

**Portfolio board for Global development and  
International relations**

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**Minutes**

**Meeting 1/21**

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**Date** 2. March, kl. 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

**Place** Zoom

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Present: Kim Traavik (chair)  
Fanny Duckert  
Annelies Zoomers  
Camilla Tenna Nørup Sørensen  
Christopher Cramer  
Elise Must  
Isabell Schierenbeck  
Nynke van den Broek  
Peter Smith  
Rainer-Elk Anders

Apologies: -

Observers: Hanne Meldgaard, Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Rolf Arne Billington, Ministry of Defence  
Stine Mürter, Ministry of Justice and Public Security  
Marianne van der Wel, Ministry of Health and Welfare

**Item PSGLOBAL 2/21 Approval of agenda**

No amendments were made, except that items 7/21 and 8/21 changed the order of which they were presented.

**Decision:** *The Portfolio board approved the agenda for the meeting.*

**Item PSGLOBAL 3/21 Minutes of meeting 4/20**

**Decision:** *The minutes from the last meeting was approved by correspondence prior to this meeting.*

## Updates from the administration

### *NORGLOBAL2 Research Networks*

The funding decision regarding the NORGLOBAL2 Research Networks was made by correspondence in January/February 2021. The following proposals were approved for grant:

- 322461 - The taxation, capital and development research network, NUPI
- 322630 - Research Network on Competence and Job Creation, CMI
- 322410 - Norway-ASEAN Consortium in Risk Management for Safer and Sustainable Ocean, NTNU

The following proposals were rejected:

- 322429 - International Research Network for Education, Work and Social Cohesion (EduWorkSoCo), University of Stavanger
- 322445 - International Research Network on Nature-based Solutions for Sustainable and Liveable Cities, University of Stavanger

### *Assessment procedure of project proposals*

Following the funding decisions of the 2020-calls, there has been a debate and a criticism of the Research Council's assessment procedure of research proposals in the media, especially Khrono (an online newspaper for the Norwegian research and higher education institutions). Most redress procedures following the funding decisions have been linked to the procedure of rejection of proposals, which received fairly weak grades from the individual assessments, from a full panel discussion. In some cases, this procedure caused a lack of coherence between the grade given and the written feed-back to the applicant.

Members of the portfolio board pointed out that peer-review processes are imperfect. However, there are steps that can be taken to ensure a more robust process. One example is the UK where proposals are sent to individual experts before being reviewed by a panel comprising experts other than those who have done the initial assessment. This allows for a greater range of expertise to be included into the assessment procedure. This mode demands a greater workload for the funding agent, which should be taken into consideration. Receiving comments from the applicants on the expert assessments could also be helpful in assuring as thorough peer-reviews as possible.

The administration informed the board that RCN will follow-up on this through dialogue with stakeholders and an evaluation of current procedures after this year's application process is completed.

### *Calls for proposals in 2021 - status*

This year's calls for proposals for researcher projects and collaborative projects was moved up to 10. and 17. February accordingly. The portfolio board will make funding decisions for a total of four calls following the assessment of the proposals. Panel meetings will be held in April-May, and the funding decisions will be made in June.

### *R&D-budget 2021*

The R&D-budget in the Research Council for 2021 has been affected by a 'technical cut'. The purpose is to reduce the transfer of funds across fiscal years, as the Research Council has gained an excess liquidity that surpasses one third of the annual income. The activity, i.e. the amounts allocated to calls for proposals, is not to be reduced.

Funding periods for thematic areas Norglobal2 and Utenriks is coming to an end in 2023, and most the available funding is already committed to ongoing projects. It is important to start work on securing a new period of funding for these areas. The administration will work together with MFA on this, and keep the board updated.

The Global Health Research has been funded for the upcoming ten years with a total amount of 500 million NOK. The board pointed out that although it was good news that funding for a new period now was secured, an annual amount of 50 million NOK is not much considering the challenges of this area. Peter, Nynke and Fanny will consider how the board can promote increased funding. The administration will then get back to the board with a proposal on how we can work to increase funding of this field.

***Decision:*** *The updates from the administration are taken into consideration.*

## **Item PSGLOBAL 5/21**

### **Portfolio analysis**

The portfolio analysis gives a status in regard to goal achievement of the portfolio plan. The analysis is performed on the total portfolio, i.e. on all Research Council-funded projects, EU-funded projects and, if deemed relevant, SkatteFunn (a tax deduction scheme for R&D-efforts in the private sector). Other efforts outside of the Research Council are included to the extent that it is considered appropriate. The analysis will also present information on the capacity and the quality of the research in the various priorities of the portfolio plan, the composition of the R&D-effort as to research sector, disciplines, geographic distribution of researchers (domestically and internationally) etc. As the investment plans must be approved by the portfolio boards by the end of September 2021, the portfolio analyses must therefore be presented to the portfolio boards well in advance of the processing of the investment plans.

***Decision:*** *The portfolio board asks the administration to develop a comprehensive portfolio analysis for Global Development and*

*International Relations along the lines proposed. The portfolio analysis shall be presented to the portfolio board in June 2021.*

## **Item PSGLOBAL 6/21**

### **Revision of the Portfolio Plan - schedule**

*Document:* Portfolio Plan for Global Development and International Relations

The portfolio plans were approved by the Research Council's board in June 2020 after consideration and approval by the portfolio boards. These plans were prepared in a short time, based on existing program plans and without extensive input processes. The Board therefore decided that all portfolio plans should be available in a revised version with approval from the Board by June 2022. The revision of the portfolio plan will consist of two input phases and three rounds of discussion in the portfolio board before the final approval of the portfolio plan by the Board in June 2022:

- Anchoring in the portfolio board - March 2021
- The knowledge base and input phase 1 - March-September 2021
- Internal processing in the Research Council and processing in the portfolio manager - October-November 2021
- Draft portfolio plan for open consultation - December 2021 - January 2022

As the first version of the portfolio plan was finalized only eight months ago, there will not be a complete re-do of the plan. However, the revision is an opportunity to adjust the plan and to correct weak points.

