

Norwegian Cooperation Programme in Higher Education with Eurasia

Programme Document 2010-2015

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NORWEGIAN CENTRE FOR
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

1. General

The Norwegian Cooperation Programme in Higher Education with Eurasia is a programme for university cooperation with the following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

Through cooperation projects and mobility activities the Eurasia Programme aims at extending capacity and competence at the institutions of the cooperating countries. The Eurasia Programme is administered by the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU) on the basis of an agreement with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Eurasia Programme supports project cooperation between higher education institutions in Norway and the above mentioned countries. Eligible activities include education projects targeted at all three levels of higher education (bachelor, master, Ph.D), and projects targeted at technical or administrative staff at the institutions.

2. Goals and objectives

The overall goal of the Norwegian Cooperation Programme in Higher Education with Eurasia is to contribute to renewal and internationalisation of higher education in the cooperating countries. The cooperating countries are in a process of reforming their higher education system. Several of the countries are members of the Bologna Process, while some are connected to the European Education Area in other ways. An important goal for the programme is to contribute to the ongoing reforms.

The objectives of the Norwegian Cooperation Programme in Higher Education with Eurasia are:

- Increase *relevance* of higher education in the cooperating countries by joint development of sustainable study programmes in fields of high priority at institutional and national level.
- Enhance *quality* of education.
- Contribute to increased internationalisation of higher education in the cooperating countries and in Norway, and to share Norwegian experience from the Bologna reform process to institutions in the cooperating countries.
- Increase academic connections and cooperation between Norway and the cooperation countries.

3. Cooperation, commitment and responsibility

The Norwegian Cooperation Programme in Higher Education with Eurasia primarily supports projects and activities representing long-term institutional cooperation between one or more institutions in Norway and one or more institutions in the cooperating countries.

In accordance with the main goals of the programme, cooperation activities must reflect the needs and priorities of the institutions in the cooperating countries. The cooperation should be based on the principle of equality between the partners and must be characterised by transparency at all levels.

The Eurasia Programme is built on bottom-up initiatives, and individual contacts may well be the starting point of cooperation. At the same time, the challenging goals and objectives of the Eurasia Programme require institutional commitment for all involved.

Preferably, the selected areas of cooperation should reflect key areas in the partner institutions' strategic plans and priorities. In any case the leadership of the involved institutions must endorse the cooperation.

4. Strategic priorities: Modernisation of education

The countries covered by the Norwegian Cooperation Programme in Higher Education with Eurasia have a more or less developed higher education sector, and in some respects there are considerable differences between them. At the same time all the countries share some fundamental challenges and a common need for modernising education. In the framework of the Eurasia Programme, modernisation of higher education will be achieved by way of projects focusing on the following:

- Curriculum development
- Introduction of new teaching methods or teaching materials
- Quality assurance mechanisms
- University management and administration

All cooperative activities must be in line with institutional as well as national priorities in the cooperating countries. *Relevance* for cooperating institutions and for cooperating country will be decisive for selection of projects and activities in the programme.

Any cooperation must present strategies for *sustainability*. All applications will have to include reflections on the termination of the project, and plans for how the results achieved during the project period can be sustained when the project period is over.

Regarding subject areas, priorities may differ between the countries. Possible programme priorities emphasizing particular countries or subject areas may be given in calls for proposals.

Partners receiving funding from the Norwegian Cooperation Programme in Higher Education with Eurasia must include a *gender perspective* in the planning and implementation of their cooperation project. Any cooperation project or activity must be in line with the main principle of gender equality. This can for instance be done by means of recruitment policy, thematic priorities, by including gender perspectives in curriculum, teaching methods and materials, and/or by organizing seminars/workshops aimed at increasing the gender awareness at the institutional level.

Programme participants are also encouraged to seek synergy with other available programmes and mechanisms, such as the Quota Scheme or other.

5. Eligibility

All Norwegian universities, specialised universities as well as university colleges, are eligible for participation in the Eurasia Programme. In the cooperating countries all higher education institutions, private or public, are eligible, provided they are fully recognised/accredited in their home country and they provide education at a level comparable to what is offered at the eligible institutions in Norway.

As a starting point, all academic fields are eligible for support from the Norwegian Cooperation Programme in Higher Education with Eurasia. The main provision is that a proposed project is in accordance with institutional priorities and national priorities in the cooperating country. To the extent that any particular subject field or country among those eligible will be given priority, this will be made known in the relevant call for proposals.

Project applications may cover up to three years. All projects must end by 31.12.2014 at latest. Details regarding funding possibilities will be announced in connection with calls for proposals.

6. Financial guidelines

The total project sum applied for should not exceed NOK 4 500 000 over three years for bilateral projects involving two institutions, and NOK 5 500 000 over three years for network projects involving more than one institution in the cooperating countries.

