



Norwegian Agency for
International Cooperation
and Quality Enhancement
in Higher Education

UTFORSK

Programme document

Background

UTFORSK is a measure under the Norwegian government's strategy for cooperation on higher education and research with Brazil, China, India, Japan, Russia and South Africa (2016–2020), the Panorama-strategy. The UTFORSK programme targets cooperation in higher education and research with Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Russia, South Africa, South Korea and the USA.

Of particular relevance to the objectives of the programme are the priorities stated in the Panorama strategy:

- Constructive interaction between higher education and research cooperation
- Productive connections to the labour market, trade and industry
- Mutual student exchange as a part of institutional cooperation
- Constructive interaction between bilateral and multilateral cooperation, with special emphasis on the EU programmes for education and research

The Norwegian Government's Long-term plan for research and higher education 2019–2028 states that international cooperation is a prerequisite for quality in Norwegian higher education. The significance of international cooperation as a measure for benchmarking quality is also emphasised in the white paper on "Quality Culture in Higher Education" (Meld. St. 16 (2016–2017)), which states that internationalisation should be an integral part of education. Research-based education (content) and research-based pedagogy (teaching methods) are two other mainstays of Norwegian education policy.

Theory of change

The UTFORSK programme's theory of change outlines the assumptions as to why cooperation in higher education between Norway and the prioritised countries outside Europe are important for improving the quality of higher education and for Norwegian bilateral interests in a broader sense. The theory of change is aligned with policies and objectives outlined in relevant policy documents, with particular reference to the white papers "Long-term plan for research and higher education 2019–2028" and "Quality Culture in Higher Education" (Meld. St. 16 (2016–2017)) as well as the "Panorama strategy".

UTFORSK encompasses the following dimensions of change:

Sustainable development

Education is a key factor in Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, that includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Quality education is a goal in itself, but education, research and innovation are also essential components for achieving the other SDGs, as expressed in SDG 17 – "Partnerships for the goals". International cooperation is a prerequisite for achieving Agenda 2030. The SDGs demonstrate that the major economic, social and environmental challenges facing the world today require international cooperation and global solutions. Knowledge collaboration in the form of broad international partnerships that include actors across disciplines and sectors is an important part of the solution. The countries included in this programme are all significant stakeholders in achieving these goals.

Higher education

International collaboration is a precondition for improving the quality and increasing the relevance of Norwegian higher education and research. International cooperation in education and research fosters comparative perspectives and approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. These perspectives and approaches are essential for developing new knowledge, critical thinking, dispositions, attitudes, values and self-reflection.

The priority countries outside Europe are important for developing new knowledge, both for the world and for Norway, as they are host nations to some of the world's leading knowledge communities. Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Russia, South-Africa, South Korea and USA are among the world's most advanced knowledge producers of importance both to the world and to Norway.

India and China are regional and global actors of great importance. In recent years Norway has developed more extensive cooperation with both countries. As a large, neighbouring country, cooperation with Russia is essential for knowledge production that addresses common challenges, especially in the Arctic and the high north. Japan and South Korea are central political and economic actors regionally and globally and are key research and innovation partners for Norway. Brazil is Norway's most important partner for cooperation in Latin America, while South-Africa plays an important role in Africa's development and future position in the world, a position that makes the country a valuable partner for Norwegian academic communities.

Knowledge collaboration with the US and Canada has played a vital role in the development of Norwegian higher education and research since the end of World War II, and much of the world's innovative knowledge production takes place in North America.

International relations

'Knowledge diplomacy' refers to the role international higher education and research can play in building and strengthening relations between countries. Institutional partnerships in higher education and research are arenas for building trust and networks outside traditional foreign policy channels, based on notions of cooperation, reciprocity and mutual benefit. Thus, educational collaboration holds the potential to contribute to more resilient multi-faceted bilateral relations in support of broader foreign policy objectives.

Business and trade

The priority countries outside Europe represent markets of interest to Norwegian business and industry. For Norwegian business and industry, it is valuable to access research-driven innovation, infrastructure and knowledge production in these countries in order to develop new technologies, services and approaches. An education system that generates future workers/employees with international experience and relevant competencies is important for a resilient and competitive business community.

Target groups

UTFORSK addresses the following target groups:

- **Institutions:** Through involvement in institutional partnerships and collaboration with non-academic organisations, higher education institutions get exposed to new knowledge and other ways of providing education to their students. They also get access to complementary expertise and new perspectives on their field. Partnerships are intended to lead to enhanced quality, and more internationalised and relevant study programmes.
- **Individuals:** Students are participants in higher education. Provision of higher education that is characterised by students' active learning and research, opportunities to study abroad and/or in an international learning environment, and collaboration across sectors and disciplines is intended to result in higher quality. Providing students with a framework for reflecting 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 sustainability goals.

- **Society:** Partnerships that accommodate collaboration across countries, sectors and disciplines are intended to lead to knowledge production and sharing to the benefit of society. Through such partnerships, gradual solutions to major societal challenges can be found.

Programme objectives and expected project results

The overall goal of the UTFORSK programme is to strengthen higher education for a sustainable future.

The programme seeks to achieve this by supporting projects that lead to:

- Strengthened international partnerships within areas of mutual and strategic interest between higher education institutions in Norway and in the relevant countries, and
- Enhanced quality and relevance of study programmes at the institutions involved

Results framework

The results framework below outlines in more detail the expected results and effects of UTFORSK. Projects should be relevant to the goals of the programme and designed based on the partner institutions' and relevant stakeholders' own needs assessments. Project goals, expected results and activities should be proposed by the partners based on jointly identified challenges and opportunities. The programme acknowledges the partners' insights into their own institutions, academic fields and contexts.

Strengthened higher education for a sustainable future



Tentative plan for UTFORSK calls for 2021-2027

UTFORSK calls are planned for 2020 and every second year from 2021 throughout the Panorama-strategy period.