Comparative Analysis of Partner Councils

NORFACE
ERA-NET

Comparative Analysis of Partner Councils

Slovenian Research Agency

New Opportunities for Research Funding Co-operation in Europe
– a Strategy for Social Sciences – NORFACE

Comparative Analysis of Partner Councils

Extension of the comparative analysis to the 12 NORFACE partner councils

Deliverable 3.1.1

NORFACE
ERA-NET

'Where there is a will, there is a way!'

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES, FIGURES AND BOXES

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKA	.....	Academy of Finland
CERIF	.....	Common European Research Information Format
CORDIS	.....	Community Research & Development Information Service
DFG	.....	German Research Foundation
DoW	.....	Description of work
DRA	.....	Danish Research Agency
DSSRC	.....	Danish Social Sciences Research Council
EC	.....	European Commission
ECB	.....	European Central Bank
ECPR	.....	European Consortium for Political Research
ECSR	.....	European Consortium for Sociological Research
EN	.....	English language
ERA	.....	European Research Area
ERCH	.....	European Network of Research Councils
ESF	.....	European Science Foundation
ESRC	.....	Economic and Social Research Council
EstSF	.....	Estonian Science Foundation
EU	.....	European Union
EURAB	.....	European Research Advisory Board
EUROHORC	.....	European Union Research Organisations Heads of Research Councils
EUROSTAT	.....	Statistical Office of the European Communities
FCT	.....	Foundation for Science and Technology
FP	.....	EU framework programme
GRICES	.....	Gabinete de Relaciones Internacionales de Ciencia y de Enseñanza Superior
HERA	.....	humanities in the European research area
HSS	.....	humanities and social sciences
IAP	.....	international advisory panel
IRCHSS	.....	Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences
MT	.....	management team
NB	.....	Network board
NORFACE	.....	New Opportunities for Research Funding Co-operation in Europe
NOS-HS	.....	Nordic Research Councils for Humanities and Social Sciences
NWO	.....	Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research
OECD	.....	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONL	.....	official national language
RANNÍS	.....	Icelandic Centre for Research
RC	.....	research community
RCN	.....	Research Council of Norway
SRA	.....	Slovenian Research Agency
SSHERA	.....	Social Sciences and Humanities in the European Research Area
SSHRC	.....	Social Science and Humanities Research Council
TEKES	.....	Finnish funding agency for technology and innovation
UK	.....	United Kingdom
VR	.....	Swedish Research Council

PREFACE

It is a widely accepted axiom that science, by definition, extends beyond national borders. It is therefore no surprise that transnational co-operation between researchers has a long tradition, which nevertheless varies from field to field. More 'universal' research fields (free of national particularities e.g. natural sciences) are where more extensive co-operation has been established. With the aim of fostering the EU's competitiveness, in 2000 the Lisbon Council-created European Research Area (ERA) was launched by the heads of state and governments. The key idea of the ERA is to pool national research resources with the goal of benefiting from the richness of European diversity. One of the main instruments proposed under FP6 for promoting the co-ordination of national and regional research at the programme level is the **ERA-NET scheme**. The scheme's key aim is to establish long-term co-operation between national programmes, ultimately leading to joint transnational programmes with the target of achieving synergetic effects. The NORFACE ERA-net project was approved in the first series of ERA-nets and hence the success of joint activities is an important experiment and test for other projects within the ERA-net scheme. In the NORFACE consortium the twelve partners are research agencies covering the field of the social sciences, which is traditionally even more nationally oriented and therefore the challenge of convergence is even greater than for the natural sciences.

Besides the broad ERA-net objectives, NORFACE also has an explicit aim to build a platform for co-operation which can be extended to other European countries and other scientific fields. At the same time, NORFACE is strategically committed not only to enhancing the development of the social sciences within the ERA but also to underpinning the role and contribution of the social sciences in the sustainable and cohesive evaluation of the knowledge society in Europe.

To achieve the broad objectives of the ERA-net scheme and the specific NORFACE objectives and to establish efficient arrangements for network governance and management-improved understanding, communication and trust are necessary preconditions. As a result, the present comparative study of partner research councils was carried out. Its main purpose is to explore 'the nature of the beast' which is naturally very hard to grasp while institutions are continuing to gradually transform themselves as they respond to exogenous pressures and the needs of national environments.

Since the NORFACE initiative is one of the first ERA-nets, the results and experiences of activities will have an important impact on forthcoming projects. There are very few experiences of the partner institutions with such kinds of cooperation, even though all of them have well-established bi- and multi-lateral connections. NORFACE brings to the agenda many innovative approaches which go beyond existing working principles. It is thus impossible to identify all potential barriers, but nevertheless extensive knowledge about each other and a clear and open definition of the key topics offer tools for overcoming any problems. Given these factors, the operating environment and all parameters are not known in advance and NORFACE is thus frequently called a 'learning by doing' process. We believe that the learning process will have an important influence moving far beyond the NORFACE co-operation. One of the main NORFACE innovations which were hardly applied in international co-operation before is the 'common pot' financial structure. The concept has at least as many opponents as advocates and presupposes caution regarding transparency and legitimacy but, at the same time, it represents important added value and a test for a new type of the joint activities of national systems.

For the above reasons the NORFACE initiative as well as this comparative analysis provide clear European added value, which goes beyond a single-use deliverable and which we believe will be broadly applicable. Organising the 'institutional Babylon' of national designs is too ambitious and in some respects even a dangerous aim, yet we believe that this comparative analysis will contribute to understanding and managing it.

Tomaž Boh
Ljubljana, May 2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NORFACE (New Opportunities for Research Funding Agency Co-operation in Europe – a Strategy for Social Sciences) is a partnership of 12 national funding agencies for the Social Sciences. The NORFACE aims are in line with objectives of the ERA-net scheme, which is to set up the co-ordination and co-operation of research activities carried out at national level.

Therefore the NORFACE strategic objectives are:
- the development of a durable partnership in research funding policy and practice between the partner organisations and thereby creating added value in high quality research activity which crosses national borders;
- increasing co-operation between national programmes and developing transnational research programme between the partner organisations;
- building a platform of co-operation which can be extended to other European countries and other fields of science.

The aim of Task 3.1.1 (Comparative Analysis of Partner Councils) is to provide a reliable source of information about partner institutions, needed for decision-making of NORFACE bodies, preparing forthcoming activities as well as present a source of information for further analysis even beyond the NORFACE project. Special attention in the report is paid to:
- a comparative study of the partner councils;
- an analysis of the conditions required for joint activities; and
- a strategy and recommendations for overcoming challenges to joint activities.

The report consists of two complementary parts. The first part is a comparative analysis of partner institutions, with an emphasis on the aspects which are the most important from the NORFACE perspective. The twelve partners and Canada as associate member have been compared in terms of these parameters, the prime objective being to find the vital few parameters presenting clear barriers or challenges for joint activities. The second part (annex II) contains thirteen country profiles, with detailed information about existing systems. The country profiles are arranged by selected parameters (annex I). Information has been collected via interviews with relevant experts/players, web-sites, annual reports and other partner councils' documents and questionnaires (prepared by Barry Solly).

This comparative analysis is divided in its structure into three broader clusters: a) an introductory part; b) a comparison of the councils' characteristics in national institutional designs; and c) partner councils through the NORFACE perspective. The comparative analysis starts with the general background to the NORFACE initiative and opens the comparison by defining the framework for discussion. The position of the social sciences within the European academic community, the main dilemmas of transnational co-operation and the need to integrate existing research potential are the most significant topics briefly addressed in the introductory chapter. The explanation of the methodological design illuminates the general background to the data-gathering process and methods used for analysis. Addressing research dilemmas and weaknesses is necessary to allow the proper understanding of the report and the maintenance of methodological rigour. The following section is dedicated to a definition of the main elements used in the report. Namely, the different domestic institutional designs involved determine various understandings of the analysed concepts and it is hence crucial to address these differences and offer a common denominator for understanding the key concepts.

The second cluster is dedicated to the competencies and ways of operating of the partner institutions (a comparative analysis of domestic institutional designs). In this part potential barriers and challenges to NORFACE co-operation are analysed in detail. The accountability of councils is strongly connected with their competencies and their operating systems. To whom, how and how often institutions report are the key questions addressed

in this section. The four policies (research, ethics, gender and international collaboration) are compared.

The chief function of all partner institutions is to fund research. But we are witnessing a multitude of funding mechanisms and national practices. As a result, we analyse and present these instruments and the national funding practices.

From the NORFACE point of view the practices and systems of international co-operation are of crucial importance. All partner councils have established bilateral and multilateral co-operation with similar institutions. What are the national practices (organisation, co-ordination…) are the main questions dealt with in this section. The essential reason the councils exist is to support the research community. Consequently, the flow of information from the council to 'end users' is important. We analyse the relationships of the councils with domestic research communities and the channels of informing.

All partner councils deliver available funds on the basis of scientific criteria. A crucial area which is followed in the assessment process is research excellence. Partner councils have different assessment procedures which are presented in the second part of the analysis. The creation of an appropriate assessment system acceptable to all partners is one of the key NORFACE objectives. Extensive knowledge of the national systems is one of the preconditions for this.

The concluding part of the report presents the most important findings of the comparative analysis. It addresses shortages (legal and operational/ structural issues) and strengths of systems and in a separate section it provides recommendations for further co-operation, which can improve and strengthen NORFACE co-operation.

Figure 1: *NORFACE countries*

I. INTRODUCTION

NORFACE (New Opportunities for Research Funding Co-operation in Europe – a Strategy for Social Sciences) is a partnership of 12 national funding agencies for the social sciences. NORFACE's aims are in line with the objectives of the ERA-net scheme,[1] which are *to set up the co-ordination and co-operation of research activities carried out at the national level*. The main instruments for achieving these goals are as follows:

a) the networking of research activities conducted at the national level; and
b) the mutual opening of national and regional research programmes (Commission, 2003: 3).

A comparative analysis of partner public funding institutions is an important first step towards achieving these goals, while extensive knowledge of the participating partners is essential for ever closer co-operation across national borders. With the aim to make the document more easily readable abbreviations are used instead of the full names of institutions. Throughout the text the NORFACE partner institutions are designated by the following acronyms:

Table 1: *NORFACE partner institutions*

	Acronym	Full name of partner institution	Country
1.	AKA	Academy of Finland	Finland
2.	RCN	Research Council of Norway	Norway
3.	VR	Swedish Research Council	Sweden
4.	ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council	United Kingdom
5.	DRA/DSSRC[2]	Danish Research Agency	Denmark
6.	RANNÍS	Icelandic Centre for Research	Iceland
7.	IRCHSS	Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences	Ireland
8.	DFG	German Research Foundation	Germany
9.	EstSF	Estonian Science Foundation	Estonia
10.	FCT	Foundation for Science and Technology	Portugal
11.	NWO	Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research	Netherlands
12.	SRA	Slovenian Research Agency	Slovenia
13.	SSHRC	Social Science and Humanities Research Council	Canada - associate member

1 The background to the European Research Area (ERA-net) instrument is analysed and presented in a key document *Towards a European Research Area* (Commission, 2000). The advantages and challenges of using the ERA-net instrument for the development of the social sciences are presented in a 'Advisory Group Social Sciences and Humanities in the European Research Area Position Paper FP6 and the Strategy to build ERA' (Internet 5). For some critical observations of the same instrument, see SSHERA, 2005.

2 The Danish Research Agency (DRA) is the secretariat of the Danish Research Advisory System, which inter alia means the Danish Social Science Research Council (DSSRC). The Agency is an administrative unit under the auspices of the Danish Ministry for Research, Technology and Innovation. The Council is part of the Danish Research Advisory System and is thus independent of the Ministry and the Agency. As such, there is a clear distinction between administrative (DRA) and scientific competencies (DSSRC). Therefore, the Council's secretariat is employed in and by the Agency. The Council does not have the capacity to employ its own personnel. The only authority the DRA has over the DSSRC is in terms of legal and administrative matters. Regarding the NORFACE, this means that whereas the DRA is the official contractor the DSSRC is responsible for the actual social science work of NORFACE (with the assistance of its secretariat).

The idea of connecting national scientific communities is far from new. Today we can speak about different processes – globalisation, internationalisation or Europeanisation. These processes are not exclusionary; on the contrary, it is possible to understand them as 'concentric circles' where a narrower concept forms part of a broader one. Although the Europeanisation of research systems is not occurring in vacuum and is at least partly determined by globalisation, the present document merely focuses on the EU component of the process.

The phenomenon of the internationalisation/ Europeanisation of the social sciences can be observed from two different angles. First, we can speak about the internationalisation of the social sciences as research activities. Second, a quite different phenomenon is the internationalisation of research funding, with its emphasis on the co-operation of national public research bodies. EU framework programme (FP) instruments are mostly established with the aim of *supporting research collaboration* however; the instrument of ERA-net is designed with the aim of *harmonising national research funding systems*. These two aspects have to be addressed when presenting the background to NORFACE co-operation. It is usually said that science is international by nature. It is also broadly accepted that the best science should be internationally comparable (in terms of the methods used, theoretical grounds). But this is not necessary the case with public research funding. Systems can differ significantly and pursue significantly different ways to achieve the same goal of supporting the best research addressing national developmental needs. Since public research funding involves 'taxpayers' money' which assumes it is spent on achieving national specific goals, the co-operation of funding institutions is not as 'natural' as the co-operation of scientists. The national funding systems are the result of specific needs of societies and the product of historical and cultural contexts. Because of this, co-operation within the ERA-net instrument is significantly different and more difficult than scientific co-operation.

The connections between researchers from the west and north of Europe have traditionally been quite intensive, yet we can also observe extensive levels of co-operation between 'the West' and Central and Eastern Europe involving individual scientists and their academic institutions since 1989 (Klingemann, 2002: 209). The field of the social sciences as well as the humanities are traditionally understood as typically national fields of work.[3] '*The argument went that social, economic and political phenomena have been studied traditionally in the national context, and hence the scale and pace of development of European collaborative research and infrastructure support had continued to lag behind the natural sciences*' (Smith, 2003: 9). The extensive integration of countries with the EU and new technological and especially social innovations call for a repositioning of the 'national' social sciences. Scientific communities have responded by establishing various professional associations (e.g. European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), European Consortium for Sociological Research (ECSR)) and many others. At the same time, researchers have increased their internationalisation and participation in the FP projects[4] with the extensive support of their domestic authorities. But in many respects such co-operation merely looks for the maximisation of national research and maintains the relative autonomy of national research policies, while FP programmes are frequently seen as a supplement to national research funding.

On the other side, for several years efforts have been made to achieve greater co-ordination between national funding agencies in the social sciences with their own resources. Most countries have bi- and multi-lateral connections and co-operation with countries, but the intensity of collaboration and 'target countries' varies among the states as well as among the different scientific fields within a certain country. Besides the European Science Foundation (ESF), there have been significant

3 The position of the social sciences and the humanities in the international context is analysed in many documents, including: Smith, 2003; EURAB, 2004; Langenhove, 2001; ESF, 2005.

4 For an overview of the inclusion of the social sciences in FP programmes, see Internet 3.

European regional initiatives to improve co-ordination between national funding agencies (Smith, 2003: 46).

A notably close co-operation has been established among Nordic states (which later formed the core of the NORFACE founding members). The Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils for Humanities and the Social Sciences (NOS–HS) was formed in 2003, merging the earlier NOS-H (Humanities) and NOS-S (Social Sciences) established in the 1960s.[5] The Committee's[6] aims were to promote strategic co-operation and to exchange information between research councils, to provide funding for Nordic research and to support the issuing of Nordic publications (Internet 1). A further important channel of co-operation was also developed after 1997 through UK-Nordic co-operation between the social sciences research councils of the UK and Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. This collaboration provided the basis for NORFACE, with RANNIS and IRCHSS joining the UK-Nordic partner group in the first stage.

This co-operation has developed as the result of trust built up gradually over several years. It was based on the recognition of the value of diversity as well as similarities in organisational structure and research interests (DoW, 2005: 5). A new phase in the co-operation between research councils came with the accession of five new partner councils in July 2005. The previous Nordic–UK–Ireland co-operation was expanded to 'other' parts of Europe. The inclusion of Estonia, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and Slovenia gave the NORFACE project new impetus for co-operating beyond the existing levels and provided new added value to the already existing channels of co-operation. Formalisation of the co-operation and extension to include partners which do not traditionally have a close connection with the Nordic states offers a new challenge for co-operation. Furthermore, besides the new partner councils from Europe, the NORFACE group was extended by the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), which joined NORFACE as an associate partner.[7] This gave NORFACE an even greater dimension, extending beyond the EU framework.