6.1 Student grants

A separate Eurasia Scholarship Scheme has been set up from 2011 to handle student grants and fellowships for PhD candidates. Application deadlines and guidelines are posted at www.siu.no/eurasia. Each Norwegian institution of higher education submits one joint application, the scheme is not open for individual applicants or research groups. The Scholarship Scheme covers both full degree studies and shorter non-degree studies.

Student grants and PhD fellowships may also be applied for as part of a regular project proposal, whether long-term project cooperation, seed money or limited cooperation activities. Such grants must be directly related to the project for which funding is applied for. Grants and fellowships can only be given to students and PhD-candidates from the Eurasia partner countries, to study at a Norwegian institution of higher education. A maximum of two semesters (10 months) per student may be granted.

It is a precondition that the student/candidate is enrolled at a higher education institution in one of the cooperating countries. Scholarships and fellowships are granted on the basis of the regulations and rates of the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund (Statens lånekasse for utdanning). The monthly rate is, as of January 2011, 8900 NOK per month. In addition, each student may be granted a travel allowance of maximum 10 000 NOK. For PhD candidates, the maximum fellowship is 9760 NOK per month.

6.2. Field work

Expenditures for accommodation, field assistance and necessary equipment for doing field work are supported and can be budgeted in accordance with the national regulations or regulations established by the home institution. If the national rates are insufficient to cover the real costs connected to the field work, reimbursement can be arranged based on submitted receipts.

6.3 Development of study programmes/courses

Costs related to the development of new study programmes and courses are supported by the Eurasia Programme. These costs may include expenses related to curriculum development, meetings, exchange visits, and others.

6.4 Training of technical and administrative staff

Expenses related to training of technical and/or administrative staff from the institutions in the cooperating countries are supported by the Eurasia Programme. Training should be related to the implementation of the cooperation project. If training is offered in Norway or third country, the budget should include travel expenses and costs related to daily allowance and accommodation.

6.5 Publication and dissemination

Costs related to publication and dissemination activities that are part of the objective for the cooperation project are also supported by the Eurasia Programme. Publication activities include publications of books, journal articles, etc. Dissemination activities include organisation of and participation in workshops, seminars, conferences etc.

6.6 Infrastructure

Limited funds are also available for scientific equipment, office infrastructure and library equipment. The expenses for these items should only in exceptional cases exceed 5 percent of total budget.

6.7 Travels

Travel costs to and from Norway or third country are estimated according to the cheapest way of international air travel. Travel expenses beyond this limitation will have to be covered by the traveller. Visits to Norway are covered within the standards of Norwegian national regulations. Regulations established at the Norwegian institution concerning Visiting Scholars shall be used. Norwegian travellers' stays abroad are estimated according to the official Norwegian regulations (Statens reiseregulativ). Travel in the cooperating country should be estimated in accordance with the national regulations or regulations established by the home institution, but not exceeding the official Norwegian regulations.

6.8 Project management

A premise for participation in the Eurasia Programme is that basic salary to faculty and staff members, who participate in the cooperation, is not covered by the programme. Faculty and staff members participating in activities financially supported by the Eurasia programme should be employed and paid by their own institution. This applies to participants at institutions in Norway (IiN) as well as at institutions in the cooperating countries (IoN).

6.8.1 Compensation, department at the institution in cooperating countries (IoN)

The IoN department may receive compensation for the academic IoN project coordinator's time spent in management and coordination. Compensation is supposed to cover substitute manpower

at the IoN researcher's institution. An assessment of the number of months of work needed to accomplish these functions should be stated in project applications.

Compensation is allocated according to the relevant rates/regulations at the researcher's home institution. The tentative maximum project management workload for a bilateral and/or network project is estimated to five (5) months per year.

6.8.2 Compensation, department at the institution in Norway (IiN)

The IiN department may also receive compensation for the academic project coordinator's time spent in management and coordination of the cooperation project, for his or her time spent in course and seminar work carried out at the institution in the cooperating country, etc. Compensation may include salary and social costs, but no additional overhead.

The tentative maximum project management workload for a bilateral and/or network project is estimated to five (5) months per year. However, an assessment of the number of months of work needed to accomplish these functions should be stated in project applications.

6.8.3 Project administrative costs

The applicants should seek to limit administrative costs. Projects with general administrative costs of more than 7 percent of the total budget will only in exceptional cases receive support.

The project administrative costs should be distributed between the main IoN and IiN partners and may, based on the workload of each institution, also be distributed to network partners. This could be done on an equal basis, or according to agreement between the partner institutions.

Project administrative costs are intended to contribute to administrative expenses on department, faculty or institutional level associated with the additional time and resources invested in the administration of training activities, accounting and reporting etc., directly resulting from the cooperation project.

