

Portfolio analysis for Global development and international relations

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Alternative investment options

The Russian war against Ukraine, paired with the Chinese zero-covid policy which is causing a lowering of domestic growth and disrupting global supply chains, is slowing the recovery from the pandemic. The inflation pressures have increased sharply and the rise in cost of living are putting many people in precarious circumstances with economic hardship and risk of famine. LMICs are particularly vulnerable for disruptions in food supply from Russia and Ukraine, and according to OECD's annual GDP growth projections for 2022, the average growth projection is adjusted downwards from 4,46 % in December 2021 to 3,02 in June 2022^[7]. After two years of disruption in the access to essential health services, building resilient health systems is urgent, particularly in low-resource settings. In addition, the world suffers the consequences of the climate crisis, the ecosystem crises, and an energy crisis. The impacts of these crises, both individually and combined, calls for a better understanding of how they will affect people, countries, and regions, and how they in turn will influence development, international relations, globalisation, and geopolitics on the longer term.

With the ongoing crises, the research within this portfolio should both contribute to understand, mitigate, and dampen their adverse effects by initiating calls targeting the crises, and at the same time provide funding opportunities for research that advances the development of original research methods and theories. Ensuring a sound balance between the two should be considered in future calls for proposals. Further, the funding schemes under this portfolio should seek closer cooperation with funding schemes in other portfolios to ensure broader perspectives and increased funding for calls.

In order to secure research with global development perspectives related to the SDG's, the funds for the bilateral funding schemes INDNOR and CHINOR, which both have priorities based on the SDG's, have been merged with additional funding from the Ministry of Education and Research to a collaborative funding mechanism – Research for Global Sustainability. The funding mechanism co-funds research in thematic areas together with relevant funding schemes, i.e., on renewable energy, climate, environment (terrestrial and ocean), food-production, migration, education, etc. The funding scheme aims at increasing the research efforts towards the SDG's and to ensure global perspectives into funding schemes which have primarily a national focus. Upcoming calls should ensure research on effective and innovative ways of reaching the SDG's. Emphasis should be put on fair and equitable partnerships with both academic and non-academic institutions in LMICs.

There is a need to ensure a stronger Norwegian participation in Horizon Europe on the portfolio's priority dimensions, especially related to the EUs Africa initiative and EDCTP3 which provides international collaboration and funding opportunities on many areas of high relevance to this portfolio.

Within the thematic area global health, calls for proposals that are thematically broad have resulted in 18 projects covering a range of topics directly related to SDG3 and most of its targets. All of which are implemented in accordance with set criteria of equitable partnerships. Such relatively unrestricted calls allow the researchers to develop the research questions themselves, and the research with the best quality and relevance is funded.

Implementation research has been a priority since 2021, and 10 million annually is earmarked non-communicable diseases (NCDs). These areas are both well covered in the portfolio. So far, only one projects falls within the strategic and thematic priorities of the EDCTP3. As 70 million is earmarked Norway's commitments towards the partnership, this is an area that needs to be strengthened. The global health sub-portfolio funds a lot more implementation research and social science than during GLOBVAC2. This is a natural consequence of the new priorities. However, GLOBVAC2 also funded basic research and pre-clinical research, specifically related to infectious diseases. The last calls have attracted very few such applications, and no projects have been funded so far. To attract such applications, funding opportunities must be communicated to relevant research groups.

The projects within the portfolio have extensive international collaboration and many countries are represented. However, project partners converge around a handful countries, United Kingdom, USA, South Africa, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, and Russia. For the majority of the countries, they are partners in only one project. To some extent this is due to geographical priority areas within funding schemes. Still, it should be considered whether this is a desirable concentration or whether the researchers should be encouraged to seek new partnerships. A key point being not to sever existing successful partnerships, but to bring better balance into the portfolio.

[7]OECD Economic Outlook 2022/1

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