The portfolio board pointed out some areas that should be further developed: The connection between key documents and concrete action-points and priorities should be more explicit. Also, there is a need to pinpoint more clearly research gaps and research strengths – which will be helpful when prioritizing funding initiatives. There should be a sentence or two on how to combine and align policy relevant research to underpin Norwegian interests and high-quality research. Further the plan should explain more carefully how grand challenges are related to Norway. Impact must be highlighted, and the plan should explicitly state what are the core priorities to make a difference. The plan should also reflect more on the modality of research, given restraints on travel and working with development research etc. – moving beyond only discussing the topics but also on how research can be performed. Invite input from other countries, especially LMICs and from the non-academic sector such as business and NGOs.

***Decision:*** *The portfolio board will be invited to give more comprehensive input to the process of revising the portfolio plan and to participate in the revision of the plan itself.*

## Item PSGLOBAL 7/21

### Global Health call for proposals – National research schools

One of the activities planned within the area of Global health in 2021 was to set aside NOK 16 million for a joint call for National Research schools. The funding will be earmarked a Research School in Global health. This was presented and approved in the Investment plan at the Portfolio Board meeting on 23rd September 2020.

The scheme for National Research Schools (FORSKERSKOLER) provides funding for 23 national researcher schools across Norway and covers all thematic areas. The purpose of the scheme is to raise the quality and relevance of Norwegian doctoral degree programmes through renewal and quality development, and high-quality and relevant scientific training. This is achieved through national and international networks of scientific communities that can include universities, university colleges and research institutes, which can supplement the institutions' own doctoral degree programmes. The goal is for the candidates to receive a coordinated and high-quality education that qualifies them for research and other work that requires a high level of scientific insight and expertise. Candidates affiliated to a research school complete their PhD at their own educational institution. The previous call for national research schools within global health has given students and young researchers important networks in their early-career stages.

The text on global health will be included in the overall call text. The application deadline is 15. September. The funding decision will be made by the Portfolio Board in its meeting in December 2021.

The call text will be further developed with the input from Nynke, Peter and Fanny.

**Decision:** *The Portfolio Board takes note of the information given by the administration about the call for National Research Schools and provides additional input and comments to the call text for global health.*

## Item PSGLOBAL 8/21

### Framework for the Research Council's input on the revised long-term plan

Kristin Danielsen presented the work ahead regarding the Research Council's input to the revision of the Governments long-term plan for research and higher education. The administration has started mapping important trends globally and nationally. The Board gave its input and comments in their December meeting. We are in an early stage of the process, and the chairs of the different portfolio boards will be invited to discuss this topic in more detail later this month.

The portfolio board made the following preliminary comments:

The global backdrop and the global dimension should be more developed than what is the case in the present long-term plan. Parts of the security dimension is missing, including increased precarious working conditions for researchers, - especially research partners in the global south. Funders need to take this into consideration and establish support mechanisms. The security dimension outlined in the presentation seems too focused on the technological/digital dimension. The point on anti-globalism and nationalism does not give a sufficient perspective, there should be more emphasis on democratic regression and anti-liberal institutions, a trend also seen in many liberal democracies following the Covid-19 pandemic.

It may be beneficial to clarify the perspectives Norway for Norway vs. Norway for the global world. Perhaps it could be useful to look at the portfolio plan? In order to strengthen the input to the revised long-term plan one should echo more the international language regarding the SDGs. Perspectives on health is missing in the RCN-trends, although there are strong arguments for why this should be included.

Ageing and migration are mentioned as topics, but they are also important as trends. Diversity and racial issues should be mentioned, re. the 'Black Lives Matters'-movement. In addition to the countries listed in the Panorama-strategy (Brazil, India, Japan, China, Russia, South-Africa and South-Korea), perhaps the poorest countries also should be mentioned, especially African as they have the bulk of young people. This could justify a more prominent position of Africa on the agenda.

There should be a stronger emphasis on how Norway can be competitive in the global rush to decarbonize. Under the item 'Digitalisation' there is no mention of media, the changing role of media and how people tend to go to 'echo-chambers'. There should also be a stronger emphasis on societal inequality and human rights as part of the sustainability challenge.

The revised long-term plan should also include perspectives regarding the recent criticism of the peer-review process, which is in part also a question of policy relevant impact vs. high-quality research. This is an issue that has to be bridged.

Other important trends are related to the post-Covid era: the increase in poverty, the challenging debt-burden for poor countries, multi-lateralism under pressure, etc.

Finally, the challenges concerning fake news and the need for reliable information should be addressed.

***Decision:*** *The administration will invite this portfolio board to give its comments to the final draft of the Research Council's input to the revised long-term plan in September.*

**Item PSGLOBAL 9/21****Any other business**

The September meeting will be held in week 36 or week 37. The administration will send a doodle to decide the exact date.

Regarding the involvement of LMIC's in strategic work, the Research council is involved in an initiative taken by the UK regarding Fair and equitable partnerships. The aim is to develop a guiding document on how to ensure equitable partnership practices.

This year's Norwegian science festival has the thematic heading 'Peace and conflict'. The department for Global development and International relations are engaged to give input to the festival's agenda.

**Item PSGLOBAL 10/21****Approval of Decision protocol**

***Decision:** The Decision protocol and minutes of meeting will be approved by correspondence following the meeting.*