well as invited experts, EC representatives and other specialists from outside the network, attended – a total of 32 people.

The workshop activities and discussions are presented in an internal NORFACE report.

At the first day of the workshop the collection of data was introduced. Four NORFACE partners and a representative of DG Research also delivered presentations. The second day of the workshop included four breakout groups and a concluding discussion. On the third day an open conference was arranged. The presentations and discussions at the Reykjavik conference and workshop resulted in a list of recommendations, some general and some specific for NORFACE, such as:



- Research councils need to have equal opportunity policies, practices and action plans. If not, they will tend to rely on tried and tested methods that enhance the status quo.
- Research councils need to have a review of research council board practices from the perspective of equal opportunities and a system for training new council members in issues related to gender.
- Research councils should increase transparency by monitoring every stage in the evaluation process.
- NORFACE should try to have as much diversity in its review panels as possible. This involves e.g. gender, age and ethnicity as well as scientific expertise and methodological approaches.
- NORFACE should demand from its participating research funding agencies that they ensure funding for maternity and paternity leave as well as other social security matters.
- NORFACE should conduct a gender audit of possible research themes and funding structures before implementing them.

### *MT-members' knowledge of and opinions about the task*

Three of the interviewed MT-members participated at the workshop and they have also read the report. None of the present MT-members participated in the workshop and none have read the report. Several have mentioned that this topic is an important issue in their organisation and that it was a good thing that gender was set on the agenda and discussed in NORFACE. Still, this best practice study seems to have had little direct impact on the partner organisations. Some respondents have mentioned that a more systematic follow up would have been needed if this task were to have a more clearly discernible impact. A possible effect of the data collection exercise is that – for many partner organisations – it revealed the need for improvement of the quality and coverage of this kind of data in their own organisation.

### **4.3.3 User Engagement**

#### *Activities, participants, topics discussed and recommendations*

The objective of this task was to explore how national funding agencies have considered, included and acted on the process of engaging with “users” in different stages of the research funding process and in the research activities – funded by the council. In addition, the task was supposed to give recommendations as to ways in which “user engagement” could be taken forward within the NORFACE network and in the partner organisations.

The workshop activities and topics discussed are presented in the report “*User Engagement in Research*” (NORFACE 2006).<sup>9</sup>

#### **Workshop in Montréal, Canada, 31 October – 2 November 2006**

The SSHRC offered to share with NORFACE partners some lessons learned from its experience with user engagement in research – by (in collaboration with the Research Council of Norway) organizing an international workshop on User Engagement in Research in Montréal.

This workshop brought together 47 people, including representatives from all agencies in the NORFACE network. The organisers also invited people who used research and the expertise of knowledge brokers in development and administration of research projects and granting programmes that engage users in all or some stages of the work. This group consisted of a selected group of Canadian and European science policy experts, programme directors and researchers.

In preparing for the discussion, a paper mapping the ways in which user engagement is seen by NORFACE partner organisations, was prepared. The mapping was based on a sample of case descriptions.

Despite the range and differences of perspectives and experiences among the member organisations, the workshop managed to conclude on some recommendations for NORFACE and identified some promising practices among member agencies:

<sup>9</sup> The report can be found on the NORFACE website.

- NORFACE should recognise the spectrum of user engagement activities in research, ranging from knowledge transfer initiatives to fully interactive social research. At each point on the spectrum these activities meet different objectives and entail different understandings of what constitutes “expert” knowledge.
- NORFACE should give greater consideration to research users within its own initiatives both to complement the current activities of member agencies and to address transnational issues where, for many members, user engagement is most pressing.
- In the multi-national and multi-stakeholder environment in which it operates, NORFACE should identify the organization that can effectively, credibly and sustainably act as intermediaries between researchers and research users, where appropriate, for its funded activities.
- To advance knowledge and encourage discussion within the academic community on user engagement, the NORFACE workshop organisers should produce a publication from presented papers in a special issue of a scholarly journal.<sup>10</sup>

### *MT-members’ knowledge of and opinion about the task*

Five of the former and two of the present MT-members participated in the workshop. Nine of the respondents to the questionnaire have read the report. The impact of this best practice study is hard to detect, including impact on those MT members (and their councils) that either participated in the workshop and/or read the report.

All the respondents that took part in the workshop say that this workshop was very well organised. When it comes to the topics discussed, the answers diverge. Those partner organisations where user engagement was a relevant topic in their Council, report that the workshop was both innovative and interesting. For Councils that fund only basic research through responsive mode instruments, user engagement seemed a bit irrelevant for their way of working with research funding.

Some of the former MT-members have mentioned that even if the topic was less relevant when the NORFACE workshop took place, it has now become relevant as national and international research initiatives more often are motivated by the need for knowledge to meet societal and global challenges. For this kind of “targeted research” user engagement is mentioned in many different contexts. Thus the experiences from the NORFACE user engagement task may become more relevant and valuable in the future.

### **4.3.4 Priority setting and development of new initiatives** *Activities, participants, topics discussed, recommendations*

This best practice study was set up as a site for exchange of information and discussion on specific interesting, instructive and – in particular – innovative – experiences for priority setting/new initiatives. The aim was to identify “good practices” that may facilitate common understanding and learning among the participants, while remaining sensitive to the contextual features and location of each partner’s specific experiences and overall approaches to priority setting/new initiatives.

An internal NORFACE report summarise the workshop activities and main findings of this task.

#### **Conceptual framework and collection of policy areas**

A conceptual framework for discussions on priority setting and development of new research initiatives was prepared in a paper. Building on the terminology and criteria discussed in this paper, each NORFACE organisation was asked to provide descriptions of 2 – 3 cases of priority-setting and/or new initiatives from their own portfolio.

#### **Workshop in Coimbra, Portugal 19 – 20 April 2006**

A total of 29 persons participated in the workshop in Coimbra and all twelve partners in NORFACE (at that time) were present. On the first day of the workshop a presentation on the “state of the art” was followed by a presentation of the case descriptions by the partner organisations. On the second day the EC perspectives on priority setting in the emerging

<sup>10</sup> This turned out to be difficult and instead an internal NORFACE paper was produced.

