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Introduction

For Norway, the Russian Federation, with the longest coastline to the Arctic Sea of any state, has been a neighbour in the High North for centuries. Due to the important political and economic interests of many actors in this area, there exists a permanent need for research and research cooperation.

In this context the NORRUSS programme was created and planned for the period 2012 – 2016, comprising of two main thematic dimensions, both with views to Norwegian interests:

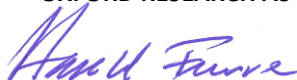
1. Challenges and Opportunities in the High North. Russia's Relations with the Outside World
2. Developments in Russia - Politics, Economy and Society

This mid-term programme evaluation is to assess whether the program is on track with its planned implementation and to make recommendations on a possible continuation of the program after 2016. The purpose of this evaluation is to consider the programme's thematic and organisational development to date.

This evaluation was carried out in the period from June to October 2014. Senior analyst Aase Marthe Johansen Horrigno (Project Manager) and senior analyst Bart Romanow have conducted the evaluation. Salve Dahle and Ole Øvretveit provided important input to the evaluation of NORRUSS' thematic scope and stakeholder involvement.

We would like to thank all stakeholders for their input delivered during interviews and meetings.

OXFORD RESEARCH AS

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Harald Furre".

Harald Furre

CEO

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Executive summary

NORRUSS is the Research Council's first social science research programme on Russia and the High North. The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs have funded the programme and the guidelines for the programme is laid out in three agreements between The Research Council of Norway (RCN) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) (separate with Section for Russia and Section for Northern Areas). These contracts allocated funds for the period 2012-2016.

In 2012, the programme launched its first Call for Proposals and most projects started up in 2013. Three projects in the NORRUSS portfolio are finished, but most of the projects are currently in their implementation phase. Hence, it is too early to evaluate their outcomes and impact and the quality of research conducted.

Instead, this evaluation assesses whether the programme is on the right track with and makes recommendations for improving the programme's effect and efficiency.

Overall, the logic of the programme theory in NORRUSS is good. There is a large degree of overlap between the expectations presented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the programme objectives. Furthermore, the programme theory shows a logical consistency in the programme, where the suggested activities (calls for proposals, thematic scope, project types) are likely to help the programme achieve its goals.

The programme objectives are ambitious and defined with a long-term perspective, including:

- to develop long-term and strategic competence in Norway on High North
- to develop long-term and strategic competence in Norway on Russia within the social sciences and humanities, as well as research cooperation with Russia
- to develop new knowledge on foreign policy issues of special relevance to the High North/Arctic, with a focus on the interests of China, Japan, South Korea and India

As regards the first two objectives, NORRUSS is on the right path in order to "develop long term and strategic competence" in the field. However, the impact

could be increased. We find that there is room for improvement and a need for continuation of the programme, in order to develop long-term strategic expertise.

NORRUSS has managed to sustain the existing competence on Russia and the High North and allow existing research groups to maintain their thematic focus and size. The two main objectives of the programme require more focus in the future, through financing of recruitment positions and further strengthening of the strategic research conducted in the existing groups.

It should be pointed out, that the projects to a large extent have been awarded to institutions with long tradition within studies on Russia and the High North. However, some newer research groups have also surfaced, e.g. from the University of Nordland (UiN). The conclusion is that there has been some widening of the scope, while at the same time the traditionally important institutes in the field have maintained their position.

The projects are either reported too short term, or too small to develop new research groups and to create significant additional interest among researchers in these fields. By some project managers, NORRUSS is considered "just another" source of funding and not seen as important for shaping long-term behaviours of the research groups.

Given that this is one of the main objectives, the size of the project portfolio on the third strategic objective (focus on Asian countries' interests in the High North/Arctic), is disproportionate compared to the programme's portfolio on the other two main objectives, Russia and the High North.

The international dimension is taken good care of in the NORRUSS projects. The projects include extensive cooperation with Russian partners, as well as with other international partners. The projects financed by NORRUSS should be praised for their international cooperation and the networking possibilities created through the projects.

Norwegian expertise with regard to the High North and Russia has been noticed in the international scientific community. Initial research contacts have through NORRUSS projects been developed into more established cooperative networks. The most important countries where research collaboration has

been established include Russia, USA, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Norwegian research groups are perhaps not perceived globally as leading, or the most significant; however, the Norwegian activity is recognised and the existence of a separate programme dedicated to Russia and the High North is perceived as extraordinary and, according to some opinions, luxurious. Some interviewees argue that the role of Norwegian research groups has grown internationally over the course of the programme.