6.9 Costs not covered by the Eurasia Programme

Apart from the general administrative costs of 7 percent of the total project budget, no additional overhead can be deducted from the project allocation from the Eurasia Programme. Basic salary to faculty and staff members, who participate in a cooperation project, is not covered by the Eurasia Programme. The same goes for fellowships to Norwegian PhD candidates and scholarships to Norwegian students.

7. Applications and procedures

Interested institutions should prepare and submit joint applications to SIU – signed by the Vice-Chancellor/Rector (at all participating institutions), and based on proposals jointly prepared by the collaborating institutions. All proposals must include objectives, activities, work plan, budget requirements, etc. The application is completed and submitted online. Application form and guidelines will be available at the time of the call for proposals. Deadlines will be announced at the call.

7.1. Application categories

Applications to the Norwegian Cooperation Programme in Higher Education with Eurasia will be organised in four different categories:

1. Project cooperation
 2. Project development funds (seed money)
 3. Limited cooperative activities
 4. Supportive measures for projects
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1. Applications for *project cooperation* may cover a period of up to three years. This refers to cooperation between one (or possibly more) institution(s) in Norway and one (or possibly more) institution(s) in the cooperating countries. Eligible activities must be targeted at the priorities listed in point 4 above.
 2. Norwegian institutions that have established some contact and that would need limited funding for the joint development of a long-term cooperation project, can apply for *project development funds (seed money)*.
 3. Limited cooperative activities: Cooperative activities between the institutions that are more limited in time and scale than project cooperation, and that are not necessarily meant to lead to long term projects cooperation. Examples of activities are seminars, short term visits of institutional staff (technical, administrative or researchers).
 4. Projects that have received funding and that are approaching the end of the project period may apply for supportive measures with the aim of securing the sustainability of project results.

During the programme period 2010-2015 two calls for project cooperation should be expected, the first in 2010 and the second in 2011. Calls for the other application categories can be expected more frequently, but this could depend on the result of the major project calls.

All activities funded by the Eurasia Programme must be finalized by 31.12.2014.

Approximately 75 % of funding will be set aside for project cooperation, including supportive measures, while the interest for programme cooperation and quality of proposals will determine the actual share.

8. Selection procedures

The selection process will be as follows:

- Project proposals for the Cooperation Programme in Higher Education with Eurasia are submitted online.
- Regarding applications for long-term project cooperation external evaluators will assess project quality, feasibility and relevance of applications.
- In case of several applications from one institution, institutions must rank the proposals in order. Each institution must submit a list of priorities.

- Relevant Norwegian embassies are given the possibility to comment on geographically relevant applications
- The Eurasia Programme Board will make the final selection of projects for support.

8.1. External evaluations, institutional assessment, and the Eurasia Programme Board

Together with institutional priorities external evaluations represent an important basis for the board's decisions. In order to provide the institutions with the best possible basis for making priorities, external evaluations should be made available for the relevant institutions.

The evaluator should as much as possible represent a combination of a relevant academic background, knowledge of the relevant geographic regions, and insight in relevant forms of international cooperation. The evaluators will be recruited by SIU.

It is important that the programme makes use of the knowledge of the relevant Norwegian embassies of the national context in the respective countries. The relevant embassies will be given the possibility to comment on project applications.

Every institution – in Norway and in the cooperating countries – from which more than one proposal has been submitted, must undertake an assessment of all proposals submitted by their own institution and give a list of priorities of applications from their institution.

The aspects that should be considered by the institutions are:

- Relevance for institutional strategies and priorities – and expected results
- Project quality and feasibility from the institution's perspective

The Eurasia Programme Board will make the final funding decision on the basis of programme priorities, application quality, the available assessments, comments from embassies, and institutional priorities. In addition, the board will take into consideration the overall composition of the Eurasia Programme project portfolio.

9. Indicators of success

The success of the programme as a whole rests on the success of the individual projects. As the programme is open for a variety of activities and cooperation profiles, specific success criteria must be seen in connection with the project portfolio.

On a general level success criteria will be:

- The existence of relevant sustainable study programmes with sound student recruitment in the cooperating countries
- Continued use of teaching material or methods developed in cooperation
- Increased capacity and competence for participation in international cooperation at the institutions in the cooperation countries
- Increased competence about the Bologna process and its reforms at the institutions in the cooperation countries

- Increased competence for quality assurance measures at institutions in cooperating countries
- Increased long-term cooperation
- Increased interest for cooperation with eligible countries at Norwegian higher education institutions
- Increased level of mobility between Norway and the cooperation countries
- Gender awareness in programme activities

10. Reporting procedures

All institutions taking part in The Eurasia Programme are obliged to submit annual progress reports to SIU using the online reporting facility. SIU is responsible for reporting to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.