European Research Area, was presented. Then three break-out sessions addressed the concept of priority setting, the role of research councils in setting priorities and as “change agents”, and how European processes of priority setting affect the partner organisations national priority setting processes. Following a report from each group, the workshop ended with a plenary discussion which addressed the possible roles and rationales for NORFACE in the development of the European Research Area.

The discussions at the workshop showed among other things that priority-setting is a pervasive and multidimensional issue. This nature of priority-setting raise a number of challenges when the attempt is to characterise and compare practices in order to identify and transfer “best practices” among the partner organisations in NORFACE. Different practices in priority-setting in research must be understood with an awareness of and sensitivity to their “systemic” (including cultural, historical, organisational etc.) contexts. A first step towards a typology and a set of descriptive categories of forms of priority-setting was outlined, which enabled the partner organisations to compare and exchange practices of priority-setting:

*Thematic priorities* – classified in terms of

- scientific priorities (scientific capacity, scientific needs and opportunities)
- societal priorities; policy relevance

*Structural priorities*

- excellence, productivity
- international collaboration
- research education
- recruitment policy
- networks, transfer and dissemination

*Systemic priorities*

- systemic design; system-level change

### ***MT-members’ knowledge of and opinion about the task***

Five of the former and one of the present MT-members participated in the workshop. Some of the respondents have read the report. Again, impact from this best practice study is hard to detect with certainty, although in one of the partner organisations, it did contribute when the organisation in question needed to set principles for priority setting.

### ***4.3.5 Programme development and management***

Topics discussed, activities, participants and recommendations

The objective of this best practice study was to come to an agreement on a shared model for programme development and management for future transnational NORFACE programmes.

A NORFACE report summarises this best practice study on programme development and management.<sup>11</sup>

### ***A comparative analysis of current practices in partner organisations***

A model was to be developed by identifying and comparing current programme management and practices in the partner organisations. To accomplish this task, a comparative analysis was carried out. The comparative analysis showed that the councils shared a definition of structural and thematic programmes. Through thematic programmes research councils promote specific research subjects, whereas structural programmes aim to improve the research system, mostly by promoting careers or young researchers. The analysis revealed that the significance of the programmes in the funding policy of the partner organisations differs greatly. The analysis also compared evaluation processes and the councils’ coordination of

<sup>11</sup> The report can be found on the NORFACE website.

programmes. The findings of the comparative analysis fed into the conceptualisation and the discussions of the workshop on the partner council's best practices in these areas.

### **Workshop in Bonn, Germany, 12 – 13 January 2006**

At the workshop on programme development and management in Bonn 12 – 13 January 2006, thirty-one people participated, including members of the Management Team and the Network Board from most of the NORFACE partners, researchers and representatives from the European Commission. Part of the workshop was dedicated to presentations on the partners' practices, which provided a basis for the discussions that followed. To provide a framework for the discussions in the workshop, the main results from the comparative analysis, showing how the partners practices varied, was presented. The agenda also included some breakout sessions and the workshop concluded with the synopsis and summary of the main results of discussions. The main outcome of the workshop was a provision of six recommendations for the NORFACE transnational research programme:

1. The programme should address a topic of added value for the European research landscape that is relevant to a broad scope of researchers in the social sciences.
2. It should enable but not demand multidisciplinary research.
3. In order to promote international networking, applications should include partners from at least three different NORFACE countries and allow for the participation of researchers from non-NORFACE countries.
4. The programme should have both thematic oriented and capacity-building features.
5. Clear objectives are essential in order to properly manage and evaluate the programme.
6. Since the intellectual credibility and management competence are needed, it would be valuable to build a coordination team, bringing together people with a strong reputation in research and good management and communication skills.

### ***MT-members' knowledge of and opinion about the task***

Only one of the present MT-members participated in the workshop, but four have read the report. Many of the former MT-members have mentioned that this task was very important for the work with the research programme activities in NORFACE. The workshop gave the opportunity to discuss and agree upon concepts and definitions. This is described as having been very useful in contributing to a mutual understanding and knowledge between the partner organisations. Several have pointed to the fact that all six recommendations were used later on in the work with the programme activities in NORFACE.

At the same time they report that this task may have had little direct impact on their own organisation and how it works with research programmes. In some instances the NORFACE report has been used when the topic on research programmes has been discussed in partner organisations.

## **4.4 Staff Exchange Programme**

### ***Objectives and scheme***

This task supported the short-term exchanges and visits of programme managers and directors with the aim of facilitating deeper knowledge and understanding across partner organisations and their councils, boards and staff. A plan for the exchange scheme was published on the NORFACE website. It included exchange guidelines and listings of the different themes for visits at the NORFACE partner organisations. For each round of exchanges a booklet with visit packages offered by the partners was distributed.

### *The four rounds of exchanges*

The task was originally envisaged to consist of two rounds over a period of three years, one in 2005 and a second round in 2006-2007. The budget was EUR 30 000. This covered the expenses for the participants in two rounds, related to travel and accommodation costs.

However, the participants were so pleased about the scheme that the Management Team in agreement with the Network Board decided to arrange a third round in 2008. When NORFACE I was prolonged with 9 months until September 2009, a fourth round was organised in spring 2009. In these latter two rounds, travel and accommodation costs were financed by the (sending-) partner councils themselves. During the four rounds of exchanges 129 persons from 14 partner organisations had visited 12 countries.

Participants were asked to report on the experiences from the exchange. The final report from the task summarises the experience and impact of the task:

*“The number of participants has risen for every round and in general most of them have been very satisfied with the scheme which in turn has led to a stronger awareness of the exchange scheme itself, and of NORFACE in general. Most visitors do not work with matters related to NORFACE or ERA-Nets in their councils so in this respect the exchange visits have done a lot to spread the knowledge about what we do, including the work related to the calls on Religion and Migration. Additionally it has proved as an important arena for administrators to discuss best practices related to social science research and to reflect on different ways to organise the work with NORFACE. An impact of the exchanges that one could not neglect is the development of numerous contacts throughout our continent that would not have been established otherwise”.*

For the host the exchange visits gave several opportunities; to think about how to present their institution in an optimal way, make colleagues more involved in NORFACE activities, to produce or revise relevant information material, and to learn from and exchange views with representatives of other research councils.

