

# NORPART

## Programme Document

### Background

The Norwegian Partnership Programme for Global Academic Cooperation (NORPART) was established in 2016. The programme supports Norwegian higher education policy, and development policy, through funding from the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). NORPART is administered by Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir).

NORPART contributes to UN's 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and align itself with relevant Norwegian policy documents, such as the white papers «A World of Opportunities – International student mobility within higher education» (2020–21), “Long-term plan for research and higher education 2019–2028” (2019–18), “Quality culture in higher education” (2016–17), “Education for development” (2013–14), and “Common Responsibility for Common Future – the Sustainable development Goals and Norway’s Development Policy” (2016–17). The programme also adheres to the principles of quality assurance through fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory recognition of foreign qualifications, laid down in the UNESCO Global Recognition Convention (2019).<sup>1</sup>

The NORPART project portfolio extends across all academic disciplines, and in selected partner countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin-America.

This programme document outlines the purpose and the expected results of NORPART and shall serve as a guideline for applicants and for the development of NORPART. The programme document is based on HKdir’s experience with the administration of the programme, and recommendations from the midterm evaluation of NORPART in 2020.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ratified by the Norwegian government on 7 May 2020.

<sup>2</sup> [Report 11/2020](#) An evaluation of the NORPART program 2015/16 - 2020

## **NORPART – Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of NORPART is to contribute towards enhancing the quality of higher education in Norway and selected partner countries in the Global South, through academic cooperation and mutual student mobility.

To reach this overall aim, the programme shall fulfil four objectives:

- Strengthened partnerships for education and research between partner countries in the Global South and Norway
- Increased quality and internationalisation of academic programmes at participating institutions
- Increased mobility of students from countries in the Global South to Norway, including mobility in connection with work placements
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## **NORPART Target Groups**

NORPART addresses the following target groups:

### **Higher education institutions in Norway and the Global South**

Through institutional partnerships and collaboration with non-academic organisations, higher education institutions in Norway and the Global South can gain complementary expertise and knowledge, as well as alternative ways of providing education. Such non-academic institutions can be public or private enterprises, research institutes, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or other interested organisations. This can enhance both the relevance and quality of the education provided. Partnerships across sectors and disciplines are key elements for the achievement of sustainable «ripple effects» of project results, beyond the scope of the partnerships, reaching society at large.

## Master's and PhD students

High-quality higher education is characterised by students' active learning and research, opportunities to study abroad and/or in an international learning environment. Providing students with a framework in which they can reflect on the added value of an international education, will improve learning outcomes for students. Relevant learning outcomes may be the application of knowledge and generic skills; intercultural competence and knowledge; and competence related to the SDGs.

## NORPART in a Global Context

The NORPART programme acknowledges that global challenges require global cooperation. The relevance and quality of higher education will improve in Norway and in the partner countries in the Global South as a result of international cooperation.

The [UN Agenda 2030](#) emphasises education as a key factor, as a goal in itself and because high-quality education is an essential component for achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. NORPART aims to contribute to all aspects of the 2030 Agenda, however the programme is particularly relevant to SDG 4 – ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; SDG 5 – achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls; and SDG 17 – revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development.

NORPART facilitates academic collaboration between Norway and selected countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. From 2021, South Africa is included on the list of partner countries, for the time being limited to collaboration with universities referred to as “Historically Disadvantaged Institutions” (HDIs).

A trend across NORPART partner countries and regions has been an increase in the number of higher education institutions, followed by a rapid growth in enrolment rates. However, scarce national funding and institutional capacity to support this development often compromise the quality of the education offered. Challenges related to outdated teaching methods and curricula, inadequate frameworks for

accreditation and quality assurance, and high student/teacher ratios, continue to undermine the educational systems. Long-term international collaboration based on mutual academic interest is a precondition for solving some of these challenges. UNESCO's Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education is one step in the right direction. It aims to improve the quality of education, student mobility and access to higher education across regions and continents.