The NORFACE initiative, which arises from the long-existing semi-formalised co-operation between the Nordic states, goes beyond regional co-operation and, with the inclusion of two partners from Southern and Central Europe (Portugal and Slovenia), it has taken on a pan-European dimension. It provides a significant test of the capacity of national science systems to work together across borders and achieve European synergy and convergence. The NORFACE working principles go beyond the self-interest of each partner council, while the topics of the activities and managerial design have stressed the strong commitment of all partners to transnational activities. The ERA-net instrument of the 6th FP is seen as promoting integration of EU research capacities and systems, thereby contributing to the Lisbon goals and establishing a knowledge-based society.

The NORFACE initiative has some specific features even among the family of ERA-nets. Its *'common pot'*[8] financing is a unique instrument whereby a certain share of national sovereignty in the field of financing research and part of the control over national research budgets is deliberately moved up to the transnational level. The will to do this indicates the strong conviction of all partners to strengthen the integration of knowledge and increase the competitiveness of national funding schemes and consequently improve the quality of national research.

5 The founding countries were Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

6 For more details about the work principles and objectives of the NOS-HS, see: http://www.nos-nop.org/nos_menyer_sidor/nos_english.htm, 18.10.2005.

7 The status of associate partner enables the SSHRC to participate in all NORFACE activities but it does not have decision-making power (it is not a member of the NB), nor does it participate in the 'common pot' funding instruments. Canadian researchers, participating as partners in NORFACE funding instruments (projects or seminars), cannot be financed from NORFACE sources but are funded directly from the SSHRC budget.

8 The 'common pot' is a term designating the system of collecting money in one, central budget. The spending of the money is not limited/linked to the place of its origin.

The field of the social sciences is in some national research communities closely connected with the humanities. Although these fields are overlapping in many segments, the NORFACE project focuses strictly on the social sciences. Humanities are addressed in a separate ERA-net project, HERA.[9] However the new ways and experiences of co-operation seems to have a meaning which goes beyond this project and the field of the social sciences. There is real scope for them to be 'transplanted' to the other scientific fields as a valuable source of experience.

There is no illusion that the experiment will proceed without any problems or obstacles, which is why the whole process is called *'learning-by-doing',* but we believe that open co-operation and constructive exchange of different views leads to transparency and the strong identification of all partners involved in the process. The art of learning from each other and operating on an equal footing is the key to NORFACE's success. Seen from that angle, the diversity of procedures, institutional designs and rules of operating can be seen as a unique opportunity for exchanging experiences and shaping common procedures. Hence it is more appropriate to talk about the challenges instead of any barriers. NORFACE is more than just a project; it is an evolving process which we believe will result in a new form of co-operation in the field of social sciences which is open for a possible extension to other (new) partner countries while it can also be transmitted (after considering field specifics) to other scientific fields.

In line with the abovementioned goals the strategic objectives of the NORFACE project are as follows:

- 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 the partner organisations; and
- building a platform for co-operation which can be extended to other European countries and other fields of science (DoW, 2005: 3).

A *'leitmotiv'* of the NORFACE co-operation, deriving from the *Description of work*, is to '*be different from existing initiatives and FP programmes and to offer new type of co-operation – regarding contents and organisation*'.

This *comparative analysis of member councils* can be an important step in the process of increasing co-operation between the NORFACE partners. The field of social science research and organisation of research funding is a highly dynamic field, to some extent also politically sensitive. All NORFACE partner institutions act independently of national politics despite the fact that their budgets are allocated from ministries and governmental budgets. They act as public agencies (with exception of the FCT which is formally part of a ministry, but in practice it acts independently) and their sensitivity to 'political pressures' depends on their position in their national institutional design. The position of the partner institutions varies from a highly independent institution with its own strategy and priorities as well as independent selection of executive bodies with no obligation to report (e.g. DFG) to those who are more obviously 'agents of the ministry (e.g. SRA), where institutions' independence is limited to executive and assessment procedures, while research priorities are set by the ministry.

The comparative analysis is just 'a snapshot' of one specific moment. We fixed the time scale at the time of finishing the research (end-April 2006), however we will try to keep the data up-to-date. But there is always a chance that institutional changes have moved ahead since the analysis was done. The inclusion of Canadian experiences is useful and interesting, enabling us to test a hypothesis about the existence of a distinctive European model of social sciences research management.

It is important to note that the comparative analysis includes only a part of public funded research activities. The research councils are just one of several sources of research funds and

9 For details about the HERA project (Humanities in the European Research Area), see: http://www.nwo.nl/HERA

their significance varies among different national systems. In addition to research councils' funding, direct financing by various different ministries is a significant source of public research funding. This type of funding is usually more problem-oriented (targeted) and addresses the specific needs of the funding institution. An important share of research money also comes from private sources, but the significance of private sources (foundations) varies a lot across countries. This analysis does not address other financial sources such as research councils and we also do not assess the other financial sources.

The report is not structured as a series of 'national' chapters. Instead, we have employed a more challenging approach, based on comparative national data and characteristics. Our aim is to assess how greater synergy could be achieved between national research systems with the aim of strengthening co-operation and joining national research potential together. Both the barriers and challenges/opportunities will be addressed and how opportunities can be maximised will be recommended. Raw data in this comparative analysis has been reduced to a minimum. More raw data is available in the separate section 'Country profiles', which accompanies the comparative analysis (see Annex 1 and Annex 2). The ambitions of the country profile chapters go beyond a comparative analysis and should provide a reliable source of information about partner institutions that could be useful for further secondary analysis. The present comparative analysis is based on the pre-existing *Analysis of Partner Councils*,[10] which was made for the 7 original partners.

Another aim of this comparative analysis is to establish a platform for the partners to learn about each other and provide a reliable information source for further analysis. It is offered as a useful information base, which can also be used for planning future NORFACE activities.

The fact is that some NORFACE actions have already finished and that in one year and a half some kind of *'common language'* has already been established, and since the first milestone of such co-operation has already been reached (a pilot research programme). We have tried to include these experiences, together with the pilot programme and the findings of other NORFACE tasks in this comparative report.

Box 1: *NORFACE's objectives and objectives of the comparative analysis*

NORFACE's strategic objectives:

- *the development of a durable partnership in research funding policy and practice between the partner organisations and to thereby create added value in high quality research activity which crosses national borders;*
- *increasing co-operation between national programmes and developing transnational research programme between the partner organisations; and*
- *building a platform for co-operation which can be extended to other European countries and other scientific fields.*

Description of work – Task 3.1 (Comparative Analysis of Partner Councils):
The review will consist of comparative case studies of each partner council's legal statutes, mission, organisational characteristics, strategic goals, main funding mechanisms, review systems, ethical and language policies, relations with the public, approaches to public communication and international collaboration. It will also include an analysis of barriers to joint activities which will be defined in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and potential threats.

10 Comparative Analysis of Partner Councils, NORFACE Deliverable 3.1, 31.3.2005.

II. STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This analysis is divided in its structure into three broader clusters: a) an introductory part; b) a comparison of the councils' characteristics in national institutional designs; and c) partner councils through the NORFACE perspective. The comparative analysis starts with the general background to the NORFACE initiative and opens the comparison by defining the framework for discussion. The position of the social sciences within the European academic community, the main dilemmas of transnational co-operation and the need to integrate existing research potential are the most significant topics briefly addressed in the introductory chapter. The explanation of the methodological design illuminates the general background to the data-gathering process and methods used for analysis. Addressing research dilemmas and weaknesses is necessary to allow the proper understanding of the report and the maintenance of methodological rigour. The following section is dedicated to a definition of the main elements used in the report. Namely, the different domestic institutional designs involved determine various understandings of the analysed concepts and it is hence crucial to address these differences and offer a common denominator for understanding the key concepts.

The second cluster is dedicated to the competencies and ways of operating of the partner institutions (a comparative analysis of domestic institutional designs). In this part potential barriers and challenges to NORFACE co-operation are analysed in detail. The accountability of councils is strongly connected with their competencies and their operating systems. To whom, how and how often institutions report are the key questions addressed in this section. The four policies (research, ethics, gender and international collaboration) are compared.

The chief function of all partner institutions is to fund research. But we are witnessing a multitude of funding mechanisms and national practices. As a result, we analyse and present these instruments and the national funding practices.

From the NORFACE point of view the practices and systems of international co-operation are of crucial importance. All partner councils have established bilateral and multilateral co-operation with similar institutions. What are the national practices (organisation, co-ordination…) are the main questions dealt with in this section. The essential reason the councils exist is to support the research community. Consequently, the flow of information from the council to researchers is important. We analyse the relationships of the councils with domestic research communities and the channels of informing.

All partner councils deliver available funds on the basis of scientific criteria. A crucial area which is followed in the assessment process is research excellence. Partner councils have different assessment procedures which are presented in the second part of the analysis. The creation of an appropriate assessment system acceptable to all partners is one of the key NORFACE objectives. Extensive knowledge of the national systems is one of the preconditions for this.

The concluding part of the report presents the most important findings of the comparative analysis. It addresses shortages and strengths of systems and in separate section it provides recommendations for further co-operation.

III. METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

In order to collect data about the partner councils, their specifics and operating procedures and the 'data parameters outline' were presented and discussed at the Management Team meeting (Bonn October 2005) and Network Board meeting (the Hague, November 2005). Immediately after the proposed scheme of parameters for collection was approved we began the process of data collection and selection starting with the new partner councils. For the comparative analysis we predominantly used qualitative research methods in combination with secondary analysis. We reviewed the existing '*country profiles*' from other (ERA-net) projects in which NORFACE partner councils participated (ERCH, HERA, era-Chemistry, Bonus), web pages of associations/initiatives where they take part (ESF, EUROHORC, CORDIS home page) as well as documents of the European Commission prepared by different working groups (SSHERA, EURLAB, EC advisory group for the social sciences and the humanities). After that, a series of visits to the new partner councils was arranged.

The timetable of visits was as follows:
- Estonia/Finland 16 – 20 November 2005
- The Netherlands 27 – 30 November 2005 (combined with the NB meeting)
- Portugal 14 – 18 December 2005
- Germany 11 – 13 January 2006 (combined with the Programme Development and Management Workshop)

During these visits 26 semi-structured interviews were conducted (the parameters used in the interviews are presented in Annex 1) with representatives of research councils and members of expert committees and boards of the partner councils. During the visits we also collected publications and existing analyses of national research funding systems (procedures, practices, particularities). At the same time, documents available online (especially on the partner councils' web pages) were analysed (annual reports, legal and strategic documents). The next stage of work concentrated on the transcription of interviews, an analysis of online documents, classification and analysis of collected hard copy materials and the preparation of country profiles. The draft country profiles for the new partner councils were sent to the MT members for verification.

The next stage of work was dedicated to the first wave of partner councils. The revision of the existing partner council documents and existing comparative analysis was based on the existing data, supplemented by new documents and data from interviews with the partner councils' representatives. The revised country profiles were sent to all partner councils before the end of March.

The comparative tables and topics identified in interviews and during the preparation of country profiles, were sent for verification/clarification to the partner councils by mid-March. The draft comparative analysis (comparative tables) was presented at the MT meeting in Coimbra (April 2006). Their suggestions were included in the second draft of comparative tables which were then sent to them for verification. The final draft of the comparative analysis was sent to Chris Caswill, the special NORFACE policy adviser, who gave some additional comments.

As an important data source, documents from ongoing or finished NORFACE activities were used e.g. the *Report on Best Practice in Evaluation and Peer Review*, *Questionnaire's Results, Report on Programme Development and Management,* (Programme development and management) the *Promotion of Gender Equality in Research*. The data gathered through the questionnaires relative to other tasks were included in the country profiles.

The comparative analysis is accompanied by a set of documents (*country profiles*) where detailed data about each partner organisation is presented. The comparative analysis presents a summary of aspects relevant to the NORFACE co-operation, while the country profiles consist of more detailed

information which may be useful for analysis beyond task 3.1.1 as well as for planning other NORFACE activities.

Despite the fact that the methodological design was prepared very carefully and that methodological rigour was one of our key objectives, we are fully aware of the limitations of this comparative analysis. First, the problem of data comparability is not easy to eliminate, especially with the financial aspects. Even though NORFACE predominantly includes countries of the EU, seven countries out of the twelve are not members of the euro zone. Because of that, national expenditures are converted into euros (using ECB exchange rates) but there still could be some mistakes. The fiscal year differs from country to country (e.g. in some countries it begins on 1 January, in others on 1 April). Hence, it is impossible to compare the same time frame for all countries and so we take the fiscal year (2004/05, or 2004). Another limitation is the fact that sometimes it is impossible to isolate expenditure for the social sciences alone. In some systems there is no strict division between fields of sciences while others have merged the humanities and the social sciences. The definition of the social sciences also differs from system to system, which changes the fields actually covered by the available money. We face a similar problem with the isolation of expenditures for or the coverage of some funding instruments. For example, PhD research is often funded within other funding instruments. The same applies with international co-operation. As a result, it is significant to stress that the funding data are mostly indicative. They show the general figures and trends, the position of the social sciences and the share of the social sciences, yet it is impossible to isolate absolute figures. At the same time, the funding instruments of partner institutions are just part of the funding available for the social sciences. The other sources available for the social sciences differ from country to country and hence it is impossible to assess the position of the social sciences within national contexts.

There are also limitations associated with the validity of data. We made great efforts to eliminate errors, misinterpretations and to present up-to date information about the partner councils. But there are still doubts, for example national systems of public research funding are evolving live systems responding to challenges and needs in the defined research environments. We tried to capture the latest available data but nevertheless there is always a possibility that some changes were made after our final update. We are also fully aware that the classification of institutions into categories is not without its problems. It is sometimes hard to simply classify institutions into distinctive categories, but for analytical reasons the *ideal types* for classification are used. We try to list institutions in the most appropriate category and, where necessary, we explain specifics in footnotes.

On first sight it seemed that the traditions and national systems, which comprise the operating environment of the partner institutions, create an 'organisational Babylon' of procedures, rules and institutional designs. At the same time we have identified enough common characteristics which are a good basis for moving forward the process of co-operation. When comparing the institutions, three elements of convergence and divergence may be defined:

- convergence: the characteristics of how the institutions function are the same;
- positive/neutral divergence & complementarity: differences are evident but are no obstacle to closer co-operation or even present an important source of knowledge and potential for exchanges of good practice; and
- negative divergence: the differences might cause potential conflicts in future co-operation between the NORFACE partners.

IV. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The variety of meanings of the key terms, which is a result of differences in national systems and different science policy traditions, could represent an obstacle to a common understanding of the analysed phenomena and, as such, an obstacle to a comparative analysis of the national systems. With the aim of eliminating misunderstandings stemming from terminological differences we will propose a definition of the key analysed terms. It is not our goal to suggest an exclusive meaning of term "social sciences" but to show different meanings and bring them down to the lowest common denominator necessary for the comparative analysis and for planning further and closer co-operation. However, while terminology needs to be given careful and particular attention in the analysis as well as in future NORFACE activities, the definitions and operational components vary considerably across the NORFACE member states. Therefore we suggest that a common 'NORFACE glossary'[11] is needed for a fuller understanding of the working concepts. We accept definitions of key concepts will differ at least slightly from some national understandings but the clarification of concepts should provide a clear definition acceptable to all and understood by all partners in the same manner.

Social Sciences

The term ***social sciences*** covers a diverse group of disciplines which vary from long-established disciplines with a well-developed methodology and position in research communities such as economics and sociology through to the field of interdisciplinary research where they overlap with other fields of science, the arts and the humanities and where the social sciences are newer (Ince, 2005: 3). The distinction between the social sciences and the humanities is often blurred and there are some overlapping themes, e.g. within psychology, anthropology, media and contemporary history. Although these disciplines can be categorised in both fields, the approach and methods are usually what distinguishes the humanities from the social sciences (ERCH, 2005: 3). Besides the diversity inside the discipline, there are also great diversities between the social sciences as a result of the different national social contexts of which they exist. The NORFACE project is an attempt to merge social sciences efforts from different parts of Europe yet it is far from an attempt to make the social sciences a unique 'block', and also does not propose an 'exclusive' definition of the social sciences. There are at least two broadly accepted international classifications of the fields of sciences which are also applied within NORFACE partner institutions. The first one is the *'Frascati classification'*[12] prepared by the OECD and which is also broadly used for EUROSTAT purposes. The second classification, which slightly differs from the first, is the *CERIF classification*.[13]

Since the NORFACE project is focused on the field of social sciences, a proper definition of the field of operation is crucial for our further work. However it is impossible to make an exclusive definition of the field of the social sciences, which for example often overlaps with the field of the humanities.