The final report concludes that for NORFACE as a whole, the exchange scheme has probably been the task which has spread knowledge about the NORFACE network most effectively. Some recommendations for future exchanges are given; (1) a lot of time is needed to organise the exchange visits, (2) the duration of 2 – 3 days is ideal, (3) the size of the visiting groups should not be more than six people, (4) the visits have involved many member staff of the host organisations, and debates have also been organised in which guests are able to discuss and compare councils, and (5) it is recommended to take the visitors outside of the council building, e.g. to visit a university or another funding agency.

### *MT-members' knowledge of and opinion about the task*

All of the former MT-members and three of the present MT-members have participated in the staff exchange programme. Others that have not participated are also aware of the programme, and of the fact that their organisation participated in it as a host, or that colleagues had visited another organisation.

Many of the former MT-members have mentioned that the visits were well organised.

The impact of the exchange programme on the organisations is seen as very positive: it provided a useful reflection on the organisation where people were working and broadened their perspective to other ways of working. The exchanges and the meetings between the staff from different councils, led to interesting discussions. The programme also made it possible for a much wider group of staff in the partner organisations to go abroad, to learn about differences and similarities in assessment procedures, international co-operation etc.

Several examples of cases that reflected the differences between the partner organisations were mentioned:

- organisation; research councils with both basic and applied research, compared to other councils where only basic research is financed
- programme activities; particularly some of the Councils with experience in organising thematic programmes, thematic programmes and how users were engaged
- the experience that some of the partner Council already at that time had co-operation with countries outside of Europe

In other cases, where the similarities between the partner organisations were more dominating, the discussions could focus on details related to the peer review systems and the programme activity.

It does seem that the experiences, knowledge and perspectives were not always shared widely in the organisations involved, upon return from an exchange visit. In some cases, as a result, the learning that took place was mostly limited to the person involved. In other organisations this was more structured, people who went on exchanges gave presentations to their colleagues in order to share their experiences, enthusiasm and insights.

## **4.5 Individual and organisational learning and change**

The respondents report that participating in NORFACE provides many learning opportunities about international co-operation, ERA-NETs in particular, and about other partner organisations and their way of working. This learning occurs on an individual and organisational level, though the first more often than the second.

Several of the former MT-members mention that NORFACE gave a general knowledge base and “education” in research administration – especially related to international co-operation. Before the engagement in NORFACE (and other ERA-NETs as well), the partner organisations had some experience with bi-lateral international co-operation. The engagement in NORFACE seems to have been an important platform for deepening the bi-lateral and multilateral co-operation for several of the partner organisations.

In the further development of the multi-lateral international co-operation, the experience from NORFACE is of value to many of the partner organisations. An example is the work with the Joint Programme Initiatives. Another example is the importance of the experience from NORFACE for the international co-operation with parts of the world where many of the Councils have less experience, such as countries in Asia, Africa and Latin-America. The experience from NORFACE gives the partner organisations a broader platform for understanding both some of the challenges one may face, how to overcome some of the barriers, and they have experience with useful approaches for achieving ones objectives (such as coming to agreement on a peer review system, making a joint call etc.).

Another positive effect of NORFACE is the network building, both related to the partner organisations and to the researchers in the social sciences who have been engaged in the NORFACE research programmes. The permanency of the exchange between partners is mentioned as a positive outcome of participating in NORFACE, networking was fostered and the basis for European co-operation was broadened. For NORFACE partners the contacts with other research councils are fruitful in the information it brings and the initiatives that can be explored. NORFACE makes it easier to contact other research councils in such instances.

A key characteristic of NORFACE, and one that is appreciated by many of the respondents, is that all partner organisations – also the new-comers – were highly involved in the activities that took place. The division of work and the shared responsibility for the work packages and tasks are seen as an important factor for the success of NORFACE. Another factor

that several have mentioned is the stepwise approach which made it possible to exchange information and to get to know each other better.

Several of the former MT-members have mentioned that the exchange of practices and comparisons between the partner organisations made it possible to reflect on the organisation they work in and to review the national practices and procedures up against a European/international standard.

The difficulty in isolating the impact of NORFACE from other international co-operations that the partner organisations are engaged in, have been mentioned by many of the respondents. Some of the former MT-members are of the opinion that NORFACE has affected the peer review systems in their own organisation. The knowledge about how other councils organise their assessment processes, gives an opportunity to bring relevant examples of different practices on the table when changes in the organisation are on the agenda. When changes are considered one can look to other partner organisations in NORFACE and it can be easier to get suggestions carried through if you can back them up with examples from some other research councils. Examples of changes that respondents mentioned had taken place after exchange of practices and learning from other partner organisations are:

- finding new experts for every call to a system where you appoint the experts for a period of three to four years
- from the use of individual experts to the use of panels in the assessment of applications
- changes in procedure for picking the right peers
- from the use of disciplinary to the use of multidisciplinary panels

One critical remark is that the best practice studies and other activities in NORFACE could be given more concrete follow-up, and given the frequent changes in MT-members the information presented in the various reports could be utilised more.





## 5 Results of the assessment

In this last chapter some of the results of the assessment of the impact of NORFACE I are summarised.

### 5.1 Impact on the research community

#### *Three transnational programmes have been developed*

One of the core objectives of the NORFACE ERA-NET has been to fund European research co-operation. One of the ambitions of NORFACE I was to develop transnational research programmes between the partner organisations. The NORFACE network has succeeded in developing and financing four different transnational initiatives during a period of eight years. In the period of NORFACE I, a total of 22 research projects, two capacity building projects and nine research networks have been funded.