Several Norwegian institutes have organised well-developed networks. There are also a number of Russian partners, who have cooperated in more than one project.

In terms of relevance, the programme board is actively pursuing projects that cover relevant themes. The board also make use of their ability to reject proposals that they do not considered relevant.

Concerning the calls, there is an emphasis on multi- and interdisciplinarity and especially internationalisation. Cooperation with Russian partners is a prerequisite for funding.

The projects are generally multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary and all the major social science disciplines are included in the portfolio. In some projects, it has been difficult to mobilise researchers with a background in law.

Projects' internal interdisciplinarity varied in scope and intensity. In general, however, the programme has delivered on this objective.

In terms of contact with RCN during project implementation and financial and results reporting, projects in NORRUSS were subject to standard Research Council procedures. In most of the interviews conducted there were no complaints regarding these issues. The respondents generally assessed the access to information and communication as good or very good.

The respondents in most cases saw the cooperation with international researchers as fruitful and beneficial to the projects.

Cooperation with actors in Russia has proved complicated in some cases. Some of the Russian institutions engaged in the projects have not cooperated to the extent expected; problems have appeared also with individual researchers' participation in the research

conducted. In general, project managers revealed that cooperation with individual researchers, who were not influenced by umbrella contracts with their institutions, was easier and allowed for more flexibility than cooperation with research institutions.

Project cooperation with Russia is a goal in NORRUSS. The programme has clearly contributed to increased cooperation between the countries. This has not led to better academic output or quality in all cases. Some projects have not produced expected outcomes, or in some cases, the project managers assessed the outcomes as being of poor quality.

Some projects faced problems with access to data, especially while approaching empirical fieldwork, or reported a general mismatch in communication with Russian partners in the project implementation phase. The Russian bureaucracy has also been pointed out as a negative factor shaping the cooperation.

On the other hand, in several cases, the respondents praised their Russian partners and researchers for their high level of professionalism and dedication.

At the same time, some fear that the focus on cooperation with Russia can lead to a reduction in the cooperation with other countries. At this stage, however, the international cooperation is still very good.

The current political situation between Russia and European countries has not influenced the projects.

Concerning dissemination, the projects completed and those almost completed have used standard means of dissemination, including web pages, workshops, presentations on conferences and academic publications.

Events organised have been reported to gain the attention of policy makers and the general public through the media. Publications are typically available through scientific journals but several book chapters have also been recorded as an important outcome of the programme.

The NORRUSS projects have generally not included recruitment positions such as PhD- and post-doctoral positions. Given that research recruitment is an important tool for developing strategic, long-term expertise, this is puzzling and a finding we urge the programme to address.

Chapter 1. Evaluation context and approach

1.1 Evaluation context and mandate

The High North (including the Arctic) is Norway's number one foreign policy priority, as set out in the Stoltenberg II government's first and second policy platforms. The government launched its High North Strategy in 2006, following up with the report *New Building Blocks in the North* in 2009. In its Report no. 7 to the Storting (2011-2012), which contains the White Paper entitled "The High North: Visions and strategies", the Stoltenberg II government presents a coherent, long-term Norwegian policy for dealing with the challenges and opportunities in the High North. The Stoltenberg II government desire was to ensure that Norway is a leader in the field of knowledge in and about the High North, and that it will strengthen and develop further cooperation with Russia.

In its Research Strategy for the Arctic and Northern Areas - Revision 1 (forskning.nord.to) 2011-2016, the Research Council of Norway takes account of changes in national and international frameworks for the Arctic and the High North. Increasing need for research and new knowledge was emphasised to ensure sustainable management of the area's abundant natural resources and to respond to the challenges and opportunities arising from climate change and an emerging new political framework.

Russia is an integral part of the High North policy, and the Research Strategy for the Arctic and Northern Areas thus stresses the importance of knowledge building about Russia. However, Russia's importance to Norway as a neighbour and global actor also expands the framework of the High North policy. The research programme was therefore not limited to the study of Russia as an actor in the High North.

Before starting the NORRUSS program, the Research Council of Norway appointed a programming committee tasked with preparing a program document (Research Programme on International Relations in the Northern Areas and Russian Society - INOR). The work was completed in 2008, but the

programme was not immediately established. Nevertheless the Ministry of Foreign Affairs granted funding for an institution based Strategic Project: GeoPolitics in the High North (Institute for Defence Studies), which was one of INOR's target areas.