We have noted that there are significant differences between national systems regarding the definition of the social sciences as well as purpose of the differentiation. In some systems the classification is mostly used for statistical and administrative reasons. In these cases, calls for research funding applications are not linked to the social sciences only and there is no earmarked budget for the social sciences. For the other group of institutions, the classification is also more important for financial purposes. Institutions in this group have special calls for research funding applications for the social sciences or they have a special ('independent') budget for the social sciences.

11 Based mostly on Smith, 2004; OECD, 1991; OECD, 2002; OECD, 2003.

12 The 'Frascati manual' - Proposed standard practice for surveys on research and experimental development is an OECD document, first published in 1963. The last edition was published in 2002 (OECD, 2002).

13 Prepared at the EU level, published in a 91/337/EEC Commission Recommendation of 6 May 1991 concerning harmonisation within the Community of research and technological development databases.

For some councils this classification is significant for the distribution of funds as they have separate, quite autonomous divisions/departments which allocate their budget within the discipline. Some partner institutions use the classification as part of an assessment process (according to the classification the proposal is sent to a particular evaluation committee). But there are also some other systems where the division between the sciences is not very strict and is used more for administrative purposes and has no influence on the evaluation process. Most partner institutions use classifications which are similar or can be quite easily translated to the OECD (Frascati) classification. All partners use such classifications for statistical reports.

The distribution of partner institutions according to the importance of the classification is very diverse. There is no single pattern but since the NORFACE initiative has to have a robust structure which suits all institutions it is important to take the importance of the classification into consideration.

The classification of areas covered within the field of the social sciences is presented in Table 3. It is important to stress that there are differences between systems about the 'depth' of the classification. Some systems have more detailed classifications and cover sub-areas as a separate unit, while in other systems there is only a very basic classification.

Table 2: *Purpose of the division into scientific fields*

	Mostly statistical and administrative purposes	Important for distribution of funds
AKA	✓	
DFG	✓	
DSSRC*		✓
ESRC*		✓
EstSF		✓
FCT	✓	
IRCHSS	✓	
NWO		✓
RANNIS	✓	
RCN	✓	
SRA	✓	
VR		✓
SSHRC		✓

* Covers the social sciences only

Table 3: *Definition of the social sciences in the national systems of the partner councils*

	CERIF *****	OECD Frascati[14]	AKA	DFG***	DSSRC	ESRC	EstSF	FCT	IRCHSS	NWO	RANNIS	RCN	SRA	VR****	SSHRC
Political Science & Administration	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Media & Information & Communication Sciences & journalism			X	X	X		X+	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Law /Juridical Sciences	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Criminology	X			X							X		X	X	X
Sociology	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Social Work	X		X	X		X					X	X	X	X	X
Economic & Business Stud.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Psychology	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Social Psychology	X		X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X	X	
Education & Didactics	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Sports	X			0									X		
Research Methods for SS	X	X		0		X							X	X	
Cultural Anthropology /Ethnology	X	X		0	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Linguistics	X	X		0		X		X						X	X
(Social) Geography	X	X		X		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
Area Studies				0		X									X
Demography	X	X		X		X	X	X				X		X	
Social History	X			0		X				X			X		X
Environment						X				X					X
Statistics						X								X	
Architecture & Design													X		
History of Science		X		0											
Town and Country Planning	X	X				X				X		X	X	X	X
Transdisciplinary Research		X			X							X		X	X

* Urban studies

** Communication Science

*** The DFG has a joint organisational structure for the humanities and the social sciences. In the table X indicates scientific disciplines related to the social sciences in a narrow sense and 0 scientific fields covered within a humanities and the social sciences division, but not strictly classified as a social science.

**** The VR has, like the DFG, a joint division for the social sciences and the humanities. The disciplines marked are those with a clear relation to the social sciences.

***** Source: 91/337/EEC Commission Recommendation of 6 May 1991 concerning harmonisation within the Community of research and technological development databases, URL:http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31991H0337:EN:HTML

+EstSF – semiotics = communication sciences

14 Source: OECD (2002: 67). X – first level of social science division, x – second level, under the division of 'other social sciences'.

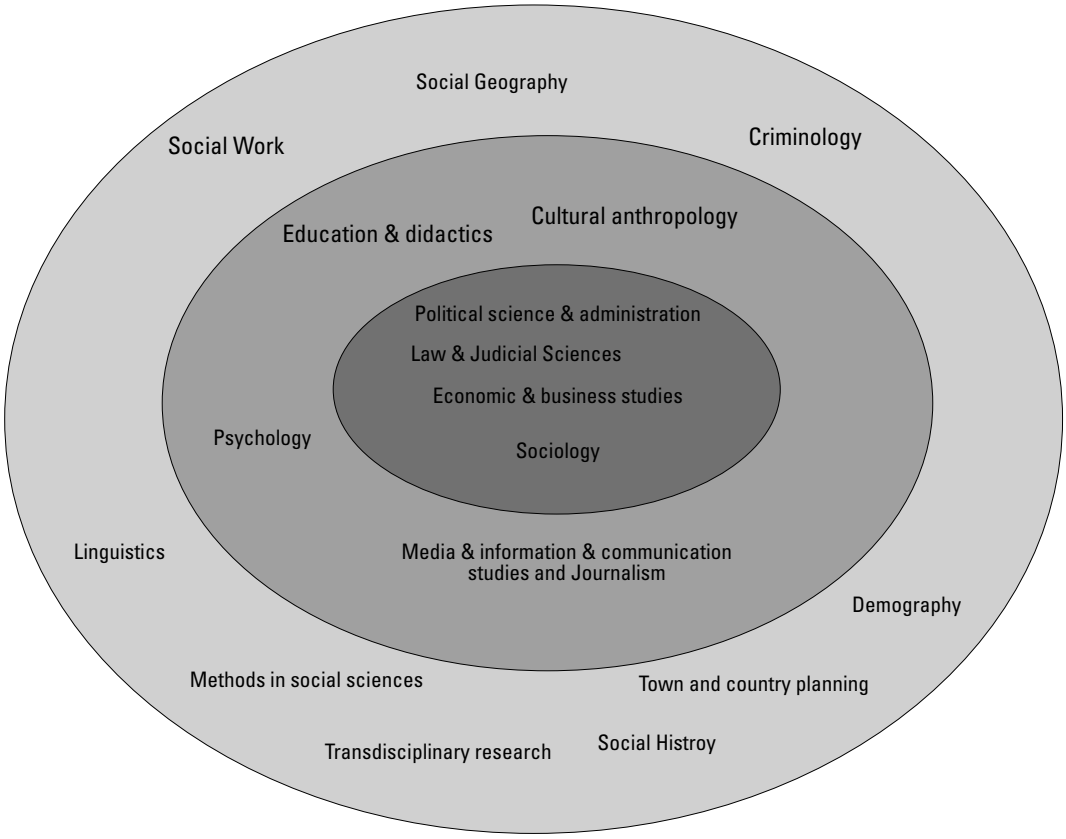
On the basis of Table 3 the social sciences classification with concentric circles is presented whereby the core indicates the fields covered by all partner councils while the outer circles representing the diminishing number of councils define the field as the social sciences. In accordance with this visualisation we can split the field into three sections:

a) The **core** of social sciences, covered by all councils
b) The **'second circle'**, covered by at least 11 councils
c) The **'third circle'** covered by at least 6 councils
d) **Others,** covered by less than 6 councils

that, despite differences in understanding the social sciences, there is a **'core'** of disciplines which is commonly understood as the social sciences. The contents of this category are: *political science & administration*; *law & judicial sciences; economic & business studies* and *sociology*. We can say that this group of fields is clearly differentiated from the humanities and there is no overlapping between the two fields of sciences.

The next ring includes areas which are understood as social sciences in the great majority of councils (at least 11). But in this case there is some overlapping with the field of the humanities. There are two reasons for the different (or multiple) classifications in this group. First, the classification

Figure 2: *'Circles' of the Social Sciences*



NORFACE relevance

Our analysis of the definition of the social sciences in the NORFACE partner institutions suggests

is a legacy of the historically justified development of the discipline in certain countries. Second, the same discipline has both social sciences as well as humanities aspects and it depends on the angle

of research and methodology used as to which category it belongs. All fields from the core and the first circle are also classified as the social sciences in the *'Frascati'* classification, which is used as a standard for statistical reporting in the partner councils. The phenomena of 'double classification' are even more present in the outer ring which includes areas defined as the social sciences in at least 6 partner institutions.

Out of these three clusters some areas are classified as the social sciences in less than 6 partner institutions. Further, these areas are twofold: first, the areas which are included as national specifics into the field of the social sciences and, second, fields which are in most systems included in other social sciences categories but are in some systems classified as a separate category.

In the context of defining the social sciences it is crucial to bear in mind the purpose of a classification in the national systems – for statistical and administrative purposes only or to provide the basis for connecting projects to a distinctive separate body for the social sciences which has authority to allocate funds (decision-making power)? As a result, a common definition of the social sciences has been drawn up according to two parameters:

a) councils where the classification is important for a decision-making process; and
b) councils with the narrowest classification of the social sciences.

The importance of a strict classification varies from one NORFACE activity to another. It is not crucial for activities concerning best practices and the exchange of information and experiences, yet it is vital for defining the topic of **transnational research programme** as well as a **series of thematic seminars**. The definition is even more important if we take into consideration that both instruments are key to the success of the whole NORFACE initiative.

Programmes and projects

Partner councils use different instruments to support their research communities in accordance with their competencies and position in national institutional designs. Two of the most extensively-used instruments are programmes and projects despite that fact the understanding of both instruments can differ slightly in different institutions. When talking about NORFACE activities, both instruments hold central importance and, as a result, it is necessary to define the meaning of both concepts. The concept of programme has been used in some already finished as well as ongoing activities (e.g. *Priority setting and development of new initiatives*, *Programme development and management*, *Best practice in evaluation and peer review*).

Box 2: *Definition of the social sciences*

From the table 2 & 3 we can see that the partner institutions, which limits both criteria is DSSRC. With a purpose of avoiding problems with a definition of social sciences ***we propose to define the social sciences as*** *covering:*

- *political science & administration;*
- *media & information & communication sciences & journalism;*
- *law & juridical sciences;*
- *sociology;*
- *economic & business studies;*

and some aspects (considering social sciences aspects and use of social sciences methodology) of:

- *psychology;*
- *education & didactics;*
- *cultural anthropology;*
- *media & information & communication studies and journalism.*

For a proper understanding of the funding modes of partner councils as well as for preparing forthcoming NORFACE activities, there are benefits to be had from all partners sharing a uniform understanding of central concepts. On the basis of the reference literature and understanding of the partner councils the following classification is proposed:

a) 'bottom-up', curiosity-driven projects – responsive mode;

b) programmes
   a. structural
   b. thematic
      i. targeted programmes
      ii. responsive programmes

The main differences in both instruments derive from the initiation phase of the research activity. Researcher-initiated funding – **a project funding** – is based exclusively on the researchers' ideas (bottom-up). So financing is strictly linked to the research interests of scientists and is not linked to any priorities. The financing is limited to single projects.

The group of **programme instruments**[15] is more diverse. On the first level we can distinguish between Structural and Thematic programmes.

Structural programmes aim to improve the research system, mostly by promoting careers or young researchers (Brüggemann, Thelen, 2006:5). The structure of the research system is also defined as: … *'having regard for instance to the co-ordination of relevant institutions, the size of research teams or the technology potential of the enterprises concerned, co-operation between university and industrial laboratories or indeed the training of large enough number of young scientists of adequate level'* (OECD, 1992 in Kallerud, 2005). The aims of structural programmes are defined by the structural priorities, which generally:

– enhance internationalisation;
– enhance interaction and transfer (researcher/user interaction; market orientation); and
– ensure the availability of adequate research capacity (research education and recruitment) (Kallerud, 2005: 10).

With the OECD definition (OECD, 1991), structural priorities are defined as: … *'the priority given to science and technology at a political level regarding the other economic and social sectors and the priorities given to policy actions beyond the support to a specific field but related with overall system, such as replacement of research personnel, technology development of SMEs…'* (OECD, 1991).[16]

On the other hand, **thematic programmes** can be defined as '*a specific budget allocated for research activities undertaken within a given thematic framework for a limited number of years. Calls for proposals are made and funds subsequently allocated to either a set of free-standing projects or a set of integrated projects under the direction of a programme co-ordinator or director*' (ERCH, 2004: 17).

Thematic research programmes can be initiated either by the research council or by political players such as the minister of research, through an act of parliament etc. This type of initiation is by nature top-down and reflects the research needs of society and is therefore called a **targeted programme**. The second possibility is that research communities propose themes for research programmes to the relevant public office or to the council. In this sense, research programmes might be classified as being funded bottom-up – **responsive programmes** (Smith, 2003: 10).

15 For more details about the different systems of programme development and management, see NORFACE deliverable 3.6 and 3.5 (forthcoming) as well as the country profiles accompanying the comparative analysis.

16 I would like to thank Luisa Henriques for her suggestion of the definition.

RESEARCH COUNCILS IN COMPARISON – THE DOMESTIC PERSPECTIVE

V. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The thirteen NORFACE participants[17] are a diverse group of institutions, but at the same time they share some characteristics which enable co-operation among them and provide a promising starting position for co-operation. All partners (except FCT which is formally part of a ministry) operate as independent public agencies under public or private law. The most typical characteristics shared by all partners include:

- public and non-profit organisations;
- working independently, and report about their work via annual reports;
- they do not have their own research capacities;[18]
- they distribute funding for research granted by national governments;
- the use of the peer review assessment process as a tool for selecting proposals for funding;
- a combination of administrative (employed full-time) and scientific (members of academia) staff;
- the highest priority is the scientific quality of funding proposals; and
- a clear commitment to international co-operation and the exchange of knowledge.

Research councils as a public institution play the role of providing a stable, independent, transparent and scientifically justified institution for funding research activities.

Despite the fact that the NORFACE partner institutions have a similar position in research funding they have different names in their national institutional designs. For the purposes of this comparative analysis the term **research council** is used here for all institutions, albeit other names also exist.

Table 4: *Names of the partner institutions*

Name	Number of institutions
Academy	1
Council	5
Foundation	3
Agency	2
Centre for research	1
Organisation for scientific research	1

The NORFACE partner institutions are not the only source of research money in the partner states. A significant share of money is directly allocated by the different ministries or private sources. In some countries other public agencies/foundations also finance research activities but these funds are not relevant to the social sciences in all cases. Some institutions (e.g. TEKES, Enterprise Estonia) are responsible for funding technical development. However, in most cases there are also some joint functions of different agencies, especially regarding structural issues. Table 5 refers to the existence of other public research funding institutions in the partner countries which are dedicated to the funding research activities and are important for funding the social sciences.[19]

There are a few available classifications of research and it is important to stress that any such classifications are based on ideal types. In reality, a clear-cut classification could be problematic but we think its worthwhile for analytical reasons. The type of research council helps to reveal the

17 For detailed information about the structure of each council, see the country profile documents accompanying the comparative analysis.

18 The exception is the NWO but their research centres are the result of historical development and the influence of the division for the social sciences on the research centre is very limited.

19 Table 5 refers to existence of other public funding agencies (councils) and does not include funding of research activities by different ministries.

Table 5: *Other public research funding institutions*

	Existence of agency	Name of the institution
AKA	NO	
DFG	✓	Max-Planck-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften, Leibniz-Gemeinschaft, Union of the Academies of Research
DSSRC	✓	Danish Council for Strategic Research, Danish Foundation for Basic Research
ESRC	NO	
EstSF	NO	Research Competence Council (under the Ministry of Education and Research) target finances group grants, also in the social sciences
FCT	✓	GRICES
IRCHSS	NO	
NOW	NO	
RANNIS	NO	
RCN	NO	
SRA	NO	
VR	✓	Swedish research council for working life and social sciences
SSHRC	NO	

Table 6: *Historical structural classification of research councils*

	Type of research council[20]	Year of establishment of …			Separate division for the social sciences with its own decision-making power (money allocation)?*
		1st institution covering SS	Inst. with current name	Last major reorganisa-tion	
AKA	Integrated	1970	1970	1995	NO
DFG	integrated	1920	1951	/	NO
DSSRC	Integrated/pure social sciences[21]	1968	2005	2005	YES
ESRC	Pure social sciences	1965	1983	2004	YES
EstSF	Integrated	1990	1990	1998	YES
FCT	Integrated	1929	1997	1997	NO
IRCHSS	Integrated research council	1998	2000	2006	NO
NWO	Integrated	1950	1950	/	YES
RANNIS	Integrated	1957	2003	2003	NO
RCN	Integrated	1949	1993	2003	NO
SRA	Integrated	2004	2004	2004	NO
VR	Integrated	1977	1991	1991	YES
SSHRC	Joint research council	1957	1977	2005	YES

* are funding decisions made by the division (body) specialised for SS or by the body covering all disciplines?