#### *Added value compared to national research programmes*

The evaluation of the Pilot programme reveals that NORFACE has proved to be a good instrument for stimulating scientific research. NORFACE has contributed to strengthen the European research co-operation, and bring forward new science based knowledge of importance for European society and public policy. The NORFACE programmes are flexible when it comes to funding international co-operation and efficient in generating international visibility. Both the evaluation of the Pilot programme and the mid-term evaluation of the Migration programme conclude that the NORFACE calls have been able to attract excellent researchers and research groups. It is also stated that the research projects are of high quality.

The midterm evaluation of the Migration programme underlined that an international programme like this offers great opportunities to encourage and develop integration and cohesion, as well as capacity building.

#### *Best practice of funding transnational research programmes*

The NORFACE network has some specific features even among the family of the ERA-NETs. The common pot funding model used in both the two pilots and the first transnational research programme on Migration, implies that national control over national research funding is deliberately moved up to the transnational level.

The common pot funding system is one of the challenges that the *Comparative Analysis of Partner Councils* (NORFACE 2006) identify as a possible problem at the national level, and the setup of the funding model was an issue in both the Pilot Programme and the transnational programme on Migration. For the new programme on the Welfare State Future the funding model has again been an issue, and some of the partner organisations signalled early in the process that a common pot model would be impossible to take part in. The solution for NORFACE was to change to a mixed mode funding model which all the partner organisations could agree to.

#### *Inclusion of new partner organisations*

Inclusion of new (and old) partners has been a continuing process in NORFACE. From the very start NORFACE had the intension to extend its activities to other parts of Europe. This was also encouraged by the Commission during the negotiation of the ERA-NET contract – “... there is a basic need for further exchange and co-operation within the social sciences across Europe, and NORFACE would be tested as a platform for this, by offering participation to other organisations”.

The NORFACE I DoW (2004) stated that at least two other European research funding organisations were to be offered the opportunity to participate during the project period. In 2005 NORFACE had already extended from seven to twelve

partners, and at present when the co-operation has launched its third transnational programme, NORFACE consists of fifteen partner organisations and one associate partner.

### *Agreement on the substance/structure of the research programmes*

A challenge that NORFACE did face was the large differences between partner organisations related to the financing of programmes. All partner organisations fund structural programmes, but there are big differences with respect to thematic programmes. The Comparative Analysis of the Partner Councils revealed that some of the partner organisations may have problems with a thematic research programme, while mobilising others for a structural focus could also be difficult. Several of the activities in NORFACE have focused on this issue, such as the best practice study on Programme Development and Management. Despite the large differences between the partner organisations, NORFACE has managed to come to agreement on the substance of the research programmes.

### *Processes for prioritizing and choosing a research theme*

Several activities in NORFACE have focused on the processes of setting priorities and launching new initiatives, such as the best practice study on Priority setting and development of new initiatives, a “Forward Look” task and a workshop on foresight methodology.

NORFACE has managed to design and plan the development of alternative programme themes, through a consultation process with all the partner organisations. The academic society has been involved in defining the research programme and specific research themes. The process of setting priority and launching new initiatives seems to have functioned, even though NORFACE did not take the advantage of using some of the more innovative instruments such as forward look and foresight methodology.

### *Organising calls – planning, launching, evaluating and managing*

The two pilots gave NORFACE important experiences and practices for the development and implementation of the transnational programme on Migration. A workshop on “Administrative and Technical Matters Related to the Transnational programme” included a session on “lessons learnt” from the pilot programme as well as other international calls, and a working group session, where administrative and technical matters related to the Transnational Programme were discussed. The workshop resulted in a number of specific recommendations related to the call, the evaluation process, contract, reporting and management. The evaluation of the Pilot programme and the Midterm evaluation of the Migration programme confirm that NORFACE has succeeded in organising the two calls, and with minor adjustments the processes, procedures and practices have been used again in the planning and launching of the NORFACE programme on the Welfare State Futures.

## **5.2 Impact on the partner organisations**

### *What individual and organisational learning has taken place?*

MT-members (as well as Network Board Members) have been the main group of participants in the workshops arranged in connection with the best practice studies and the comparative analysis.

There is no doubt that MT-members engaged in NORFACE I have learned much about the other partner organisations in NORFACE, the differences and similarities between the partner councils and the opportunities and challenges for international co-operation. They have also reported that NORFACE has had a learning impact on the organisation they work in. It is more difficult to point to specific changes that have taken place as a result of participation on NORFACE. However, the reports, survey and interviews used as input for this report clearly indicate that the partner organisations have been affected by the networking and sharing of best practices.

### *How far has the best practices been shared?*

It has been difficult to assess how far the best practices have been shared, and it seems to differ between the best practice studies:

The best practice study on *Evaluation and peer review* and the *Comparative Analysis of the Partner Councils* seems to have been highly relevant to all NORFACE partner organisations. As a consequence the results of these studies have been shared more broadly in the councils, when and where relevant.

The best practice study on *Programme management and development* seems to have been very important for the programme development in NORFACE, including setting up calls for transnational research programmes. The report and the discussions at the workshop made a better understanding of different use of concepts and instruments, and this task clearly helped the partner organisations to get a common understanding of the programme activities in NORFACE.

Best practice studies on *User engagement*, *Gender equality* and *Priority setting* seem to have been shared less frequently. Though, many found the discussions on these issues interesting, these best practice studies have been more relevant to some of the partner organisations than to others.

The questionnaire reveals that the NORFACE reports are not well known to all present MT-members. This and other statements seem to indicate that transfer of knowledge from former to present MT-members is less than optimal. The questionnaire alerted some of the present MT-members to NORFACE reports they did not know about. Succeeding in finding the reports and taking the time to read them, many found the reports interesting and useful. Given the rapid rate of turnover in the Management Team some of the valuable work and knowledge shared between partners is in danger of being forgotten.

In general it seems as if the learning process is suffering under the lack of systematic follow up on the best practice studies in the partner organisations, as well as in the continued work in the Management Team. The need for long term follow up on the best practice studies may have caused less sharing and less impact than might otherwise have been achieved. All reports have been discussed in the NORFACE Network Board, whose members are assumed to have some influence on the policies and practices of the partner organisation. From this fact it could be expected that the awareness of the best practice studies had been higher in the partner organisations.