GeoPolitics in the High North was later included into the NORRUSS programme at its establishment.

With a small grant from the Ministry the Research Council appointed a Programme Board to follow up GeoPolitics in the High North, and two other new projects: "Federal Russian Politics: Modernizing Northern Economies" (Fridtjof Nansen Institute-FNI), and "Modernizing the Russian North: Politics and Practice" (NUPI). In this evaluation, we will also elaborate on the research results of these three projects.

The financial framework for NORRUSS was established through agreements between The Research Council of Norway and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (separate from the Section for Russia and the Section for Northern Areas). These contracts allocated funds for the period 2012-2016. The first major Call for Proposals was announced in 2012 and most projects started in 2013. For this reason, most of the projects currently are in their implementation phase and therefore it is too early to evaluate their outcomes, impact and the quality of research conducted.

An overview of the projects financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, their duration and financing is provided in the table 1.

Table 1: Overview of NORRUSS portfolio financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs –social science projects (mill NOK)

No.	Project Title	Year									
		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	SUM
1.	Geopolitics in the High North. Norwegian Interests	3,0	8,1	7,8	7,5	5,4					31,9
2.	Federal Russian Politics: Modernizing Northern Economies				1,5	1,5	1,4				4,4
3.	Modernizing the Russian North: Politics and Practice				1,7	1,8	1,5				5,0
4.	Asian countries' interest in the High North: Security/foreign policy, energy, shipping and research/climate change					2,0	4,8	4,8	3,5		15,0
5.	Nation-building, nationalism and the new 'other' in today's Russia (NEORUSS)						2,0	2,2	2,7		6,9
6.	Arctic Urban Sustainability in Russia					0,2	2,3	2,5	2,3		7,3
7.	Network governance: A tool for understanding Russian policy-making?						2,0	2,1	2,1		6,3
8.	Arctic Shipping through Challenging Waters						3,5	4,0	3,9		11,5
9.	Local government budgeting reforms in Russia: implications and tensions						1,7	2,5	2,7	0,8	7,6
10.	Higher Education in the High North: Regional Restructuring through Educational Exchanges and Student Mobility					1,2	2,2	2,2	1,3		6,9
11.	Sustainability and Petroleum Extraction: Corporate and Community Perspectives in Northern Norway and the Russian Arctic						2,3	1,7	1,6		5,7
12.	Russia's defence industry - an engine for economic growth?						0,5	1,0	1,0	0,5	3,0
13.	The Russian welfare state under quadruple influence: stability or conflict?						0,4	2,0	1,7	1,4	5,5
14.	New Political Groups and the Russian State (2008-2012) (NEPORUS)						0,4	2,3	2,1	1,1	5,8
15.	Legal Culture, Corruption and Law Enforcement: the Russian Case						1,4	2,2	1,6		5,2
16.	Trade Integration, Geopolitics and the Economy of Russia (TIGER)						0,2	2,5	2,0	0,8	5,5
17.	The Individual and the State in Russia: Self-images, Coping Strategies, Civil Society (INSTARUSS)							1,4	1,8	1,3	4,5
	SUM – Ministry of Foreign Affairs allocation	3	8,1	7,8	10,7	12,1	26,6	33,4	30,3	5,9	138

Mandate

The Research Council of Norway's wish was to conduct a mid-term assessment of the NORRUSS programme (2012-2016) to assess whether the programme is on track with its planned implementation and to make recommendations on a possible continuation of the program after 2016. The purpose of this evaluation is to consider the program's thematic and organisational development to date. The academic performance of the programme is not assessed in the evaluation, because the projects are mostly still in the implementation phase. However, we have made an exception to this for the three projects that were started before NORRUSS was established.

The scope of the evaluation is limited to the projects funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; this excludes the projects financed through joint calls with other programmes.

1.2 Evaluation concepts

1.2.1 Evaluation criteria

In this particular evaluation, Oxford Research applied a theoretical framework based on OECD Development Assistance Committee evaluation criteria.

In order to observe various issues in relation to each other and conduct a comprehensive analysis, it was necessary to frame the evaluation in a more coherent mode reflecting the general logic of intervention. Figure 1 illustrates this.