20 The research council classification introduced by the ERCH project (ERCH, 2005) differs between the **pure** humanities councils (social sciences), composed of a number of prominent and well-qualified researchers from various fields within the humanities (social sciences); a **joint council** for the humanities and the social sciences, as the two disciplines are considered related and the model of one central council with representatives from various scientific fields combined with expert groups or committees responsible for peer reviews for each scientific discipline – an **integrated** research council (ERCH, 2005)

21 The Danish counselling system consists of the Danish Research Agency, which is the joint secretariat for various councils – including the DSSRC.

particular coverage of the council. Does it cover the social sciences only, a combination of the social sciences and the humanities or does it cover all fields of sciences? As already mentioned, the historical component is also very important for understanding the current position. In Table 6 we present the year in which first (independent public) research funding institution for the field of the social sciences was established. It is obvious that the research councils are dynamic institutions, answering the challenges of different historical circumstances and because of that they are permanently being reformed and adapted. But these changes are mostly incremental. As a result, the year of the first institution is followed by the year of establishment of the institution with the current name and the year of the last major structural reform.

As we see in Table 6 the great majority of partners is classified as integrated research councils, covering all fields of sciences. A separate council for the social sciences is only established in the UK (the DSSRC is included in the DRA due to its institutional design). Just two member councils – IRCHSS and SSHRC – cover the humanities and the social sciences.

Some institutional history is an important factor for positioning an institution within the national systems, for understanding the identity of the institution and in a sense also for credibility of the institution within domestic research communities. Research systems are 'live organisms' and the structure of the funding organisation has to respond to challenges and new circumstances. The establishment of a public funding institution is always a political decision (made by the ministry responsible for science or by other organs of government and formalised by a legal act) but after that the institutions normally evolve in their own ways. Table 6 shows that the majority of councils (or their precursors) have a long tradition – nine of them were established before 1970. It hence appears that their position in the national institutional design is well established and stable.

The situation in both post-communist countries (Estonia and Slovenia) differs significantly from other partners. The new form of independent, stable and excellence-oriented research funding was only introduced after the collapse of the old regime. So the EstSF was established in 1991 and the SRA in 2004 and both institutions are a significant improvement in terms of domestic research funding design. The only institution from the other countries which was established after 1970 is the IRCHSS.

It is also instructive that the data about the number of staff permanently working within councils (excluding scientific bodies) vary from 700 in the DFG to 3 in the IRCHSS. However it should be noted that in the larger organisations it is impossible to isolate staff working for the social sciences only whereas some departments (especially IT, public relations…) are common for all divisions/departments within the institution. The number of staff slightly oscillates over time but the numbers present an indicative picture about the size of institutions.

V.1 Relations with ministries responsible for science

All institutions are somehow connected with the ministry responsible for science. The relationship mostly occurs through the indirect channels of control, while the FCT is the only partner institution that is formally part of the ministry responsible for science and all major decisions have to be validated by the minister in the final stage. But even in that case the day-to-day work of the FCT is free of political influence and strictly focused on scientific quality.

The budget for the activities of the councils comes in all cases from one or more ministries. In all cases the ministry responsible for science is the biggest budget contributor. It is important to address the influence of the political system on the operations of the councils. Germany as a federal state has a special regulation under which the responsibility for DFG funding is divided between federal and state (*länder*) levels. In the case of the SSHRC the entire funding comes from the Canadian federal level.

Table 7: *Connection of the research councils with the ministries responsible for science*

	Budget appro-priations	Appointment of councils' leaders		Council operates under	Reporting to the ministry / parliament	Direct involvement of ministry representatives in the council bodies?**
		Managerial (director)	scientific			
AKA	✓	✓ (AKA board)	✓ (research council)	Public law	✓	NO
DFG	✓	NO	NO	Private law		✓*
DSSRC	✓	✓		Public law	✓	✓
ESRC	✓	✓ (ESRC council)	NO	Public law	✓	NO
EstSF	✓	NO	✓ (EstSF Council)	Private law	✓	✓
FCT	✓	✓ (president)	NO	Public law	✓	✓
IRCHSS	✓	✓(Council)	✓ (Council)	Public law	✓	NO
NWO	✓	✓ (Governing board)	NO	Public law	✓	NO
RANNIS	✓	✓	✓	Public law	✓	✓***
RCN	✓	✓ (executive board)	✓ (scientific board)	Public law	✓	
SRA	✓	✓ (management board)	✓ (scientific council)	Public law	✓	✓
VR	✓	✓ (VR board)	NO	Public law	✓	✓
SSHRC	✓	✓ (president)	✓ (scientific council)		✓	

* indirect participation of the governmental representatives in the DFG Joint Committee.
** there are members (representing government/ministry) in the highest decision-making body of the council?
*** only at a policy level not at the funding decision level

To present the research councils' connections with politics (government, crown or ministry responsible for science) we used the six parameters presented in Table 7. As mentioned, all councils are financed to a significant extent through state budget appropriations. In the majority of councils the executive (government, ministry and in some cases the crown) has a significant role in the process of selecting the head of the institution. As mentioned, all institutions have administrative/managerial and scientific bodies. As we see in Table 7 the majority of administrative heads (e.g. president) is appointed by political actors. The situation is different in the case of scientific bodies (e.g. scientific council) where the influence of politics is reduced. But it would be wrong to claim that the appointment of leaders is a highly political topic. In the majority of systems the research community also has a significant role in the process (see Table 18) and in many cases the governmental/ministerial appointment is a formality. Current appointees are in all cases members of the academic community (or at least selected after the consultation with research community) who usually move from their positions in research institutions and have a full- or part-time position for the period of a term in office.

The only case where politics has almost no influence on the selection of internal structures is the DFG where members of the Executive Committee (president and vice-presidents) are elected by the DFG General Assembly in which representatives of member institutions (universities) are presented. The second exception is the EstSF where the highest decision-making body (the Council) has representatives from the field of academia and the ministry, but the president is elected from among the Council members. The mentioned partners are also the only ones operating under private law and that is the reason for the weaker involvement of the state.

The second instrument of the direct involvement of the ministry in the councils' work is the inclusion of ministry representatives (not necessarily academics) in the highest decision-making body of the institution. In 7 member councils such representatives are members of decision-making bodies though in other cases they have limited decision-making power. Yet in **none of the partners do the governmental representatives not have a majority** in the highest decision-making body.

NORFACE relevance

Although all partner councils are highly independent institutions promoting scientific excellence and working independently from government and politics it is impossible to claim that they are not at least partly subject to influenced. Since all partners are connected with the ministries responsible for science (budget appropriations, reporting, appointments of officials, members of boards…) it is important that these ministry representatives support NORFACE activities. The question of political accountability (responsibility for taxpayers' money) should not be neglected in the NORFACE context. The topic is especially sensitive in connection with the 'common pot' structure of NORFACE financing. So it is important that activities are presented to representatives of ministries/governments as a good example of transnational co-operation and that the initiative has their support.

V.2 Composition of councils[22]

As mentioned there are great differences between councils according to the number of staff employed. Many employees do both administrative and also expert "scientific" work, which involves managing, organising and co-ordinating. They are recruited in accordance with the varied needs of the council and their contracts are normally not linked to term of office (in a contrast with scientific bodies, which are usually appointed/nominated for a distinctive period).

The permanent administrative staff are complemented in all partner councils by scientific bodies, for the most part made up of eminent social scientists from the partner country. There are different procedures for their selection and they also have various functions, but their general characteristic is that they are responsible for assuring the **scientific excellence** of the activities funded by their institutions. They also present an 'active link' between the funding institutions and research communities. They provide channels to the needs of the research community and at the same time provide accountability of councils to the research community. This linkage is a significant channel of communication of the research councils with research communities. Such a connection enables the effective dissemination of information about activities at an early stage. It also makes the operation of the research councils more transparent and increases the legitimacy of the funding system.

Despite the clear advantages of this inclusion of the research community in the work of the councils, there are a few dangers which are dealt with by the councils in different ways, namely:

- the problem of preferring a certain group of researchers or institutions;
- the problem of covering the field just from one angle and therefore creating preferences and excluding some parts of the community; and
- the inclusion of researchers calls for great caution concerning conflicts of interest.

There are different national approaches to the recruitment of *scientific bodies*. Some are elected by the research community (DFG, VR), but mostly representatives are appointed by the ministry or government. In most cases the appointments are a result of a broad consultation with the research community (in the UK even a national advertisement). The term of office varies from 3 to 5 years. In all cases participation in scientific bodies is an honorary function (usually involving the reimbursement of costs and in some cases *per diem* fee) 'reserved' for eminent academics.

22 For a detailed structure of councils and the role of their integrative parts, see the country profiles accompanying the comparative analysis.

NORFACE relevance

In all NORFACE partner institutions there is a division between the administrative/managerial activities and the scientific/substantial decisions. Because the highest 'priority' of all member councils is *scientific excellence* the legitimate and transparent instrument for achieving this goal is to include respected scientists in the councils' work. Through the bodies presented in Table 8 the inclusion of scientists is formalised and institutionalised. The competencies of these bodies vary between partner councils, but all of them are responsible for the scientific assessment of proposals and in

Table 8: *Governance of the councils – non-administrative part*

	Name of the body	Number of members	Recruitment	Duration of a mandate	Competencies
AKA	AKA board	7	President and members – appointed	3 years	Highest executive organ
	Research council(s)	10+1	Appointed following the consultation with the RC	3 years	Decision-making
DFG	General assembly	95 member institutions	Delegates of member institutions	by function	General decisions
	Senate	39	Elected by the general assembly	3 years	Questions relating science policy
	Executive committee	1+9	Appointed by the general assembly	3 years	Day-to day business
	Joint committee		Representative of state and academia	mix	Funding decision-making
	Review boards	132 (HSS)	Elected by the RC	4 years	Organising peer review
DSSRC	Danish Social Science Research Council	15	Appointed by the ministry, following nomination from scientific communities	4 years + 2 years possible prolongation	Decision-making
ESRC	ESRC council	12+1	Appointed after national advertisement – by the ministry	3 years	Overall policy and strategic decisions
	Scientific boards	4 boards, 10-15 members	Appointed after national advertisement – approved by the council	3 years	Decision-making
EstSF	EstSF council	15	Heads of the expert commissions elected by the research community, other members appointed by different stakeholders. All Council members formally appointed by the Minister.	3 years	Decision-making
	Expert commission - SS	10	Chair elected, then she/he appoints other members	3 years	Ranking proposals
FCT	Board of directors	2+1	Appointed by the minister	3 years	Decision-making
	Advisory scientific councils	10	Appointed by the FCT president		Advisory function
IRCHSS	Research council	12	Appointed by the ministry	4 years	Decision-making
NWO	Governing board	1+3	Appointed by the ministry	5 years	General policy, strategy & allocating money to divisions
	Board of the division	1+8	Appointed by the Governing Board	3 years	Decision-making and development SS strategy

Table 8: *Governance of the councils – non-administrative part*

	Name of the body	Number of members	Recruitment	Duration of a mandate	Competencies
RANNIS[23]	Science and Technology Policy Council	1+17	Four ministers appointed by law, six appointed by various ministers, rest appointed by university and industry sector organisations	3 years	General Science policy
	The Science Board	9		3 years	Working group of the Science and Technology Policy Council
	The Board of the Icelandic Research Fund	5	Appointed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	3 years	Funding decisions
	Expert panel HSS	7	Appointed by the Science Board	2 years	Reviewing and ranking of proposals
RCN	Executive board	8	Appointed by the Crown	4 years	Decision-making
	Scientific board	7	President is appointed by the Executive board	4 years	Advisory function
SRA	Management board	7	Appointed by the government	5 years	Decision-making
	Scientific council	6	Appointed by the ministry	5 years	Advisory function
VR	Scientific council HSS	11	Elected by the research community Appointed by the government	3 years	Assessment/advisory
	Research councils' board	13	Elected by the research community Appointed by the government	3 years	General policy
SSHRC	SSHRC board	22	Appointed by the Governor in council	3 years	General policy
	Selection committees				Decision-making

* RC – research community

some cases also for preparing research themes. The inclusion of researchers in the process of shaping research topics as well as in the assessment process increases the identification of research community with the ongoing initiatives, while in one way or another the broad research community is included in the process of selecting their representatives (election, nomination, consultation…). Through the scientific bodies researchers are included in the work of research councils and comprise a significant element of the process of shaping councils' research agendas. As a result, the support of the partner councils for NORFACE activities also depends on the support of the councils' scientific bodies. It is important to distinguish two segments of NORFACE activities. The first group are activities dedicated to the exchange of good practices and national experiences in organising, managing or administering procedures within national systems. This is especially interesting for the managerial/administrative parts of the partner councils when it tackles their work and they are the main 'users' of the outputs. On the other hand, when talking about substance – activities which concern research communities (pilot or transnational programme, thematic seminar series…) with an aim to provide accurate scientific inputs – the inclusion of experts

23 Rannis is the administrative part of the system. The answers in this table (as in the other tables) reflect the whole system administered by Rannis.

(as representatives of national permanent scientific bodies) would be very useful.

From the NORFACE point of view, it could be very useful to include heads (members) of scientific bodies in activities, especially for:
- providing scientific support and justification of the investment of money in NORFACE activities;
- informing research communities about NORFACE's activities and stimulating them to participate;
- the greater transparency and legitimacy of the NORFACE processes and connection of decision-making process with the research communities is achieved; and
- providing the 'highest level domestic scientific input' in the process of shaping research themes.

Nevertheless, it would be very useful to follow the national pattern of distinguishing between administrative/managerial and scientific bodies. The NB as the highest decision making body has to keep the final decision-making power but there should also be a body of representatives of national scientific bodies that have an influence on 'substantial' matters. The NORFACE International Advisory Panel (IAP) is a significant source of scientific advices, although it would also be useful to include 'institutionalised' scientific representatives of the member institutions.

V.3 Councils' accountability

All partner councils are users of public research money and, as a result, the transparency of their work is linked very much with clear paths of accountability and reporting. There are two types of accountability and control:
a) financial; and
b) scientific/procedural.

The first one is in all cases regulated by national accounting standards and rules and monitored by national financial institutions (auditing authorities). For a substantial part of their work research councils are mainly accountable to the government/ministry responsible for science and also to parliament as a decision-maker adopting national budget but also to the research community as a 'user' of their services and nevertheless to the general public since they are spending taxpayers' money.

The most important formal accountabilities are through:
- annual reporting to the ministry/government;
- annual reporting to the parliament;
- control via the annual allocation of funds; and
- control via representatives of ministries in the decision-making bodies of the council.

The general pattern of reporting is via preparing annual reports about the councils' work which have to be approved by the highest decision-making body of the council and which are usually sent to the ministry responsible for science. There is often no formal feedback from the ministry.

Exceptions from the general pattern are DFG and NWO, which do not have regular annual reporting to the ministry. The DFG as a institution operating under private law has no obligation to report to the ministry. Its annual report has to be adopted by the general assembly at which representatives of the member institutions are presented. It has no obligation to report to the ministry or government. The DFG is also a unique system when seen from the financial angle. It is financed by the federal and state levels, but the DFG budget is practically fixed and there are no annual 'negotiations' over funding. The DFG annual budget is approved by the Joint Committee, where representatives of state and federal authorities as well as research community (members of the DFG senate) make a final decision. The DFG reports about its work in annual reports, which has to be approved by the general assembly in which delegates of the 'member institutions' are participating.

A special case is the NWO in which divisions (the division for social sciences) are largely independent in their work. They are accountable to the general board for the implementation of their activities. The division prepares an annual report about its work. There is also an annual report about the work of the NWO as a whole.

NORFACE relevance

Just as at the national level, the question of the accountability and legitimacy of NORFACE's activities is crucial for the long term success of the initiative. Reporting and accountability about ongoing activities to the European Commission (EC), which finances the ERA-NET project, is of course part of the story. The fulfilment of obligations arising from the contract is checked by the EC. But the establishment of a platform for deeper and extensive co-operation financed by the EC is just one part. As NORFACE is the only ERA-NET project already using a full 'common-pot' system of financing, it will be important to report back on this pathbreaking step to the national level, the political level and research community as well as to general public. One of the main aims of the NORFACE initiative is to open research communities and boost international co-operation. When connected to the 'common pot' financing model there is a distinct possibility of spending national (taxpayers') research money on activities in other countries. By moving the centre of decision-making to the transnational arena we are moving into a new situation of diminished control of national authorities over their funds and the power to monitor and evaluate the impacts of that money. This needs to be borne in mind throughout NORFACE. Such a transaction beyond national borders can easily cause problems if the process and procedures are not very transparent and have strong legitimation within the institution. Because of that, when funding instruments are concerned extensive communication with all bodies within the institution is necessary, while the financial support of the initiatives depends very much on the commitment of the highest decision-making structures to the project. The need for extensive communication is even stronger in systems where NORFACE money comes directly from a national research budget.