Partner organisations themselves are of course responsible for giving new MT-members and NB-members the possibility to become acquainted with NORFACE, as well as to spread the accumulated NORFACE knowledge in the organisations. This is the fundamental purpose of NORFACE, and putting it into practice is in line with the self-interests of the partner organisations. Both the individual and organisational learning process speed up and benefit from easy access to publications, reports and other documents at the NORFACE website.

A possibly efficient way to help transfer the accumulated NORFACE knowledge to new MT-members and new NB-members would be to make some kind of a welcome package of selected documents organised and distributed by the Coordination Office.

Some of the best practice studies and reports could be relevant to discuss in a NORFACE setting once again. The purpose should be to bring the discussions a step forward: What has been achieved since 2006? How can new networks of international co-operation (JPI etc.) benefit from the NORFACE experiences, and vice versa?

The comparative analysis of councils seems to have been very useful. The report is becoming slightly outdated, as new partners are not included. Is the time due for a revisions and extension of the analyses?

### 5.3 Key to NORFACE success?

Assessed against the strategic objectives of the ERA-NET, NORFACE has been a success. The ERA-NET has managed to develop a durable partnership in research funding policy and practice between the partner organisations, and extended the co-operation from seven to fifteen European countries. The evaluation of the Pilot programme and the midterm evaluation of the Migration programme both concluded that NORFACE programmes have had an added value in high quality research activity.

The assessment of the impact of NORFACE on the partner organisations has documented that the ERA-NETs are important platforms for individual and organisational learning related to international co-operation, and as such they have an impact on the process of building the ERA.

Some of the factors that seem to have been important for the NORFACE success:<sup>12</sup>

- The NORFACE partner organisations are a diverse group of institutions, but they share some important characteristics which enable them to co-operate: All partner organisations are research councils providing a stable, independent, transparent and scientifically justified institution for funding research activities. Even though the Comparative Analysis of the Partner Councils revealed differences between the partner organisations, the similarities related to organisational structure, research interest and the access to the English language are important. What several partner organisations in NORFACE now experience is that moving the international co-operation to other parts of the world, such as Asia, Africa and Latin-America, can be a lot more challenging.
- One core idea of NORFACE is that open co-operation and constructive exchange of different views, leads to learning and improvements for all partners involved. Operating on an equal footing is a key value for NORFACE. The co-operation of NORFACE has developed as the result of trust built up gradually between the partner organisations over many years. It is based on the recognition of the value of diversity among the partner organisations as well as similarities in organisational structure and research policy interest. Building mutual understanding and trust, takes time, and all the activities in NORFACE, both the regular Network Board and Management Team meetings, as well as other activities such as the best practice studies and the staff exchange programme, have been important in this process.
- NORFACE has been able to explicitly identify some of the problems and barriers in the co-operation and the work with the comparative analysis of the partner organisation, and the final report were important in this process. The co-operation has also been willing to meet and compromise on some of the challenges and respected some of the real barriers (political and/or legal). The change in the funding model from a “common pot” used in the first three transnational initiatives, to a mixed mode” funding model in the new programme on the Welfare State Futures, is one example of compromise between the partner organisations.
- NORFACE has managed to establish a “We” which refer to an identity as a group and a common position. This is an important factor when the network has the ambition of moving from a group of partner organisations with different national positions to new ground in international co-operation. The three NORFACE institutions: the Co-ordination Office, the Network Board and Management Team have been crucial for establishing this identity.

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<sup>12</sup> These reflections are also base on experiences in other ERA-NETs such as HERA and CO-REACH. CO-REACH (2005 – 2010) was a network of European S&T policy and funding organisations involved in promoting research co-operation with China in the natural sciences, medical and life sciences, engineering sciences, social sciences and humanities.

- The NORFACE partner organisations seem to have accepted that international co-operation is time consuming. The former MT-members of NORFACE reported that the work load and intensity in the activities was high in periods. The fact that NORFACE got funding for the co-ordination and management activities as well as for networking, seems to have made it possible for the partner organisations to prioritise NORFACE and keep a high level of engagement through the whole project period.
- NORFACE has managed to establish a clear division of work and a shared responsibility for the whole ERA-NET. Every partner in NORFACE has had a leadership of one or several tasks and for all tasks there have been one or several “dialogue partners”, providing advice and support. In more demanding activities, such as the work with the transnational programme, all partners have been involved in planning and designing.
- NORFACE has been called “learning by doing”. The learning aspect is related to how the co-operation has managed to set up the funding instruments for transnational activities – starting with the two pilots and using the lessons learned from the pilots as essential input for the work with the transnational research programmes.
- NORFACE has been well co-ordinated and managed. It seems clear that the ambitious objectives of NORFACE could not have been reached without a strong, open and inclusive leadership.

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- NORFACE ERA-NET Final Activity Report. January 15<sup>th</sup> 2010.
- Other NORFACE reports, documents and deliverables.

# Annex I

## NORFACE I: Overview showing Work package leaders, Task leaders and Dialogue partners

### *How NORFACE Operates:*

#### *Work packages*

The work of NORFACE is divided into eight “work packages”. Each work package has a set of objectives, a series of tasks and a set of deliverables. Each work package also has a leader responsible for its implementation. Work package leaders are drawn from one of the following four countries: Finland, Sweden UK and Norway. Task leaders, drawn from all twelve partner-countries, will lead the individual tasks that make up each work package.

#### **WP1: Building and Managing a Network (FIN)**

The first work package – Building and managing a network – aims to put in place the systems and structures required to manage, co-ordinate, monitor and review the NORFACE network effectively. This includes establishing the Network Board (NB), Management Team (MT), International Advisory Panel (IAP) and ensuring access to good legal advice.