The figure shows how the evaluation relates to the reality of the programme and its particular building blocks. An evaluation of a public intervention should consider both the relevance and efficiency, as well as the achievement of programme objectives.

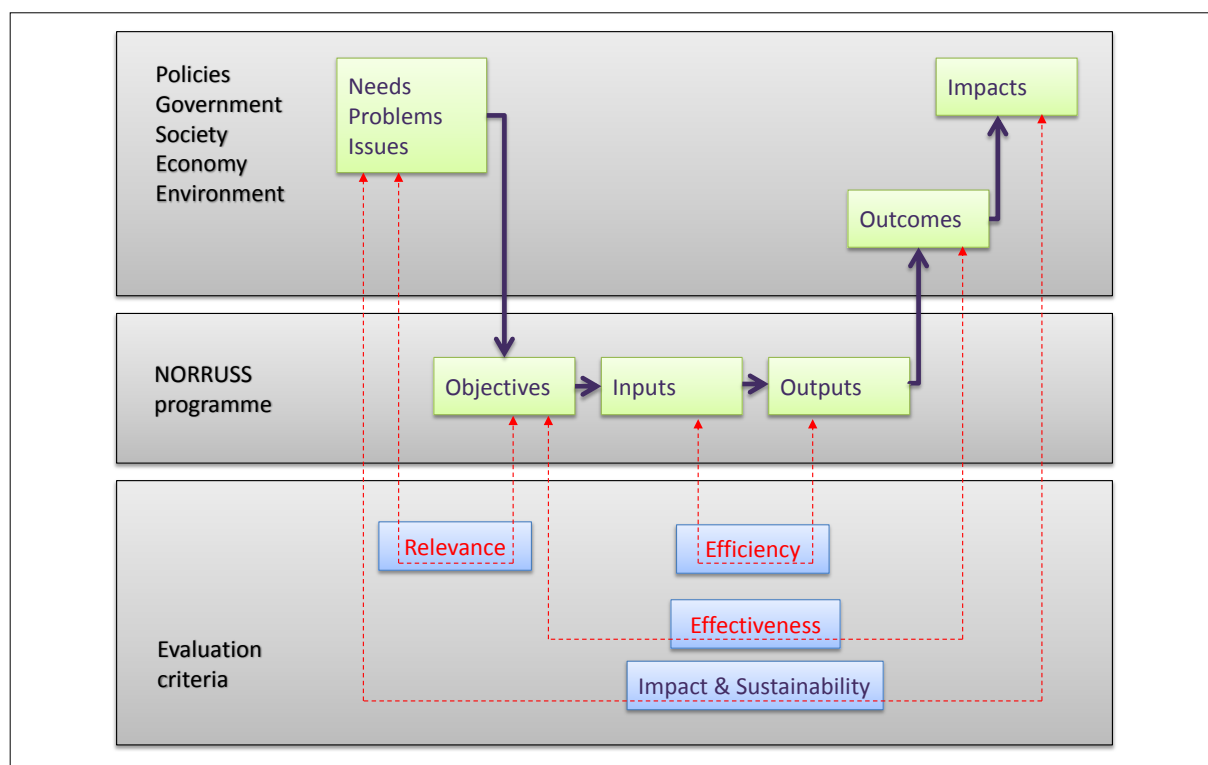
In the evaluation, we have used a customised version of the OECD DAC criteria as a framework. From this larger framework, the evaluation team concentrated on three criteria (namely relevance, effectiveness and efficiency). This allowed us to conduct a strategic analysis of all the efforts, in addition to examining the concrete results of the finalised projects.

The three criteria we will focus on are:

- Effectiveness. To which extent has the programme managed to (or is expected to) attain its objectives. Would these objectives have been achieved without the programme intervention? To what extent do new international research collaborations appear because of the programme?
- Relevance. To what extent are the programme's goal and activities relevant? Is there a link between the objectives of the programme and the types of projects that have been financed? Has the programme succeeded in mobilising the relevant research groups?
- Efficiency. To what extent is the programme organised in an appropriate manner? Would the same or better results been achieved with an alternative approach?

This general approach was used to sort the research questions mentioned in the Terms of reference.

Figure 1: Logic of intervention and selected evaluation criteria



The key focus for this evaluation assignment has been to check if the programme is moving in the right direction. With this in mind, the evaluation has also examined if it is likely that the programme will attain its

objectives. In this context, the programme theory approach was proposed.