To offer national authorities an insight into the NORFACE activities as well as to legitimise and justify expenditures it is important to make the reports about NORFACE's activities available and delivered to the national authorities. On one hand,

Table 9: *Partner councils' policies*

	research	ethics		gender	language	international collaboration
		Research ethics	Conflict of interest			
AKA	✓	✓	✓	✓ (panels) 40/60	ONL/EN	✓
DFG	✓	✓	✓ (code)	✓	ONL/EN	✓ (strategic document)
DSSRC	✓	✓	✓ (code)	✓ (panels equal representation)***	ONL/EN	✓
ESRC	✓	✓	✓	no	ONL=EN	✓
EstSF	✓	✓	✓	no	ONL/EN	
FCT	✓	✓	✓	no	EN	✓
IRCHSS	✓	✓	✓	no	ONL=EN	✓ (strategic document)
NWO	✓	✓	✓ (code)	✓ (panels) 30/70	ONL/EN	✓
RANNIS	✓		✓		ONL / EN	✓
RCN	✓	✓	✓ (code)	✓ (panels) 40/60*	ONL/EN	✓
SRA	✓		✓		ONL/EN	✓
VR	✓	✓	✓ (code)	✓ (panels) 40/60	ONL/EN	✓ (strategic document)
SSHRC	✓	✓	✓		ONL***	✓ (strategic document)

Legend: ONL – official national language/(-s) EN – English language

* rule applies to permanent organs and is only a guideline for all others.

** as a general guideline

*** French and English are official languages in Canada

such reports have to be sent to the highest decision-making bodies within the research councils while, on the other, it would be very useful to send them to the authorities to which the annual reports of the councils are sent.

V.4 Policies

As a contribution to comparison four sets of policies are analysed. We asked the partner councils whether they had a special written or any other policy about the following fields:

- research;
- ethics;
- gender;[24]
- language; and
- international collaboration.

In Table 9 the existence of a particular policy is presented. The single statement common to all partner councils is to support research of the highest quality. This is the guiding principle of all partner councils.

Ethics policy is a very sensitive and significant topic. It can be argued that Europeans share largely the same values and adhere to the same fundamental principles. But they often differ on how to apply the latter in practice. Ethical questions concerning scientific and technological advances are thus approached differently from one country to another (Commission, 2000). It can be divided into the two segments. First, we can talk about research ethics or best research practices. The issue is originally predominantly addressed to research on humans or animals and because of that it is not applied so much to social sciences. But still some systems have clear rules (codes) concerning ethical dilemmas, while others have practices whereby if necessary a certificate about ethical issues can be obtained by a special committee inside the academic institutions. The second part related to ethical questions is the problem of a conflict of interests. The question of impartiality is essential for transparency of the process as well as for the assurance of only financing excellent research. Partner councils have different approaches to eliminating a conflict of interests. All of them have a special form where experts participating in assessment procedure have to declare any potential conflict of interests. There are two main groups of conflict:

- institutional conflicts of interest; and
- personal conflicts of interest.

A conflict may appear in the level of expert bodies within a council or at the level of individual reviewers assessing a proposal. It is important to note that these two segments usually refer to two different stages of assessment. There are different approaches to resolving conflicts. Individual peers assess proposals while expert bodies within the institutions rank proposals on the basis of these individual reviews. The general pattern is that the individual reviewer who identifies a conflict of interest is replaced by another reviewer. A conflict of interest within the expert bodies is resolved so that the person who identifies a conflict is not present in debate and decisions about a critical proposal.[25]

The issue of gender equality is treated very differently in the NORFACE countries. There are also some variations among the partners on gender policy and practice. All partners declare that the equality of opportunities is a significant element. But just six partners have an explicit written policy about gender equality. Five partner councils have a rule under which the composition of all expert bodies of the council (panels, committees…) must have a distinct proportion of each gender. But it is important to stress that there is a big gap between the normative provisions and actual practice. Women are in fact underrepresented in all systems despite efforts to create a balance. In some systems there are certain instruments to help women researchers who are on maternity leave (DFG) but this is a supplementary instrument. When weighing up research excellence and the gender balance, the first always prevails. The gender of an applicant is not a criterion in the selection of projects or expert bodies members, instead quality

24 See the NORFACE report on task 3.2.2 Promotion of gender equality in research.

25 For more details about conflicts of interest, see Section VIII.2.

is the only criteria, but great efforts are being made to attract high quality women researchers.

An international co-operation policy is present in the majority of partners (the only exception is the EstSF which does not have an explicit international policy). Bilateral and multilateral co-operation are very high on the councils' agendas. Basically, all councils accept the trend towards greater internationalisation and therefore have official codified policies supporting international collaboration. International co-operation policy is included in the basic strategic documents of the councils but four partner councils have special, very detailed documents covering international co-operation. Evidence of the high priority of international co-operation is seen in the use of English as a language of application. Due to the increasing importance of international peer review, applications to all partner councils can now be made in English. In some cases the application can also be sent in the national language but in most systems the English language is broadly used. In EstSF, FCT and NWO (from non-English-speaking partners) applications are submitted exclusively in English.

NORFACE relevance

The policies analysed above have different implications and relevance for NORFACE co-operation. The explicit policy in favour of international co-operation is a crucial but not sufficient element for co-operation. The need for internationalisation and the very clear policy of all partner councils to support excellent and high quality research makes the platform for co-operation. The question of research ethics is significant but since NORFACE's research initiatives are not very involved in 'sensitive' research into humans or animals this should not be problematic.

There are many studies about language barriers which hinder international co-operation (e.g. SSHERA, 2005: 5). The main argument stresses that much of the relevant social sciences research (especially when it addresses national policy-makers) is carried out in national languages. There is a problem of how to evaluate research results which are not published in English. But the counter-argument (referring to ERA-net as an instrument) is that the fundamental purpose of the NORFACE initiative is to form a common European research area where research topics extend beyond the national perspective. Applicants must have an international network and, as a result, the use of English should not be a real problem. At the same time, as shown in Table 9 applications in English are required in all councils. The use of English as the *lingua franca* of international co-operation requires the careful definition of key concepts while some misunderstandings arising because of different meanings/translations could appear. As a result, it is important to elaborate a detailed *Memorandum of Understanding*, especially for all activities with financial implications. On the other hand, it is necessary to continue with 'best practice' activities where different approaches are discussed. But nevertheless we believe that the English language should not be seen as a barrier to co-operation.

Last but not least is the question of a conflict of interests. This question is one of the most significant and crucial for the success of NORFACE. It addresses activities connected with NORFACE's funding instruments. The allocation of national research funds abroad makes this topic even more sensitive than at the national level. Transparency has to be the highest premise of all funding activities and, as a result, a clear definition of a conflict of interests as well as procedures for its elimination are crucial. It would be very useful to prepare a document about potential conflicts of interest which would reflect the national practices of all partner councils. The document could develop a code to cover both institutional and individual elements of a conflict of interest and the different characteristics reflecting national particularities. Such a document should be adopted by the NB but also approved by national decision-making bodies since the agreement and recognised transparency by the highest councils' decision-making bodies is significant for NORFACE's success.

VI. NATIONAL RESEARCH FUNDING – INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURES

VI.1 Funding instruments of councils

According to their position in national research designs, councils differ according to the funding instruments they cover. They also differ according to the funding of public or private research institutions. Despite dilemmas of funding clear-cut distinctions between separate instruments (for example elements of some of them can be presented in one grant) we have achieved a classification of funding instruments. The instruments of funding can broadly be classified as:

a) financing of research activities;
b) financing of human resources development; and
c) financing of infrastructure.

Table 10: *Partner councils' funding instruments*

	AKA	DFG	DSSRC	ESRC	EstSF	FCT	IRCHSS	NWO	RANNIS	RCN	SRA	VR	SSHRC
Projects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Programmes	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Fellowships	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Centres of Excellence	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
PhD research/students	✓*	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Seminars/congresses	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Travel/accommodation		✓	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Infrastructure investments		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Eligibility – public	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eligibility – private			✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓

* Funded by other funding instruments

We can see that the only instruments applied in all partner councils are research projects and fellowships. Thematic programmes are an important instrument which directs research into fields relevant to national development. From the table we can also see that all partners finance public research institutions, while private institutions are eligible for funding in just 7 of the partner councils.

An important indicator which shows the role of research councils is their budget. Due to the fact that different institutions finance different activities, which are not necessarily directly connected with research such as core (block) funding of research centres and institutions, travel reimbursement and research infrastructure it is impossible to make a clear-cut separation of the shares for each instrument. As mentioned at the beginning there are some problems with comparability for fiscal years are not the same in all partner states. The second problem is that, in some cases, it is impossible to draw a clear-cut distinction of the social sciences and the humanities (due to the joint budget and/or different delineation of the fields). But nevertheless we believe that the presented figures are accurate enough for a picture to begin to emerge.

Given that of all NORFACE activities programme funding is crucial, the use of this instrument in

the partner councils is presented in more detail in Table 11. As stressed at the beginning the concept of the programme is very broad (it covers many aspects) and as a result the category has been split into sub-categories.

There are large differences between research councils relating to the financing of programmes. All of them fund structural programmes (especially to support young researchers), but there are big differences with respect to thematic programmes. Three partner councils (EstSF, RANNIS, VR) do not fund thematic programmes at all or they finance them to a very limited extent. The AKA, DFG and DDSRC run responsive programmes only. In these systems the bottom-up initiatives/proposals of researchers are the basis for establishing a new research programme. On the other hand, the FCT,

Table 11: *Funding of different programmatic instruments*

	AKA	DFG	DSSRC	ESRC	EstSF	FCT	IRCHSS	NWO	RANNIS	RCN	SRA	VR	SSHRC
Structural programmes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Thematic programmes	✓	✓	✓	✓	No	✓	✓	✓	No*	✓	✓	No*	✓
targeted	no	no	✓**	✓	No	✓	✓	✓	No	✓	✓	No	✓
responsive	✓	✓	✓	✓	no	no	no	✓	No	no	no	No	no

Source: data adopted from Brüggemann, Thelen, 2006: 5.

* the council does not run thematic programmes (with rare exceptions)

** the council only rarely runs targeted thematic programmes

Table 12: *Budget for funding research in the social sciences in 2004 (in €)*

	Total budget of SS in € million	Share of council according to total NORFACE partners spending in SS	% of funding in SS for programmes**
AKA	29,1	7,6 / 5,0[27]	~21
DFG	78,9***	19,3 / 13,7	~16
DSSRC/ DRC	13,8	3,4 / 2,4	~20
ESRC	110,3	26,9 / 19,1	~23
EstSF	0,53	0,1 / 0,009	/
FCT	47,4	11,6 / 8,2	~5
IRCHSS	3.2	0,8 / 0,6	~39
NWO	42	10,3 / 7,3	~33
RANNIS[27]	0,32	0,008 / 0,006	/
RCN	56	13,7 / 9,7	~36
SRA	13,1	3,2 / 2,3	~12
VR	14,8	3,6 / 2,6	/
SSHRC	167,9	0 / 29	

* these figures include both the social sciences and the humanities.

** refers to the funding of partner councils, including all three types of programmes source: Brüggemann, Thelen, 2006.

*** refers only to general research support. Not included is all social science funding for example through Collaborative Research Centres, Priority Programmes, Research Training Groups, Research Units, the Emmy Noether Programme, the Excellence Initiative and awards.

26 Without Canada / including Canada.

27 RANNIS as a secretariat has a budget of about € 1.5 million, but together with the funds the budget is € 14.5 million.

IRCHSS, RCN, SRA and SSHRC are financing targeted research programmes only. This means that the national research needs (priorities) are a key element of establishing a new project and that the research in these cases is much more linked to the governmental strategic framework than in states where targeted research is not supported. There are also two systems (ESRC and NWO) where all types of research programmes are supported.

In Table 12 the financing situation of the research councils is presented. This is instructive as we can see that the research councils vary a lot according to their overall budgets (~ 1: 170).[28] The biggest institutional budget is held by the DFG, followed by the NWO, RCN and DSSRC. The picture changes somewhat when the social sciences are isolated. Since the ESRC covers the social sciences only, its budget is the biggest, followed by that of the DFG, FCT and NWO. Research councils differ a lot according to the funding instruments they cover. Because for our purposes the segment of direct research funding is the most significant, we separated the parts related to project and programme funding. This operation was necessary since councils have different competencies in the national systems (e.g. financing research infrastructure, development of cadre …). But our purpose is to compare partner councils through the elements covered by all partners and relevant for NORFACE and this clearly encompasses the financing of research programmes and projects.

NORFACE relevance

The financial situation presented above shows the situation of the social sciences in domestic research environments. The big differences seen in the councils' budgets results from:

a) size of the population & consequently the research community;
b) position of the institution within the national institutional design; and
c) the instruments (competencies) used by the institutions.

We should note that in all integrated research councils it has not been possible for us to isolate the proportion of the institutional budget for social sciences. This is especially the case where budgets for different fields of sciences are not strictly separated. Research activities can also be funded from sources not directly linked to the social sciences budget. As a result, the figures presented here are merely indicative. From the NORFACE point of view, absolute numbers are of secondary importance. In the first place there is the question of the instruments used.

The biggest budget for the social sciences is held by the ESRC, which also has the second biggest population. They financed all the instruments (except travel/accommodation) listed in Table 10, as well as all types of programmes (Table 11). The second biggest budget for the social sciences is held by the DFG, which covers all funding instruments but does not cover targeted programmes. The smallest budgets for the social sciences is held by the EstSF and RANNIS, but at the same time they are the countries with the smallest populations as well as institutions covering the least funding instruments. Neither the EstSF nor the RANNIS finance targeted programmes.

An important parameter showing the openness of national research systems to internationalisation is the question of the openness of national research schemes to foreign researchers (see Table 13). When talking about foreign applicants/non-residents it is important to distinguish between three aspects:

a) foreign researchers working within a partner state research system (research institution);
b) foreign researchers applying for funds as co-ordinators/leaders; and
c) foreign researchers applying as co-applicants (partners) within the research consortium led by a 'domestic researcher.'

a) In all partner states there is no problem with applications of foreign researchers working in

28 Absolute numbers do not give us the whole picture about the financing of the social sciences. The position of financing the social sciences through the research councils' funding depends very much on the
1. size of the research community (also the number of inhabitants);
2. the cost of research (financial situation in a particular country – € 1 has a different relative value in different national environments).

If we keep in mind both parameters the differences between states are much smaller.

'domestic' research institutions. There are no restrictions according to the duration of their residence in the state. They can apply as principle investigators.

b) In Finland, Denmark, Ireland and Iceland it is possible for non-residents to apply for funding as leaders. But it is important to stress that a significant criterion of selection is the 'national importance' of a project. So it has to be extremely important for the country and hence this possibility is quite limited in most cases.

c) In Norway and Estonia they can participate as co-applicants. It is also important to mention the DFG at which the exceptional funding of researchers from abroad is possible. It is so in cases where the majority of projects within a distinctive programme are located in Germany but very few of them (which are crucial to the whole programme) are located abroad.

VII. INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATION AND INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN OF COUNCILS FOR INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

The question and organisation of the international co-operation of councils is one of the most important segments for the analysis. On the policy level international co-operation is one of the most significant topics for all partners. Some of them have special strategic documents covering the field of international co-operation, while others refer to the field in their mission documents or statutes.

When talking about international co-operation it is important to address two things:

a) do councils have a special/separate budget for international activities or do they contribute their national research money?; and
b) do councils have a special division for international co-operation?

When addressing the financing of international co-operation of researchers most partners have difficulties clearly defining the total sums spent on international activities since these funds are often imbedded in the project grants and cannot be isolated. The spending on the international co-operation of researchers is so tightly connected with the research activities that it is not sensible to try and separate it from overall research funding. But nevertheless some partners have a special budget for international co-operation (participating in international initiatives like ESF, NORFACE), while others directly spend national research money. Differences between national research money and money for international co-operation as we have defined it refer to the 'influence' of funding international activities. Is there a zero-sum-game where participation in international activities causes a reduction of money for national calls, or is there a special budget for such activities?

The second component is the existence of a special international co-operation division (department) within the council. In the larger organisations where an international division or equivalent exists, co-ordination is normally carried out by that department. But the department (where it exists) is always a central body, serving international co-operation affairs in general, covering all fields of the councils' competencies. As a result, they mostly address general affairs only, while more detailed initiatives and more specialised co-operation (in the field of social sciences) is the responsibility of the units responsible for the social sciences.