#### *The Tasks of the first work package are*

1. NORFACE Network Board (FIN)
2. Management Team (FIN)
3. International Advisory Panel (FIN)
4. Monitoring and review (UK)
5. Legal advisors (FIN)
6. NORFACE Co-ordination Office (FIN)

#### **WP2: Communication (SE)**

The second work package – Communication – aims to establish effective tools for communication and exchange of information between partners and design an information system which will be the basis, at a later stage, for opening up the network for broader European co-operation. Tasks include setting up a NORFACE website.

#### *The Tasks of the second work package are*

1. Strategy for information and communication (S)
2. NORFACE website (IRE)
3. NORFACE Strategy for information and communication.

#### **WP 3: Analysis of context and best practice (SE)**

The third work package – Analysis of context and best practice – aims to create an appropriate structural support for co-operation between partner councils, review barriers to effective joint activity and identify best practice across the organizations. This entails undertaking a review of the main activities and processes of all seven partner councils, for example, their main funding mechanisms, review systems, relationships with the public, and ethical policies. The review will consider barriers to joint activities and provide recommendations for overcoming these barriers. In addition, four topics will be the object for a deeper analysis of best practices among partner councils. These best practices will be reviewed in a joint workshop.



*The Tasks of the third work package are*

1. Commissioning comparative analyses of partner Councils (S)
2. Best practice studies:
3. Evaluation and peer review of research (IRE)
4. Promotion of gender equality in research (ICE)
5. User engagement (N)
6. Priority setting and development of new initiatives (N)
7. Programme Development and Management

**WP4: Building up research cooperation (UK)**

The fourth work package – Building up research co-operation – aims to increase the extent and depth of collaboration of partner countries. Activities include exchanges of programme managers and programme directors, a research seminar series, identifying options for cross-border clustering of research activities, a project aimed at greater PhD and postdoctoral mobility. Parallel reviews will explore likely political and socio-economic scenarios across Europe and identify areas of “cutting edge” research in partner countries. These will be brought together in a major “forward look” exercise in which a range of interested parties will share perspectives about future research topics and needs.

*The tasks of the fourth work package are*

1. Exchange of programme managers and programme directors – (N)
2. Research seminar series (UK, DK)
3. Facilitating clustering activities (N)
4. Forward look (UK)
5. PhD and postdoctoral mobility (UK)
6. Opening up to transnational participation (DE)
7. Data and research infrastructure (NL)

**WP5: Inclusion of other partners (NO)**

The fifth work package – Inclusion of other partners – addresses the inclusion of more European partners in a broader network and will explore the possibility of using NORFACE as a basis for a European network of research funding organisations. This work package will take initiatives to strengthen the research strategic co-operation within the regions of Europe and expand the NORFACE co-operation to include other partners.

*The Tasks of the fifth work package are*

1. Mapping out possibilities for extension (NO)
2. Two workshops (NO)
3. Analysis of results of the workshops (IRE)

**WP 6: Output and dissemination (UK)**

The sixth work package – Output and dissemination – aims to ensure that the knowledge gained by NORFACE participants is retained in an efficient way and can benefit other research organizations, researchers and research users. A further aim is to focus attention on the key links between economic and social research and European knowledge society. Tasks include setting up an information forum between the seven partners to agree a methodology for retaining information, electronically and on paper, and a pilot study of cross border knowledge transfer.

*The Tasks of the sixth work package are*

1. Information storage and sharing (S)
2. Publication of the outputs (UK)
3. Pilot study of cross border knowledge transfer (UK)

**WP 7: Cross border pilots (FIN)**

The seventh work package – Cross border pilots – will plan and implement two pilots to test the functionality of funding new research activity on a multi-national basis. One of the pilots will focus on research projects within an agreed theme. The second pilot will focus on capacity building through researcher training. Both pilots will be evaluated on the response to the Call (for research proposals), the quality of proposals and the outcomes of the Calls.

*The Tasks of the seventh work package are*

1. Planning and launching the pilot for research on an agreed theme (FIN)
2. Planning and launching the pilot on capacity building (ICE)
3. Analysis of both pilots (DK)
4. Design of new Transnational Funding Instruments

**WP8: Launching a transnational programme (FIN)**

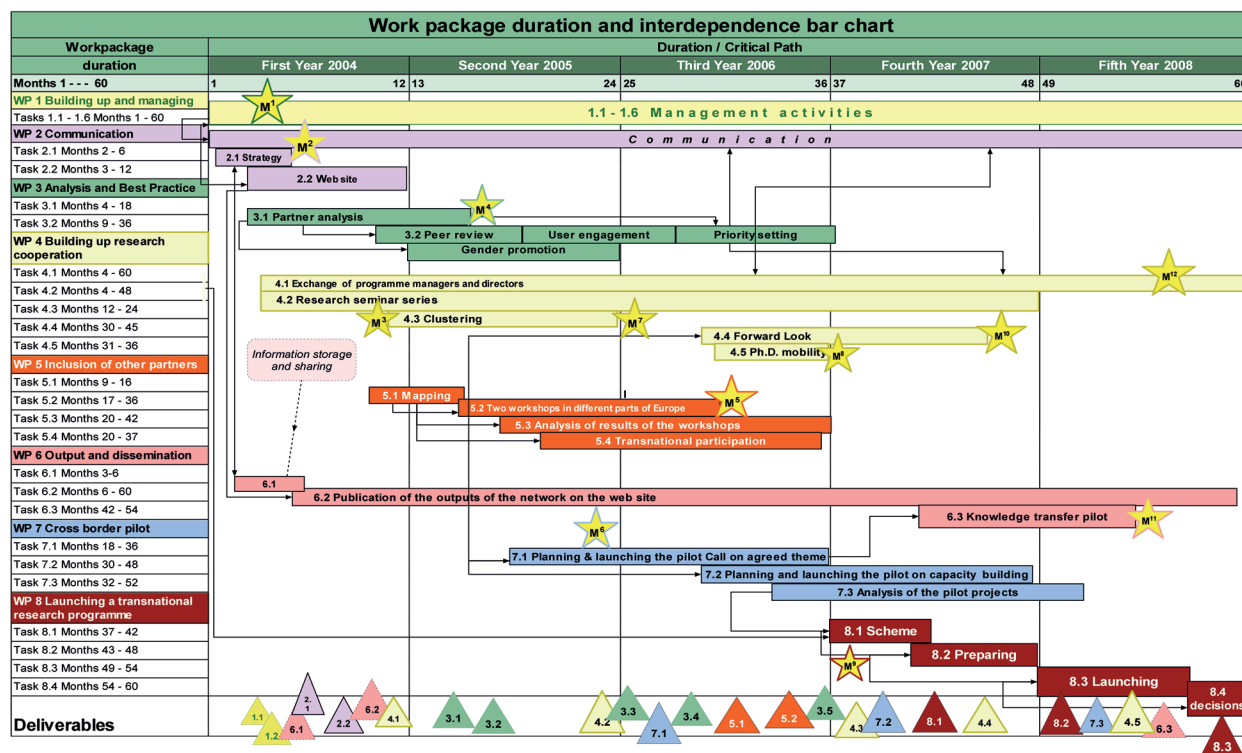
The eighth work package – Launching a transnational programme – will draw heavily on the experience of the two cross border pilots in the seventh work package to plan and launch a successful transnational programme, involving all the partner organisations. The joint Call for the main transnational programme will be launched with an agreed timetable, budget and plan of implementation. But the first projects will begin outside the five-year period of NORFACE funding.