The evaluation team have examined how the program was set up in order to achieve its goals, as well as what activities have been undertaken to achieve these objectives. Furthermore, we have investigated the relationship between activities, program organisation and its goals, in order to trace logical relationships between these aspects.

In sum, this is a study of the internal programme logic in the context of the three criteria mentioned above.

Such an approach to program theory and the description of the internal logic of the intervention forms a good basis on which to address the question of whether the programme is on the right track. Through assessment of the chain of effects, it is possible to investigate, even in a programme's early phase, if the program is on track. If the preliminary steps in the program theory have not been implemented, or are not producing the expected results, that is a good indication that the program is not moving in the right direction and vice versa.

1.3 Methodological approach

In this evaluation, we have applied different methods. Qualitative methods have been at the centre of the project, however in some cases we have included a more quantitative analysis of data. The latter is mostly done in relation to the portfolio analysis.

The methodological and analytical tools we have used are:

- Desk studies
- Programme theory
- Qualitative in-depth interviews
- Portfolio-analysis
- Analysis of the calls
- Network analysis

In this chapter, we will give a more thorough description of our methodological approach.

1.3.1 Desk studies

The first step in the evaluation was desk research. This included collecting relevant documents, both policy documents and programme relevant documents.

Key documents have been the programme plan, the INOR programme plan, agreements between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the RCN, as well as the Research Council's two strategies for the High North and other policy documents regarding the Stoltenberg II government's High North strategy.

In addition to this, we have collected data from the programme itself, such as performance indicators and lists of projects, panel evaluations and minutes from the programme board meetings. We have also collected data on all the calls, as well as reports from the projects. This information has been used to map the context NORRUSS operates within, as well as giving input to the general analysis of the programme.

1.3.2 Programme theory

We have described the NORRUSS programme theory. A programme theory is the theory of change that the programme draws on. This has a two-folded contribution to the evaluation. Firstly, it is a tool for us. It highlights the reasons for establishing the programme, the activities in the programme as well as the objectives. Thus, it shows how the programme is expected to function.

This makes it easier for us to test if the programme actually functions as expected. To do this, the chapter on programme theory ends with a discussion of NORRUSS' programme theory and identifies areas that needs further examination in the evaluation.

Secondly, it gives information about what functions and not functions in the programme. We can trace the relationship between activities and objectives and examine whether this is logically consistent and if the programme activities have been carried out as expected. Thus, we are more able to pinpoint what has functioned and not functioned, hence, providing an opportunity to learn from the mistakes in the programme and rectify these.

Furthermore, the programme theory is an element in examining the internal relevance of the programme.

1.3.3 Qualitative interview

Qualitative interviews have been the main source of information in this evaluation. The interviews have given in-depth knowledge about the programme, as well as the rationales behind the programme.

Several groups of actors have been interviewed in the evaluation process. In the first phase of the project, we conducted interviews with the programme administration, the chair of the programme board, as well

as with the department director and the division director. The person formerly responsible for the High North Strategy in the Research Council has also been interviewed. We have also interviewed the former leader of the group that wrote the INOR-plan. In total, this phase included six interviews. With two exceptions, these interviews were all carried out in person. These interviews were all important for writing the programme theory, as well as to get a general understanding of the programme.

At a later stage, we also conducted interviews with three other board members.

Interviews with other research council programmes

We initially proposed to conduct interviews with all research council programmes that interacted with NORRUSS. This proved difficult, as several respondents declined and felt that they had little to contribute. This led to there being only one interview with programmes related to NORRUSS.

Interviews with external partners

We have interviewed:

- Representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, both the High North-department and the Russia section.
- Representatives from the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR).

The interviews with the Ministry focused on the background of NORRUSS and what the Ministry had expected from the programme as well as whether they were satisfied with the programme.

Interviews with project managers and cooperation partners

This is by far the largest group of respondents in this evaluation. We have conducted telephone interviews, with one exception, with the majority of the managers of the social science projects in the NORRUSS portfolio. We have however also conducted one interview with a project manager from a natural science project.

Furthermore, we have interviewed several project partners from other countries, in order to examine the extent and depth of project cooperation. One

Russian partner declined, due to the sensitivity of the project topic.

1.3.4 Portfolio-analysis

Our experience from former evaluations of Research Council Programmes has shown that portfolio-analyses are a valid source of information. In the portfolio analysis, we have gone through the approved projects, their institutional affiliation, cooperation partners, project size and thematic focus.