At all councils, decisions on international engagement which include legal responsibilities or funding from the organisation's central budget are taken at the executive level and generally based on recommendations from the research councils. In bigger organisations there is a special department or division for international co-operation which is usually responsible for general international policy strategies. More operational co-operation, which goes beyond general strategies, is ensured by departments responsible for the social sciences alone (e.g. DFG, NWO). In smaller councils the situation is quite different because of the lack of personnel and international co-operation is usually co-ordinated by the executive director or a member of staff.

A significant parameter here is the location of the money intended for international co-operation. We analysed the source of NORFACE money. There are two different principles. One is that the NORFACE contribution comes from part of the institutions' budget reserved for international co-operation. This means that the budget is separated from the national research money and thus there is no *zero-sum-game* situation where the increasing of international co-operation inevitably leads to the reduction of national research funds. The other possibility is that the funding of international co-operation is directly linked to national research money. In that case the national funds are reduced by the sum used for international co-operation. Six

Table 13: *International co-operation of partner councils*

	Office for international co-operation	Co-ordination of international co-operation	Special budget for international co-operation	Funding foreign researchers/non residents?*
AKA	✓	Office for international co-operation	International co-operation	YES/YES
DFG	✓	Office for international co-operation	National research money	YES/NO****
DSSRC/DRC	/	DSSRC itself/chairs of research councils	National research money	YES/YES
ESRC	✓	International team	International co-operation	YES/NO
EstSF	/	Board & administrative staff	International co-operation	YES/YES**
FCT	/	Foundation Board	National research money	YES/NO
IRCHSS	/	Director	International co-operation	YES/YES
NWO	✓	Office for international co-operation	International co-operation	YES/NO
RANNIS	/	Director on the recommendation of staff	National research money	YES/YES
RCN	✓	Office for international co-operation	National research money	YES/YES**
SRA	✓	Office for international co-operation	International co-operation	YES/NO
VR	✓	Office for international co-operation	National research money	YES/NO***
SSHRC				YES/NO

* refers to the funding of non-residents when they are co-ordinators/leaders of the programme
** possible funding as co-applicant
*** There are some exceptions. For instance, an agreement with the ESRC makes it possible for VR to fund researchers from the UK up to 30%.
**** Some exceptions are defined in corresponding agreements between the DFG and partner councils in other countries.

of the NORFACE partners are using the second model, while all the others are using a special international co-operation budget for NORFACE participation.

NORFACE relevance

The question of international co-operation is extremely relevant to the NORFACE initiative. We can assume that the initial will to participate is presented while the fact that the partner councils have decided to establish and join the NORFACE initiative shows their strong commitment to a new type of international co-operation. Decisions to join the initiative were discussed in detail in the departments responsible for social sciences. Despite the fact that in most cases the final formal decision was made by the highest decision-making bodies, the role of departments remains crucial while the final decision of the highest decision-making body is based on a recommendation of a more specialised sub-division (or individual). When talking about the implications of the NORFACE activities on the national structures it is worth stressing two segments:

a) the exchange of experiences and good practices; and
b) establishing funding mechanisms that have financial implications.

In both cases the strong commitment of the section responsible for the social sciences is inevitable. An exchange of experiences and identification of best practices is important for their further international co-operation and can also offer useful examples for improving the national systems. The main benefit from of this co-operation is enhanced knowledge and networking without big costs and the risk of losing control over national research funding money. Such activities are very significant and can be implemented without broad institutional support. The case is a little different when we are addressing the establishment of joint funding instruments, like the *International pilot programme* or *Series of thematic seminars* or *Transnational programme*. Such activities have financial

implications and especially in the NORFACE case, where the 'common pot' funding mechanism was chosen, co-operation demands more caution (see also page 23 above).

Box 3: *International co-operation of the partner councils*

In a section above financial instruments of the partner councils are presented. Partner councils vary significantly regarding the funding instruments they cover. The pleiad of instruments is strongly connected with the position of the council within the national system. The only instrument covered by all partner councils are research projects and fellowships. In line with NORFACE purposes the projects as well as programmes were analysed. As it was stressed in previous sections differences between partner councils are extremely big. From financial angle there are enormous differences which are caused by three parameters. The practices of funding international cooperation vary from case to case and the proportion of these with separate budget for international cooperation as well of those which spend direct national research money is equal. The research funding in research councils is not linked to the citizenship of applicants but on the place of residence. In some cases is even possible to finance foreign researchers working abroad, but there is important clause of conducting "national important research". But nevertheless, some councils already have some limited experiences with common pot financing (EURYI scheme, Finnish-Swedish cooperation, NOS-HS). The key elements (preconditions) for success of such funding instrument are:

- *Transparent and ex ante defined procedures;*
- *Clear supremacy of research quality – evaluated through the peer review;*
- *Clear procedures for elimination of conflict of interests;*
- *Partner approach of with participating councils.*

VIII. ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES[29]

Among a series of activities for examining best practices the workshop on *Best practices in evaluation and peer review* was organised. For the purposes of the workshop peer review was defined as… *'the system whereby research or research proposals are evaluated by independent experts or peers'* (NORFACE, 2005: 2). In more extensive OECD definition the peer review is defined as:

"… the name given to judgements of scientific merit by other scientists working in, or close to the field in question. Peer review is premised upon the assumption that a judgement about certain aspects of science, for example its quality, is an expert decision capable of being made only by those who are sufficiently knowledgeable about the cognitive development of the field, its research agendas and the practitioners within it". (OECD, 1987: 28)

The process of the selection and assessment of funding proposals is a critical phase in the research funding process. The legitimacy of the whole research funding process is largely based on a transparent and scientifically justified process of selection. The procedures can be roughly divided into two models. In the **first model**, reviews are made by independent experts (external reviewers) while the council acts as the decision-making body selecting projects to be funded on the basis of expert assessments. In the **second model**, council members evaluate applications (internal evaluation). External experts are merely called upon for large-scale projects when there is a conflict of interest with council members or when no council member has expertise for a specific topic (ERCH, 2004b: 9). The second model is used by the DSSRC in cases where the grant does not exceed € 670,000.

The measurement of excellence[30] in the social sciences has in recent decades been based on the concept of peer review (NORFACE, 2005: 2). The process from the submission till the end of the assessment procedure is divided into two stages, namely: a) the pre decision-making stage; and b) the decision-making stage. From the point of view of transparency and legitimacy it is important that both elements are separate and not executed by the same body.

All NORFACE partners have separate assessment and decision-making stages. The instrument of peer review is used for assessing all proposals for funding. The principle of the peer review procedure can be implemented through the assessments of individual referees of on the other side through panels of experts. The mode of assessment depends on a variety of factors of which, according to the SSHERA (2005b) report, the most important are:

a) the structure of research – taking place at research centres connected to universities or outside universities;
b) researchers' status – stable or linked to contracts;
c) prevailing modes of financing – private or state sources;
d) the importance attributed to factors such as mobility teams' work and international co-operation; and
e) the size of the scientific community (SSHERA, 2005b).

In the table below we can see that use of the peer review instrument depends on the instrument assessed. The use of panels in most cases depends on the amount of money allocated. The third assessment possibility is visiting sites, but this instrument is used very rarely. It is used only for the assessment of centres of excellence in Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK. Panels in different formats seem to constitute the most widely-represented deployment of peer review. Some panels also use external individual expert reviews to inform or supplement their own expertise and discussion of proposals (NORFACE, 2005: 3). The systems using panels as an exclusive assessment tool for all funding instruments are

29 For more details about the assessment and peer review procedures, see NORFACE deliverable 3.2.

30 For extensive analysis of Constraints, processes and bias of expert panels evaluation see Langfeldt, 2002: 70-92).

Table 14: *The 3-stage decision-making process*

	Pre-decision-making stage		Final decision
	Assessment /evaluation of proposals	**Ranking of assessed proposals**	
AKA* first stage	(inter)national peer review	Programme committee*	Programme committee
second stage	(inter)national peer review	Board of the AKA/subcommittee	Board of the AKA/subcommittee
DFG	(inter)national peer review	Review board	Senate & Joint Committee
DSSRC	Council (subsections)**	Council	Council
ESRC	(inter)national peer review	Panel & expert commissioning panel	Board for SS or Commissioning panel
EstSF	(inter)national peer review	Panel & expert commission	Council of the EstSF
FCT	International panel of experts	International panel of experts	President of FCT/validation by the minister
IRCHSS	Peer review assessment panel/ external reviewers	Peer review assessment panel	IRCHSS board
NWO	National and international peer review and college of reviewers	Programme Committee or Board of Social Sciences	Steering Committee or Board of Social Sciences
RANNIS	Domestic and foreign peer reviewers	Domestic panel	Board of the fund
RCN	Peer review assessment (sometimes panel)	Peer review assessment panel	Evaluation committee/funding board
SRA	Peer review assessment	Assessment panel	SRA council
VR	Peer review assessment panel	Peer review assessment panel	board
SSHRC	Peer review	Adjudication committee	SSHRC Board

* The AKA distinguishes between the rating and ranking stages. The rating of proposals is done by an international peer review or review panel, while the ranking is made by the same body as the final decision. For all responsive mode type projects one-stage calls and evaluations are used and there the decisions are made by the Research Council.

** The DSSRC uses international individual reviewers in some special instances.

the FCT, DSSRC and VR. On the other side, there is no council using just individual referees for the assessment of proposals. Most systems are combining both individual peer reviews and panels of experts for the evaluation of research proposals. There is no unique model of peer reviewing for all funding instruments. The selection usually depends on: a) the funding instrument; b) the amount of money allocated; and c) the expected number of applications.

In addition some other national characteristics are interesting and are presented in Table 16. A significant instrument enabling applicants to influence the peer review process is the possibility to appeal. Regarding the possibility to appeal the partner councils vary a lot. Six of them do not have the possibility to appeal; while in 7 of them applications have a legal right to appeal against decisions. But even where an appeal is possible the right is in most cases limited to procedural matters only. Only in the FCT and partly the ESRC is there also a possibility to appeal on matters of substance (reviews). In all cases applicants have a right to receive assessments on request, while the only system where the opinion of the applicant is obligatory is the NWO system.

The use of a one/two-stage peer review procedure depends on the instrument and number of applications expected. A two-phase assessment process is used for applications for programmes at the AKA, DFG, NOW and RCN. The only research council to use a two-phase procedure for project applications is the VR. It should be noted, however, that applicants only submit one complete application.

Table 15: *An overview of the peer review modes used*

	Panels				Individual referees				Site visits			
	proj.	prog.	fell.	cent.	proj.	prog.	fell.	cent.	proj.	prog.	fell.	cent.
AKA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	——	✓	✓	——	——	——	✓
DFG	——	✓	——	✓	✓	✓	✓	——	——	——	——	✓
DSSRC	✓	✓	✓		——	——	——	——	——	——	——	——
ESRC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	——	✓	——	✓
EstSF	✓*		✓*		✓		✓		——		——	
FCT	✓	✓	✓	✓	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	——
IRCHSS	✓	✓	✓		——	——	✓		——	——	——	
NWO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	——	✓	——	✓
RANNIS	✓		✓		✓		✓		——		——	
RCN	——	✓**	——	——	✓	✓	✓	✓	——	——	——	——
SRA	✓	✓	——		✓	——	✓		——	——	——	
VR	✓	✓	✓	✓	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	——
SSHRC	✓	✓	✓		——	——	——		——	——	——	

* only 'problematic' cases or cases where a conflict of interest appears
** some programmes

An important component of the peer review systems and a significant point of differentiation is the anonymity of reviewers. Four partners do not have a practice of protecting reviewers' anonymity (AKA, DSSRC, RANNIS, VR). In these systems researchers have the right to be provided with the names of the reviewers. Regarding other partners, there is a practice to ensure the anonymity of reviewers with the aim to avoid potential pressure and a conflict of interest.

Minimum numbers of reviewers are presented in Table 16. Where the services of individual reviewers are required a majority of research councils commission 2-3 reviews per single application. There are some exceptions; the ESRC for instance seeks on average 5 reviewers for applicants seeking large grants. Peers are mainly a combination of national and international experts from the field. The only council seeking reviewers exclusively from academics located outside the country is the IRCHSS. In all other countries there is a trend to use international reviewers more and more but the proportion of national and international reviewers strongly depends on the funding instrument, the amount of the grant and the availability of suitable domestic experts in the field.

VIII.1 Selection of peers

The selection of peers is a critical element of the peer review procedure. The selection of competent and non-partial peers (national and international) is a very demanding process. In most systems peers are both national and international experts. Only the IRCHSS and DSSRC peers are exclusively drawn from outside the country. The process of peer selection is not easy and in all systems appropriate peers are nominated by the councils' administration, expert bodies responsible for assessments within institutions or in some cases peers are even proposed by the applicants themselves. The NWO has an experiment with the *'College of reviewer*s' where a number of eminent academics (domestic and foreign) who are willing to assess applications are included. In all other cases there is no formal database of reviewers, there is lasting co-operation with some of them but the co-operation is not formalised.

VIII.2 Resolving conflicts of interest

Resolving a conflict of interest is one of the most significant elements for ensuring the transparency of the assessment system. In all member councils

Table 16: *Some characteristics of the peer review process*

	Possibility to appeal		Procedure[31]	Anonymity of reviewers?	Minimum number of reviewers	Peers
	Procedure?	Substance?				
AKA	NO	NO	One/two stage	NO	2	(inter)national
DFG	NO	NO	One/two stage	YES	1 + review board	(inter)national
DSSRC	YES	NO	One stage	NO	Council (=15)	National*
ESRC	YES	NO	One stage	YES	2	(inter)national
EstSF	NO	NO	One stage	YES	2	(inter)national
FCT	YES	YES	One stage	YES	2	(inter)national
IRCHSS	NO	NO	One stage	YES	1 + assessment board	International
NWO	YES	NO	One/two stage	YES	2	(inter)national
RANNIS	NO	NO	One stage	NO	2 + review board	(inter)national.
RCN	YES	NO	One/two stage	YES	2	(inter)national
SRA	YES	NO	One stage	YES	2	(inter)national
VR	YES	NO	One/two stage	NO	-	(inter)national
SSHRC	YES	NO		YES	2	(inter)national

* In the case of the DSSRC, members of the council review applications. When the application for a project exceeds € 670,000 international reviewers are employed in addition to the council members (NORFACE, 2005: 3).

the question of a conflict of interest is high on the council's agenda. Some councils have special documents (codes) defining the question in detail (see Table 9). All partner councils have a special form which has to be signed by the reviewer and obliges him/her to indicate any possible conflict of interests and to disqualification himself in cases where a conflict appears. There are three possible areas where a conflict of interest may appear:

- conflict as an individual reviewer;
- conflict as a member of panels; or
- conflict as the council's permanent body member.

In all cases the self-disqualification of individuals participating in the evaluation process is of crucial importance. Despite the obligation that partner councils' bodies resolve a potential conflict of interest in all stages of the process, it is impossible for the councils' administrations to completely track potential conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest can arise on:

a) institutional; or
b) personal grounds.

With the aim of avoiding a conflict of interests reviewers (peers) in all systems have to sign

Table 17: *Instruments to avoid a conflict of interest*

Instrument	Individual reviewer	Member of panel (if instrument used)	Council's body member
Use of international peers	EstSF, IRCHSS		DSSRC
Leaving the room when discussing a proposal	ESRC	DFG, ESRC, IRCHSS	EstSF, DSSRC, AKA, DFG, IRCHSS, NWO, SRA, VR, ESRC, RANNIS
Proposals goes to a special international panel			EstSF, FCT
Self-disqualification	DSSRC, EstSF, AKA, DFG, RANNIS, NWO, RCN, FCT, SRA, ESRC, IRCHSS	NWO	DSSRC

31 Sources: interviews and Results of the Questionnaire on the NORFACE Partners' Programme Development and Management conducted by Anne Brüggemann and Philip Thelen (DFG).

statements that they do not have a conflict of interest. The same is important for members of assessment bodies (assessment committees or review boards). The common practice for reviewers declaring a conflict of interest is that such a reviewer is replaced by another. The common practice for avoiding a conflict of interest among assessment bodies is that the member with a conflict of interest does not participate in the discussion and decision-making procedure concerning the 'critical' proposal. In the EstSF in the case of an application of a member of an expert commission or their family member the proposal is sent to two international evaluators. The proposals of expert commission members or council members are assessed by an ad hoc international panel.