*The tasks of the eighth work package are*

1. Developing a scheme for a transnational programme (SE)
2. Preparing the transnational programme (FIN)
3. Launching the call for proposals (DK)
4. Evaluating and funding decisions (FIN)

## Annex II

### NORFACE I Work package duration and interdependence bar chart (DoW 2004)



## Annex III

### NORFACE II: Overview showing Work package leaders, Task leaders and Dialogue partners

Please note: The partners are distinguished by their acronym. *Dialogue partners in italics.*

#### 1. Joint Research and Related Activities and Initiatives (NWO & ESRC)

Tasks:

1. Identifying multidisciplinary research needs (AKA & IRCHSS) (*Dialogue partners DFG, ARRS*)
2. Exploring opportunities and challenges of collaborating with Emerging and Developing Economies' (NWO & FCT) (*Dialogue partners FWK, AKA*)
3. Interagency co-operation' (RANNÍS & ESRC) (*Dialogue partners AKA, RCN, SSGRC*)
4. Co-operation with non-NORFACE-SA members in and outside Europe
5. (NWO & ETF) (*Dialogue partners FWF, FCT, and ARRS*)

#### 2. Exploiting Data & Research Infrastructure in the Social Sciences (DFG & ANR)

Tasks:

1. Strategic aspects of data production and data sharing, and developing mechanisms to exploit data & research infrastructures (DFG & ESRC) (*Dialogue partners AKA, IRCHSS, RCN*)
2. Implementation (FWF & DFG) (*Dialogue partners ESRC*)
3. Promoting data for research in the interdisciplinary field of migration (AKA & DFG) (*Dialogue partners VR*)

#### 3. Governance and Management of the NORFACE Network, and Output, Dissemination and Impact (NWO & IRCHSS)

Tasks:

1. Governance & Management Structure (NWO)
2. NORFACE Network Coordination Office (NWO) (*Dialogue partners AKA*)
3. Developing a coordinated dissemination and communication strategy, and implementation strategy (RCN & VR) (*Dialogue partners AKA, ESRC*)
4. Assessing the impact of NORFACE activities (RCN & ASSR) (*Dialogue partners RANNÍS*)

## Annex IV

### NORFACE I: List of Workshops and Conferences

- Workshop on Evaluation and peer review, Dublin, Ireland 26 – 27 October 2004.
- Workshop on enlargement, Oslo, Norway 27 – 28 January 2005.
- Workshop on Clustering, Oslo 17 – 18 February 2005.
- Workshop on Gender Equality, Reykjavik, Iceland 20 – 22 October 2005.
- Forward Look workshop, Bled, Slovenia 2 – 3 March 2006.
- Impact of language on international research cooperation. Tallinn, Estonia, 4 – 5 September 2006.
- Workshop on User engagement, in Montréal, Canada 31 October – 2 November 2006.
- Workshop on “Data and Research Infrastructure”, in The Hague, the Netherlands, 16 – 17 November 2006.
- Workshop on Priority setting and development of new initiatives, in Coimbra, Portugal 19 – 20 April 2006.
- Workshop on Programme development and management, Bonn, Germany 12 – 13 January 2006.
- NORFACE Workshop on Administrative and Technical Matters in Connection with TNP. Stockholm, Sweden 2 – 3 May 2007.
- A Clustering workshop, in Lisbon, Portugal 13 – 14 November 2007.
- Workshop on Comparative aspects of Research Councils, Bled, Slovenia 1 – 2 March 2007.
- Workshop on Ethnic minorities, Amsterdam, the Netherlands February – March 2008.
- Workshop on Design of New Instruments for Social Sciences Funding, Ljubljana, Slovenia 23 – 24 June 2008.
- “Bridging Knowledge: Social Sciences Collaboration in Practice”, in Lisbon, Portugal 12 – 13 November 2007.
- “Crossing Boundaries in Social Science Research”, Brussels, Belgium 18 September 2009.

## Annex V

### Questionnaire sent to the NORFACE Management Team members

**Dear member of the NORFACE Management Team,**

As part of the work programme of NORFACE II, we are assessing the impact of NORFACE activities (task 3.4). One of the topics is the impact on the NORFACE Partner organisations themselves of the activities in the context of NORFACE I. For this, we have developed a short questionnaire, which we would like to ask you to answer. It is not supposed to take much time and you are not expected to check with the documents referred to or to gather information from past members of the NORFACE Management Team.