The higher education sector is currently confronted with a different global context than in 2016, when NORPART was established. Above all, the impact of the covid-19 pandemic in 2020 has profoundly affected all aspects of international academic collaboration, including the operation of NORPART projects. On a positive note, the pandemic has sped up the development of new and creative approaches to online teaching and learning, as well as a more strategic use of local ICT resources. The digitalisation of education can contribute to enhance the quality and relevance of education in Norway and in the NORPART partner countries. In line with the SDG principle of leaving no-one behind,<sup>3</sup> digitalisation can also improve access to higher education. NORPART therefore encourages the development of online learning, education, and training. Strategic use of open and flexible learning platforms, virtual and "blended mobility" (combining physical meetings with online ones), and open educational resources, will improve access and facilitate wider sharing of project results and outputs.

NORPART is one of several interventions to support academic collaboration between Norway and the Global South. Synergies with other programmes may improve the results and impact of NORPART and contribute to the sustainability of institutional partnerships. To ensure that common goals are met effectively, NORPART will complement Norwegian support to international cooperation and capacity building in higher education and research (e.g., Norad's NORHED programme; the Research Council of Norway's NORGLOBAL programme; other HK-dir programmes), as well as participation in EU's Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ programmes.

## **NORPART Mutual Student Mobility**

In the white paper “A World of Opportunities – International student mobility within higher education» (2020–21) the Norwegian government continues to underline that international collaboration and student mobility is a precondition for enhanced quality of higher education at Norwegian institutions in a wider perspective. International academic collaboration and mobility is also underpinning Norwegian foreign policy, development policy and industry- and business policy.

The long-term aim of the Norwegian government is that international student mobility shall be an integral part of all study programmes at Norwegian institutions and that 50 per cent of the Norwegian student population shall undertake a mobility exchange to a country outside Norway as part of their degree. Internationally mobile students will prosper academically and gain international understanding, intercultural skills, and access to international networks. They will also bring new perspectives back to their home institutions, and thereby contribute to internationalisation at their home institution. A precondition for the achievement of internationalisation at home, is however the presence of institutionalised opportunities for academic collaboration and social interaction between mobile and non-mobile students at the higher education institutions.

In line with the Norwegian government’s policy, increased mutual student mobility continues to be a core element in NORPART. To facilitate partnership collaboration, NORPART supports mobility of Norwegian students to the Global South, as well as mutual staff exchanges of both academic and administrative personnel. South-south mobility between partner institutions is also encouraged.

NORPART supports student mobility that contributes to achieving the overall aim of enhanced quality in higher education. NORPART focuses on master’s and PhD students and includes both physical mobility and virtual as well as blended mobility.

## **NORPART Partnerships for Enhanced Quality in Education and Research**

Strengthened academic partnerships in education and research is an equally central element in NORPART as mutual student mobility. Institutional partnerships serve as a framework for student mobility and quality enhancement in higher education. Educational cooperation facilitates knowledge sharing, network building and the development of improved and more relevant academic programmes. Higher quality education should benefit not only the individual student, but also the institution.

Higher education institutions and study programmes will be strengthened by having highly qualified students and staff, as well as updated and relevant courses and degrees. The partner institutions' strategies, priorities, and needs define the framework for the projects in the NORPART portfolio. The partnership model aims to be a flexible tool for joint and mutually beneficial academic cooperation and student mobility, with a long-term perspective. NORPART recognises north-south-south partnerships as important means to reaching the goal set.

# Appendix 1

## NORPART Partner Countries 2024

- Angola
- Bolivia
- Cameroon
- Cuba
- East Timor
- Ethiopia
- Guatemala
- Indonesia
- Liberia
- Malawi
- Mozambique
- Nepal
- Niger
- Palestine
- Rwanda
- South Africa\*
- Sri Lanka
- Tanzania
- Vietnam
- Zimbabwe
- Bangladesh
- Burkina Faso
- Colombia
- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Egypt
- Ghana
- Haiti
- Kenya
- Madagascar
- Mali
- Myanmar
- Nicaragua
- Pakistan
- Peru
- Somalia
- South Sudan
- Sudan
- Uganda
- Zambia

## \* Eligible Higher Education Institutions in South Africa - Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs)

- University of Fort Hare
- University of Limpopo
- University of Venda
- Walter Sisulu University
- University of Western Cape
- University of Zululand
- Mangosuthu University of Technology
- Sefako Makgatho University of Health Sciences