VIII.3 Challenges for the peer review

As the peer review process is one of the most critical parts of the assessment procedure and since the NORFACE transnational funding instruments are among the most important indicators of the success of the NORFACE initiative, the following topics are important to keep in mind when talking about the assessment:

a) exchange of peer reviews
In the NORFACE workshop on peer review it was agreed that the location of experts for peer review is a demanding and time-consuming task. But participants argued against the development of a shared NORFACE database of experts on the basis of the high level of labour and costs such an exercise would entail (NORFACE, 2005: 7). The argument against a common database of peers is that the NORFACE programmes are not planned to be continuous programmes and, as a result, for each call a different type of peer is needed and as such new proposals for each call are necessary. The extensive co-ordination between research councils was proposed and according to that solution the engagement of the partner councils to identify appropriate peers in their national research communities would be crucial. The inclusion of domestic high quality evaluators is very useful for at least two reasons:
   - building of transparency and legitimacy of the NORFACE funding initiatives and at the same time overcoming a potential barrier to some partners, which are obliged to include their national experts in the assessment process; and
   - in-direct communication with research communities and presenting the NORFACE initiatives.

b) to support of impartiality and transparency it is important to strictly define and implement the rules of a conflict of interest
As mentioned, the resolving of a conflict of interest is one of the crucial elements of the success of the NORFACE funding activities. It was also identified that a failure to regulate conflicts of interests and adopting anything less than best practice in individual partner councils could lead to serious problem for co-operation. This is especially significant since the 'common pot' funding mechanism has been chosen. To fulfil the requirements the widest definition of a conflict of interest should be employed. Strictly defining conflicts of interest is important for the process of selecting reviewers. Such a transnational code of conflicts of interest could also be applied beyond NORFACE's activities.

In Sweden, VR practices where the list of all applicants is sent to selected reviewers for the identification of conflicts of interest and where assessment panels are made after checking a potential conflict of interest can be applied to NORFACE. Checking the conflict of interest before proposals are sent to reviewers can reduce costs and the use of time.

c) make a list of high-level evaluators, selected through the inclusion of the scientific community (begin the process together with the selection of themes)
The inclusion of domestic research communities in NORFACE activities is important for NORFACE. In point a) it was stressed that peers participating in NORFACE assessment panels are significant 'promoters' of activities in domestic environments. It is important that

national research communities are included as much as possible. The process of appropriate peers selection should begin early in the process of selecting the programme theme and not just before the call deadline. Such a process would connect the research community with NORFACE activities, make an instrument ensuring the inclusion of researchers in the process and therefore increase the legitimacy of the whole process.

d) include reviewers from outside the NORFACE countries

One possible way to eliminate/resolve a conflict of interest is to employ researchers from outside NORFACE countries. Besides advantages of ensuring impartiality, the idea has some shortcomings which we have to kept in mind. First, in the case of the employment of foreign researchers there is a great chance that invited peers will be from the USA. But there is a danger that, as a result, the importance of 'European relevance' could be neglected. Second, as was stressed above the peers are a significant element of legitimating the NORFACE in the national research communities. Third, as one of the NORFACE aims is the connection (networking) of researchers in NORFACE countries this could be a significant side-effect of using peers from NORFACE countries.

It is of course not the intention to propose the exclusion of peers from outside NORFACE countries, but they should be employed predominantly in cases where there are not a suffucuent pool of eligible enough experts from NORFACE countries.

e) make an ex-post evaluation of the projects, evaluate research output and compare it with EU and national outputs

All NORFACE partner councils have very strict selection procedures for the assessment of the scientific quality of proposals. But most of them are much weaker in the assessment of research results. It would be very useful to make an evaluation of the NORFACE funding activities at the end of the financing period. There is a case for this to be done by the same transnational reviewers as were involved in the selection of proposals. In the evaluation, the outputs should be compared with national outputs and outputs of other international research activities (e.g. other ERA-nets and FP activities). Information from the evaluation could be a significant indicator to help in reshaping NORFACE's activities.

Box 4: *Characteristics of peer review and the challenges of peer review for NORFACE*

A peer review is defined as the system whereby research or research proposals are evaluated by independent experts or peers. The peer review is a critical moment of proposals selection process while the transparency and impartiality of the process is a key for legitimacy of the system. Partner research councils employ different mechanisms of peer review, but most of them use some form of peer review. Except IRCHSS and DSSRC all other councils use combination of national and international reviewers. The minimal number of reviewers per application is 2-3, but the actual number differs according to the a) instrument and b) amount of money allocating. The selection of appropriate peers (the scientific excellence on the field of evaluation is the highest criteria) is usually responsibility of councils' administrations, but also councils' expert bodies participated in the process. The issue of anonymity of reviewers is balance between the right of applicant to have information about the expert evaluating his/her application and protecting anonymity of reviewers to prevent impartialities. The way to fulfil both requirements is to publish names of all participating reviewers, but not linking to concrete projects. The conflict of interests is one of the most sensitive issues within the assessment procedures. The clear definition of a conflict as well as mechanisms to resolve it are crucial elements for the legitimacy of the process. Looking the peer review process through the lens of NORFACE the following aspects should be addressed:
a) exchange of peer reviews;
b) in the name of impartiality an transparency

it is important to strictly define and implement the rules of conflict of interest;

c) *make a list of high level evaluators, selected through the inclusion of scientific community (begin the process together with the selection of themes);*

d) *include reviewers outside the NORFACE countries;*

e) *make a ex-post evaluation of the projects, evaluate research output and compare it with EU and national outputs.*

IX. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COUNCILS AND RESEARCHERS

In all systems the research councils are an instrument for supporting research activities and because of that they have to be responsive and include researchers in their activities. It is seen as an essential element that researchers have an influence on the work of the research councils. The various councils assuring the inclusion of researchers in different ways.

In almost all systems[32] researchers are included as reviewers. They are selected on the basis of their competencies and research excellence and as reviewers they contribute significantly to the operations of the council.

The inclusion of researchers in the expert bodies of the partner councils is significant for at least two

Table 18: *The direct influence of the research community on the composition of research councils' bodies*

	Peer reviewers?	Electing councils' bodies?	Open application?	Consultation /nomination?
AKA	✓	No		✓
DFG	✓	✓	No	✓
DSSRC	no	No	No	✓
ESRC	✓	No	✓	No
EstSF	✓	No	No	✓
FCT	✓	No	No	✓
NWO	✓	No	No	✓
IRCHSS	no	No	No	No
RANNIS	✓	No	No	✓
RCN	✓	No	No	
SRA	✓	No	No	✓
VR	✓	✓	No	No
SSHRC	✓		No	

Table 19: Media for disseminating information

	web page	newspapers	info meetings	newsletter	e-mails
AKA	✓	✓	✓	✓	
DFG	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DSSRC	✓			✓	✓
ESRC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
EstSF	✓			✓	✓
FCT	✓	✓			✓
IRCHSS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NWO	✓		✓	✓	✓
RANNIS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RCN	✓		✓	✓	
SRA	✓		✓		✓
VR	✓			✓	✓
SSHRC	✓				

32 The exceptions are the IRCHSS where only foreign reviewers are employed and the DSSRC where the council's internal evaluation is used when small projects are assessed and, where external reviewers are employed, they come from abroad.

reasons:
- it is a way of disseminating information about the councils' work and forthcoming activities; and
- it is tool for legitimising the institutions' work.

The dissemination of information is important. Besides the direct inclusion of researchers via the institutions' expert bodies there are some other instruments that are more or less commonly used by the partner councils. All partner councils declared that they generally do not have problems with the dissemination of information about their activities (calls). They use the instruments presented in Table 19.

As presented in Table 19 one channel for information dissemination used by all partner councils is web pages. This vehicle enables up-to-date, low-cost information that is accessible to all interested researchers. At the level of research institutions there are usually people responsible for the dissemination of information within the institution. Some councils also have a special information system for tracking applications.

Announcements in national newspapers are used by some partner councils. There is usually no obligation to publish calls in newspapers, but the instrument is used by some councils to inform researchers as well as the general public about ongoing activities. E-mails (mailing lists) of researchers from the relevant field and council newsletters are also used by the majority of councils. Info meetings are useful and effective tools for informing potential applicants about funding opportunities but unfortunately they are expensive and time-consuming. This tool is mainly used when a new instrument is being established, but for regular calls it is not usually used. In general, the direct inclusion of researchers from the research institutions in the councils' bodies and electronic sources (web pages and e-mails) are the most important channels for communicating with research communities. Web pages are the most significant instrument for informing, while all other instruments are not usually used so often and, as a result, they mainly serve as a supplement to the web-information services.

Box 5: *The dissemination of information*

The dissemination of information about the councils' activities is essential for successful outcome. The direct influence of research communities is quite limited. Only in a few cases are the members of research communities electing representatives in the councils' scientific bodies, while for most of the others the members of scientific bodies (who are all eminent academics) are appointed by authorities after consultation with the research community. The most important channel of disseminating information is the councils' web sites, followed by newsletters and e-mails. Announcements in daily newspapers are also used by some councils.

PARTNER COUNCILS THROUGH THE LENS OF NORFACE ACTIVITIES – CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Motivation of all member councils for joining the NORFACE initiative seems to have been twofold. First, participation in NORFACE offers a significant chance for the exchange of experiences and good practices between different national research systems. International co-operation is a high priority in all member councils while there is a clear consciousness that the national perspective in sciences 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, while it offered a new mechanism for networking. It also establishes a common evaluation system for all participants, meaning that all researchers would be evaluated according to the same criteria. This provides an important 'mirror' to the social sciences in national environments.

There is considerable agreement about the benefits of collaboration, which may be defined as:
- strategic; and
- operational.

Strategic benefits:
- NORFACE will allow a social science voice to be heard more clearly by research funding organisations responsible for natural sciences, technology and medicine;
- the cross-fertilisation of practices between the various national systems will reduce the fragmentation of research efforts and work processes, leading to greater efficiency in the use of scarce resources;
- access to a wider community of scientists and expertise will lead to both increased collaboration and to higher quality which comes from stronger competition;
- access to the social sciences database should improve research coverage and quality; and
- all the processes should be enriched through greater cultural diversity.

Operational benefits:
- exchanges of both managers and researchers will increase the understanding of options for new ways of working and rationalisation;
- national peer reviews will be improved by access to large pools of expertise; and
- new research networks will provide new synergies through improved flows of ideas and high quality methods.

These positive perceptions of the benefits of collaboration provide a strong basis for participation in NORFACE. They are sufficiently important to justify being monitored during the course of a project and perhaps to be used in any final evaluation.

X. BARRIERS/CHALLENGES FOR CO-OPERATION

At the beginning of the analysis it was stated that the differences seen between partner councils could be threefold, namely:
- convergence: the characteristics of institutions are the same;
- positive divergence: the differences are apparent but are no obstacle to closer co-operation and even present a significant source of knowledge; and
- negative divergence: the differences are a cause of conflict and trigger common actions.

Through the comparison we found that very few characteristics of the partner institutions are absolutely convergent. But there are common fundamental principles which enable co-operation. The most important of these are:
- a public research funding institution;
- supporting high quality research;
- competitive – peer review funding;
- employment of international peer reviewers;
- use of English as a working language (when using an international peer review);
- high priority of international co-operation;
- a strong commitment to extensive international co-operation in the field of the social sciences;
- a firm commitment to the internationalisation of the social sciences; and
- significant experiences in different types of international co-operation.

These are the starting points for enhanced co-operation among the partner councils. There are also many barriers which can be classified as:

a) formal barriers
   – egal regulations
   – administrative routines
b) informal barriers
   – knowledge
   – culture & political will (Bonus, 2005: 19).

Since the NORFACE activities are progressing well there is no evidence as yet of any barrier that can have a show-stopping influence on the initiative. As a result, it is more appropriate to talk about challenges which have to be dealt with very carefully than about barriers. When talking about the challenges to co-operation, we should differentiate among NORFACE activities. The exchange of good practices and experiences is of great value for the partner councils and seems to be practically problem-free. Looking from that angle, differences in partner councils' operating systems are of great value and form the basis for the development of new practices and solutions for closer co-operation. More demanding and sensitive are activities with financial implications, for instance the *Transnational research programme* and *the thematic seminars*. When talking about barriers we will address these two issues.

Activities with financial implications could face and rise the most significant barriers. They can be roughly divided into two general groups, as shown below.

One of NORFACE's most striking innovations is its 'common pot' financing. Some partner councils have expressed scepticism/reservations about such financing. The common pot actually means a flow of money across national borders, loss of some control over national research money and consequently possible allocating it to foreign researchers. All member councils are allowed to fund foreign researchers working within the national research institution. Yet the situation differs when talking about non-residents. Some partner councils (see Table 13) are formally allowed to fund researchers abroad, but the funding of research has to be strictly linked to the national research interest. As a result, it is not a general practice among the partner institutions to fund foreign non-resident researchers.

The second cluster of challenges refers to organisational and attitudinal aspects of collaboration. It is understandable that national funding institutions could have some built-

in resistance to funding outside of national boundaries, for example to give priority to researchers from abroad and to initiatives taken outside of its institutional design. There is a possibility of reluctance to lose control over either peer review or final funding decisions. National priorities at the partner councils may take precedence over any international engagement when choices between that and national issues must be made. Concern was also expressed that there may not always be complete clarity at all levels on the international objectives of councils, on who co-ordinates international engagement and on who is responsible for NORFACE and the decisions relevant to the project.

The next challenge we have identified refers to use of English as a *lingua franca*. As was identified in the comparative part of the analysis, the English language is used in all partner councils as a language for proposals (in the AKA even exclusively) so the use of English should not be seen as obstacle. There is a different risk if it turned out that English terminology were used differently by various councils. With an aim to avoid misunderstandings it is suggested that the question of terminology be explicitly addressed in all NORFACE activities (workshops, seminars…) and that for the purposes of calls (programme and seminars) the terminology being used defined very clearly, if necessary through discussion within the Network Board and Management Team. It would be very useful to build up a 'NORFACE glossary' which could be a side benefit from other ongoing activities. Without that, there is a danger that the same terminological issues would be discussed many times and in this way a significant part of intellectual energy would be lost.

From the operational point of view it is important that members of the Network Board as the highest NORFACE decision-making body have a mandate to speak on behalf of their councils. If an NB member does not have a clear mandate about financial matters this complicates the decision-making procedure. As NORFACE is a learning process the established procedures have to be as flexible as possible.

Some potential obstacles were identified which are linked to the structure of national research communities and the attitude of researchers to international co-operation /participation in international projects:

- the research institutions/researchers do not have money for the preparation of a project proposal; and
- researchers are satisfied with domestic financial sources, and therefore not interested in participating in international activities.

Apart from common dilemmas there are also some national particularities which have to be addressed when dealing with joint activities with financial implications. They are not really barriers but it is important to keep them in mind during the NORFACE process:

- DFG: when assessing project proposals there has to be a member of the DFG review board present. The request is resolved by the system of nominating national experts to the assessment panel;
- in Denmark, Finland and Sweden there is a legal principle of public access to official records, which may clash with the practices of anonymity in other countries;
- the NWO has a system calling for the obligatory opinion of the researcher on the assessment procedure; and
- some members do not have a possibility to appeal against decisions. Due to the fact that NORFACE NB decisions are not open to appeal the need for transparency and very strictly defined rules is even greater.

The identified barriers may be classified in many ways, one of them is presented above, but for analytical reasons it is more useful to classify them according to their effect and not their origin. As a result, the potential barriers are classified as:

- legal issues; and
- operational and structural issues.

The recommendations in the next section are linked to each of these issues. The recommendations are not addressed to a specific NORFACE body (MT or NB) since the overcoming of these challenges inevitably demands the co-operation and joint efforts of all bodies.

XI. MEETING THE CHALLENGES

Challenge A

The preparation of transnational pilot programme shows that there could be a problem with the substance of the programme. One problem concerns the dichotomy between structural/ thematic programme. Councils which may have problems here ESRC and DSSRC, which may not want to participate in the thematic/ structural programme. The DSSRC is not allowed to formulate thematic research priorities. In the existing Danish counselling system the Danish Council for Strategic Research has the responsibility for programmes and themes. The Danish Council for Independent Research, of which the DSSRC is a member, provides support on the basis of proposals from Danish researchers. On the contrary, a predominantly thematic focus is essential for the ESRC. From its point of view a mainly structural focus would not have any hope of securing a buy-in from the ESRC Council.

Challenge B

Partner institutions have quite different practices regarding appeals against their funding decisions (see Table 16). In some systems the right to appeal (against the procedure or even matters of substance) is guaranteed or even legally defined as necessary (NWO). Since the NORFACE procedure does not make an appeal possible it is necessary to maximise:

- transparency; and
- the inclusion of high ranking national representatives which have a mandate to decide on behalf of their institution.

Challenge C

The problem of contractual partners. To whom is the money linked (to the researcher or to the institution)? The problem could occur if the principal investigator changes position during the duration of the project. Should the principle of *'the money follows the researcher'* be introduced or should the money be linked to the research institution? What is the case when a principle investigator moves to a research institution outside of a NORFACE country. This dilemma should be clarified and defined before the transnational programme is launched.