With impact of NORFACE activities on the Partner organisations we think of:

- Organisational and individual learning about:
  - other Partner organisations in NORFACE,
  - differences and similarities between the Partner organisations
  - opportunities and challenges for international co-operation between funding councils.
- How and to what extent this learning may have led to:
  - adjustments or changes in assessment procedures, peer review systems, eligibility rules etc.,
  - adjustments or changes in programme development and management, thematic orientation of programmes etc.,
  - adjustments or changes in policy areas such as gender equality.

Another part of this task will include some interviews with current and past members of the NORFACE Management Team. The interviews are scheduled to take place in November.

You can return the questionnaire via email by replying to this message and we would like to receive your answers by **Monday 5 November 2012.**

We appreciate your effort!

Kind regards

Janike Harsheim and Carlien Hillebrink

**Questionnaire for assessing the impact of NORFACE activities on Partner organisations**  
**Task 3.4 in NORFACE II**

Name:

Organisation:

How long have you worked at the organisation

Since (year):

**A. Participation in NORFACE**

A1. How long have you been involved in NORFACE? *You personally, not your organisation*

Since (year, month):

A2. How often are you in contact with colleagues from NORFACE partner organisations?

- ☐ once a week
- ☐ once a month
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ only related to the MT-meetings

A3. Do these contacts involve non-NORFACE issues? If so, what kind of issues do you contact MT colleagues over?

**B. The exchange programme**

From 2005 to 2009, NORFACE organised an exchange programme between NORFACE Partner organisations. The programme supported short-term exchanges and visits of programme managers and directors.

B1. Did you participate in this exchange programme?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

B2. Did your organisation host other NORFACE partners in the exchange programme?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no
- ☐ I do not know

B3. Are you aware of colleagues of yours having participated in this programme?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

B4. What would you say has been the impact of the exchange programme on your organisation?

**Best practice studies**

For the Work Programme of NORFACE I, five best practice studies were undertaken. The overall aim of the best practice studies was to create an appropriate structural support for co-operation between the NORFACE Partner organisations. The tasks aimed to review barriers to effective joint activities, to identify best practice across organisations and to elaborate recommendations to be implemented in the NORFACE Partner organisations.

**C. Best practice study: Evaluation and peer review of research**

For this task, a workshop was organised in Dublin in 2004, and an internal report was written with the title: *Report on best practice in evaluation and peer review*.

C1. Did you participate in this workshop?

- ☐ yes  
☐ no

C2. Have you read the report?

- ☐ yes  
☐ no

C3. What would you say has been the impact of this task on your organisation?

**D. Best practice study: Promotion of gender equality in research**

For this task, a workshop was organised in Reykjavik in 2005, and an internal report was written with the title: *Report on best practice in promotion of gender*.

D1. Did you participate in this workshop?

- ☐ yes  
☐ no

D2. Have you read the report?

- ☐ yes  
☐ no

D3. What would you say has been the impact of this task on your organisation?

**E. Best practice study: User engagement**

For this task, a workshop was organised in Montréal in 2006, and a report written, with the title: *User Engagement in Research – La participation des utilisateurs à la recherche*, published on the NORFACE website.

E1. Did you participate in this workshop?

- ☐ yes  
☐ no

E2. Have you read the report?

- ☐ yes  
☐ no



E3. What would you say has been the impact of this task on your organisation?

**F. Best practice study: Priority setting and development of new initiatives**

For this task, a workshop was organised in Coimbra in 2006, and an internal report was written, with the title: *Priority setting and development of new initiatives*.

F1. Did you participate in this workshop?

☐ yes

☐ no

F2. Have you read the report?

☐ yes

☐ no

F3. What would you say has been the impact of this task on your organisation?

**G. Best practice study: Programme development and management**

For this task, a workshop was organised in Bonn in 2006, and an internal report was written with the title: *Report on programme development and management*.

G1. Did you participate in this workshop?

☐ yes

☐ no

G2. Have you read the report?

☐ yes

☐ no

G3. What would you say has been the impact of this task on your organisation?

**H. Comparative Analysis of Partner Councils**

In 2007, NORFACE published a report with the title: *Comparative Analysis of Partner Councils*.

H1. Are you familiar with this publication?

☐ yes

☐ no (continue to section I)

H2. Have you read the publication?

☐ yes

☐ no (continue to section I)

H3. How was this publication useful to you?

## I. General comments

I1. How would you describe the impact of participation in NORFACE on your organisation? Do you for instance feel that your organisation learns from participating in the network and from working with the other NORFACE partner organisations?

I2. Are you, or colleagues of yours, active in other international networks, such as HERA or ORA for instance?

☐ yes, myself (name of networks, examples)

☐ yes, colleagues of mine (name of networks, examples)

☐ no (continue to I4)

I3. How would you say NORFACE compares to the other networks you or your colleagues are active in, in terms of the effect it has on your own organisation?

I4. Do you have other comments relating to the topics of this questionnaire, that you would like to add?

*This is the end of the questionnaire. Our thanks for answering the questions.*

*Please return your questionnaire to Janike Harsheim, [jh@rcn.no](mailto:jh@rcn.no), before **Monday 5 November 2012**.*

## Annex VI

### List of interviews

- Anne Brüggemann, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG). Management Team member and Task leader for the best practice study on Programme Development and Management.
- Eiríkur Smári Sigurðarson, the Icelandic Centre for Research (RANNÍS). Management Team member and Task leader for the best practice study on Gender Equality.
- Eivind Hovden, the Research Council of Norway (RCN). Management Team member and Task leader for the best practice studies on Priority setting and the best practice study on New Initiative and User Engagement.
- Tobias Bade Strøm, the Research Council of Norway (RCN). Management Team member and Task leader for the Staff Exchange Programme.
- Luule Mizera, Estonian Science Foundation (EFT), Management Team member.
- Satu Huuha-Cissokho. Academy of Finland (AKA). Secretariat of the Co-ordinator of NORFACE I, and a Management Team member in the beginning of NORFACE II.
- Berry Bonenkamp, Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO). Management Team member. Secretariat of the Co-ordinator of NORFACE II (in the beginning of NORFACE II).
- Eili Ervelä-Myrreen, Academy of Finland (AKA). Co-ordinator of NORFACE I.