Challenge D

Since the NORFACE partners are mostly financed from national budget appropriations, the idea that taxpayers' money should be returned (indirectly) to national taxpayers still dominates a lot of thinking at the national level. There is a risk that political leaders, researchers and perhaps the general public could be reluctant to lose control over:

- national research money;
- thematic and funding decision-making processes;
- evaluation procedures; and
- diminishing national standards (criteria, conflicts of interest…).

Challenge E

An important niche of NORFACE is to cover transdisciplinary research and the societal angle of EU research. A potential problem to the allocation of national research money could be the creation of a programme which would go beyond the minimal definition of the social sciences since, which could then exceed the competencies of some partner councils. This is especially important for those partners which cover the social sciences only or those for which the classification of the social sciences is significant for financial reasons.

Challenge F

A long term programme, over several years, requires stable financial resources. As a result, partners have to earmark long term funds for NORFACE activities. The different durations of the fiscal years could cause an administrative problems.

Challenge G

There are two practices regarding the anonymity of reviewers (see Table 16). Two extremes are involved, namely in some systems applicants have the right to know the name of the reviewers while, at the other extreme, there is the complete anonymity of reviewers.

Challenge H

The NORFACE initiative and especially the 'common pot' funding system could cause some problems at the national level (see A).

Challenge I

The NB as the highest decision-making body is a critical point for the smooth operations of NORFACE. NB members have two types of origin:

- heads (members) of the councils' highest scientific body; or
- high ranking officials (heads of administrative bodies).

As a result, they represent two different perspectives and have different decision-making mandates. This could cause non-optimal decision-making procedures.

Challenge J

A problem could arise with 'non-responsiveness' of research communities. Any participation in international projects usually demands quite a great investment of resources and the success rate is usually quite low. Because of that any problems with the motivation of researchers to participate would be serious, especially in systems where researchers are well funded nationally.

XII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We believe that extensive knowledge of the partner councils and potential obstacles to be avoided is of crucial importance for the development of the NORFACE partnership. In the previous section we presented some challenges which were identified and emphasised by the representatives of councils during this comparative study. In conclusion we would like to make some recommendations which we propose should be taken into account in future NORFACE activities.

Recommendation 1

Extensive communication with the research council, research community, politics as well as the general public.

Recommendation 2

Use of the definition of the social sciences as proposed in Figure 2.

Recommendation 3

Transparency in all processes, especially those with financial implications. The procedures of: a) selection of a research theme; b) selection of reviewers; c) criteria for evaluation; and d) financial transparency of the NORFACE should be transparent and presented to all national stakeholders. All NORFACE procedures should be defined in detail and made public.

Recommendation 4

Inclusion of the national research communities in the process of preparing a research theme and in the selection of peers.

Recommendation 5

The process of selecting peers should begin early in the process of defining the theme because there needs to be enough time for consultation with the research community.

Recommendation 6

A strict and detailed code on conflicts of interest should be prepared. It should be based on the widest possible version of the existing national codes. It should be approved by the Network Board.

Recommendation 7

Since NORFACE is a 'learning by doing' activity, finished activities should be carefully evaluated and recommendations for forthcoming activities should be made.

Recommendation 8

A broad group of researchers and stakeholders should be involved in a 'forward looking' process for finding the Transnational Programme theme(s) thereby also contributing to researchers building up cross-border networks.

Recommendation 9

Network Board members should undertake to promote the prioritisation of European and international issues within their councils' strategies and objectives. The Management Team should also be asked to do likewise and to provide feedback on any challenges of this kind which need to be addressed at the MT or NB level.

Recommendation 10

Extensive communication and openness within and between partner councils should be prioritised. Efforts have to be made to assure and inform all those concerned about the fairness of funding shares and openness of these processes.

Recommendation 11

Because the success of the NORFACE initiative is connected very much with the strong commitment of all those participating in the initiative it is important to assure the responsibility and responsiveness of all partners.

Recommendation 12

The process of selection of Transnational Programme topic should be transparent and include: a) the foresight exercise; b) researchers and c) it should clearly differ from other EU funding

instruments e.g. FP programmes thereby providing clear 'European' added value.

Recommendation 13

A long term research programme needs stable financial resources. As a result, partners have to earmark funds for NORFACE activities. Different durations of the fiscal year in different partner countries could create an administrative problem to the financing of joint activities. Because of that, the national schedules of partner institutions' budgets have to be shared and the planning of NORFACE activities (those with financial implications) should follow requirements of national financial procedures.

Recommendation 14

An IT system for the online submission of applications and the organisation of whole assessment procedures should be improved. Such a system will optimise the effectiveness of the NORFACE project and boost transparency since applicants could follow the progress of their applications through different assessment procedures.

Recommendation 15

The building of a more effective co-ordination tool within and between NB and MT members is necessary. Co-ordination of the main programme will require the effective and real-time responses from the Board as the responsible decision-making body. Here 'physical' meetings twice a year are not likely to be sufficient, putting unhelpful restraints on the whole process. A closed part of the NORFACE web page should be arranged for NB members only where decisions may be debated and made. It is necessary to establish detailed rules of the operation for such an instrument.

Recommendation 16

Rules for defined responsibilities of the co-ordinator of the programme should be adopted. They should include which decisions can be made by the co-ordinator and for which of them they should consult with NB members (or the programme steering committee) via a special information system.

Recommendation 17

With the aim to avoid conflicts of interest as well as to fulfil the legal provisions (demanding the anonymity or identification of reviewers) we propose the use some form of panel assessment for the Transnational Programme. In this way, decisions about applications would not be personalised but would involve a decision made by collegial body. The identity of panel members should be published on the NORFACE web page after the assessment procedure has finished. It would then be necessary to inform reviewers about that procedure before they confirm their participation. The assessment documentation should be available to all applicants (on request or automatically).

Recommendation 18

The Swedish VR practices where the list of all applicants is sent to selected reviewers for the identification of any conflicts of interest and where assessment panels are made after checking any potential conflicts of interest could be applied to NORFACE. Checking conflicts of interest before proposals are sent to reviewers could reduce costs and the use of time.

Recommendation 19

The risk of a democratic/legitimacy/accountability deficit should be resolved (or at least minimised) through:

- extensive communication of the national NORFACE representatives with:
  - structures within the partner institution (the highest decision-making body);
  - political bodies responsible for funding research (ministry/government);
  - the research communities; and
  - the general public.
- Ensuring the NB's legitimacy, achieved through the quality of its members (NB members should be close to the highest decision-making body of their institutions and have a mandate to represent the position and opinion of their institutions); and
- the fairness of the funding shares and equal treatment of all partners – transparent internal

procedures open to all partners.

It is important that all procedures and criteria are defined ex ante and that all participants (administrative and scientific) are familiar with them and support them.

Recommendation 20

There is a large number of different international co-operation initiatives and networking proposals. In these circumstances, it is important to motivate domestic research communities to participate in NORFACE. As a result, NORFACE should distinguish itself from other initiatives by its minimal administrative burden and innovative substance. There should be a well-connected schedule of activities which would enable researchers to prepare applications, find a suitable partner and make strong connections within the research consortium. This is crucial for overcoming the problem of 'old connections' and achieving new research synergy within NORFACE.

Recommendation 21

Co-operation with other ERA-net initiatives and exchanges of experience and good practice should be enhanced. In principle ERA-net projects face some very similar challenges. Because of that it would be worthwhile to exchange information between them.

Recommendation 22

The time period for the selection process should be as short as possible. It should certainly not be longer than the average national procedures – between 6-9 months. To achieve this goal it is important to establish an effective information tool for the exchange of information among reviewers, the Co-ordination office, MT and NB.

Recommendation 23

Given that the gender-balance issue is important in most partner councils and that one of the NORFACE aims is the promotion of a gender balance, the gender equality principle should be followed when creating assessment bodies. It is recommended that each partner proposes two candidates (female and male). If there is no suitable candidate for each sex the country should propose just one name. Nevertheless, gender issue should not prevail over the quality of the proposed candidate.

Recommendation 24

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 suitability of procedures used.

Recommendation 25

It would be very useful to gradually build a 'NORFACE glossary' a side benefit of ongoing activities. Great effort has been put into clarifying the terms for each NORFACE event but given that a glossary has not been elaborated, the terminology again becomes the subject of discussion for the next event. Such a glossary could also be very useful for activities extending beyond the NORFACE project.

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- Anne Kovalainen - Finland
- Anne Brüggemann - Germany
- Berry J. Bonenkamp - The Netherlands
- Blaž Golob - Slovenia
- Dagmar Kutsar - Estonia
- Eili Ervelä-Myréen - Finland
- Ernesta Mlakar – Slovenia
- Fiona Devine – United Kingdom
- Hrafnhildur Ragnarsdóttir - Iceland
- Indrek Reimand - Estonia
- Jan Karel Koppen - The Netherlands
- José Santos - Portugal
- Jüri Allik - Estonia
- Luisa Henriques - Portugal
- Luule Mizera - Estonia
- Manfred Nießen - Germany
- Manuel Mira Godinho - Portugal
- Maria Eugénia Rodrigues - Portugal
- Marjoeska Ponsioen - The Netherlands
- Mikko Lagerspetz - Estonia
- Patricia G. Vogel - The Netherlands
- Philip Thelen - Germany
- Rainer Kattel - Estonia
- Stojan Sorčan - Slovenia
- Tiago Santos Pereira – Portugal

Other sources:

Annex 2

- A. Country profile – Finland
- B. Country profile – Germany
- C. Country profile – Denmark
- D. Country profile – United Kingdom
- E. Country profile – Estonia
- F. Country profile – Portugal
- G. Country profile – Ireland
- H. Country profile – the Netherlands
- I. Country profile – Iceland
- J. Country profile – Norway
- K. Country profile – Slovenia
- L. Country profile – Sweden
- M. Country profile – Canada

Annex 1

NORFACE – ERA-NET

Comparative Analysis of Partner Councils

Preliminary structure of deliverable 3.1.1, prepared by Tomaz Boh

Contents:

A.

i.

- Introduction: background of the NORFACE and scope & aims of the WP 3 (D3.1.1)
- Methodological framework

ii.

- Definition of a Council (different types? → possible classification?), social sciences, programmes & projects, research excellence, the role of public agencies in different systems

iii.

- Partner Councils profiles – schematic presentation of Councils and their position in national systems
- Relation of Councils with ministries responsible for science
- Historical and institutional point of view of research Councils
    - the position of social sciences compared with other research fields
- Composition of Councils:
    - Bureaucrats vs. scientists
    - Appointed
    - Elected
    - Competences, duration of the mandate
- Accountability of Councils (political, expert…)
- Number of staff
- Ethical policies, language policies (reference to **D3.2** – **D3.8**)

B.

- strategic goals (how they are set up) – national vs. Council strategy/objectives
- initiation of research: top-down vs. bottom-up
- administrative vs. scientific competences of Councils
- mediation of national research interests
- barriers to upload decision-making power to supra-national level
- barriers and challenges for enhanced cooperation between research Councils and researchers from different partner states
    - subjective (personal) and objective (systemic) barriers
        - administrative barriers
        - legal barriers

        - financial barriers
        - "cultural barriers"
        - barriers caused by lack of personnel and knowledge
- analysis of major barriers from the NORFACE perspective

C.

- national calls for projects and programmes
    - role of partner Councils
- dynamics of funding procedures (an average duration – call for projects → end of the procedure)
- initiation of funding: top-down vs. bottom-up
- preparation of priorities
    - autonomous (cooperation with "users")
    - ministry
- thematic vs. non-thematic research
    - basic research
    - applied research

Reference to **D3.5**

- permanent funding programmes vs. project funding
    - how much of research funding to each category
    - duration of programme period
    - evaluation procedure
    - criteria for evaluation
        - criteria for programmes & projects
        - who makes and how to make the final decision
    - how many research groups are funded (% of all groups…)
- reporting of researchers back to Councils
    - financial reporting
    - scientific reporting
    - who evaluates reports and how

Reference to **D3.2** **D3.6**

D.

<u>i. relations with researchers</u>

- the influence of researchers on the composition of the Council
- the role of researchers in the process of setting priorities
- funding of young researchers – system
- the cooperation of Councils with research organizations – focus on NORFACE

<u>ii. international engagement</u>

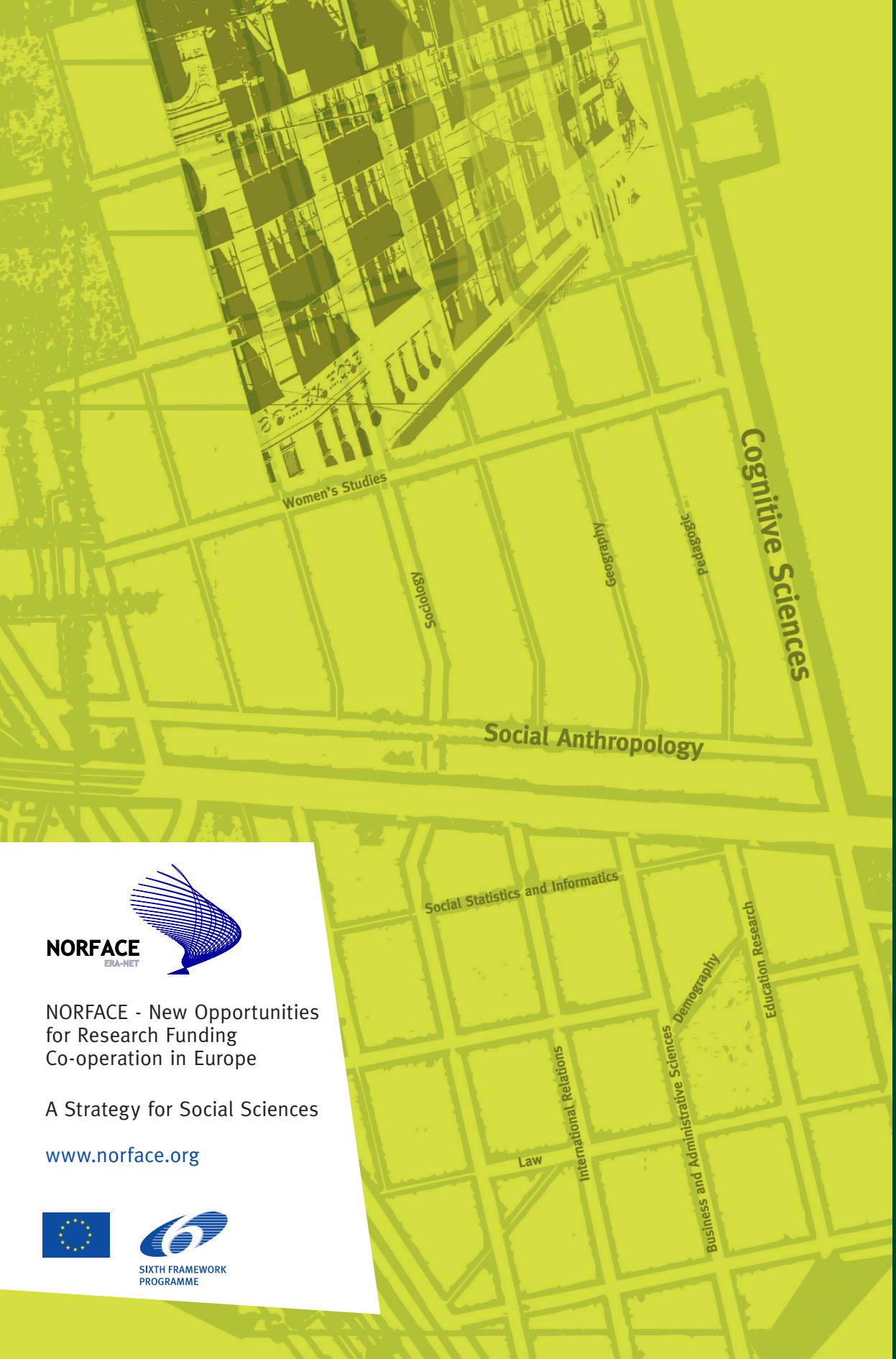
- coordination of international engagement – general
- structure within Councils, responsible for international engagement
- existing relations and cooperation between partner Councils
    - intensity, aim, continuity…
    - coordination and funding of council's NORFACE engagement

Annex 2

Country profiles[33]

A. Finland
B. Germany
C. Denmark
D. United Kingdom
E. Estonia
F. Portugal
G. Ireland
H. Iceland
I. The Netherlands
J. Norway
K. Slovenia
L. Sweden
M. Canada

33 Country profiles are based on data collected from different sources (written documents, internet sources and interviews and are checked by MT members). Data reflects the situation on April 2006, so later changes are not indicated in profiles. The country profiles are available in electronic version, for details please contact the author.



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