We have used the project reports and description of the project objectives to analyse which disciplines the project cover and, thus, which projects can be considered multi-disciplinary. Moreover, these reports have been important in order to determine if the project portfolio has covered the prioritised areas in the programme.

1.3.5 Network analysis

We used this information to conduct a network analysis that shows the patterns of cooperation in the projects, including which institutions and countries are represented in the portfolio.

Furthermore, this analysis has been helpful in determining which research communities are represented in the portfolio, and if the programme has spread the funding too thinly.

Oxford Research prepared analysis of cooperation linkages within all NORRUSS social science projects. This was based on the available listing of project coordinators and their partners in each project. Unfortunately, there is no data available as regards the intensity of cooperation in financial terms nor the cooperation outcomes resulting e.g. in joint publications. The network analysis was prepared using NODE XL software and Harel-Koren fast multiscale algorithm¹, producing a force-directed diagram, designed to make all the lines ("edges") about the same length and to minimise line crossings, which can make for a more aesthetically pleasing and readable graph.

The network graph presents all the main actors and their interconnections, providing an overview of programme internationalisation.

1.3.6 Expert assessment of the programme

The Research Council appointed an expert to assist the evaluation team in the assessment of the programme. The input from the expert is included as an

¹ http://www.research.att.com/groups/infovis/res/legacy_papers/DBLP-journals-jgaa-HarelK02.pdf

appendix, and the conclusions from this input are discussed in the report.

Chapter 2. NORRUSS' programme theory – background and programme rationale

2.1 What is programme theory?

One of the main topics in this mid-term evaluation is whether the NORRUSS-programme is on the right course to fulfil its objectives and purpose or not.

Programme theory is a central tool in order to provide a point of departure for the further assessment of the programmes course. Put simply, the programme theory is the programmes own theory on how to reach its objectives – its theory of change. It is the sum of the programme designers' thoughts on how the programme is supposed to work and how the programme is expected to achieve its goals.

Key questions that need to be answered in a programme theory for a research programme are:

- Which activities are needed in order to reach the objectives?
- Which interventions were needed to reach the programme objectives and how were the programme activities expected to help reach the programme objectives?
- What must the call for proposals include in order to increase the likelihood of providing the needed research results?

Furthermore, through asking how the programme was expected to work, we get a further understanding of the programmes' internal relevance i.e. are the implemented activities likely to yield the necessary or expected results and outcomes?

Together these questions, or rather the answers to them, makes it possible to describe how the NORRUSS programme is supposed to work, as well as the internal logic of the programme.

With the description of the programme and its activities as a point of departure, we can then examine how the programme actually work and whether the programme's activities are logically expected to contribute to the goal attainment in the programme. This will help us identify why the installed interventions have succeeded or failed (Vedung 2009:209), and, what parts of the interventions have failed or succeeded.

Most importantly, the programme theory is a good starting point to examine if the programme is on the right course. Since we, through writing the programme theory, have a good knowledge of the intervention logic, we have the possibility to examine if the programme is following the course described in the programme theory. If not, this indicates a lower probability of reaching the programme's objectives, or at least, it indicates a factor that needs closer examination.

In the following section, we will describe NORRUSS' programme theory, through discussing why the programme was established, which problems and challenges the programme should address as well as through which means these should be addressed. In the discussion, we have drawn on data from several sources. Firstly, data from the Research Council has been important; this includes the programme plan and documents on the High North-strategy, as well as interviews with the programme management. Furthermore, interviews with representatives from the Ministry of Foreign affairs (financing institution), and other actors involved in the establishment of NORRUSS and its "forerunners" INOR and «Geopolitics in the High North», have given valuable input to the discussion.

2.2 NORRUSS programme theory

NORRUSS is a Research Council programme; this means that the focus is on research, and especially on financing research. This is the main activity in the programme, as well as being an internal coordinator of issues related to Russia within the Research Council.

The conducted interviews all give a similar picture of the rationale behind NORRUSS. Three arguments have been used to explain why NORRUSS was established. These three reasons also make up parts of the programme's objectives. The three are:

- The need to develop and strengthen research on the High North and the Arctic's. This is closely related to the Norwegian High North strategy.

- The need to develop and strengthen the knowledge and competence on Russia, including the Russian society, Russian economics, decisions making as well as the Russian legal system.
- Strengthen and develop the research communities that studied Russia, as well as securing more stable financing for research on Russia.

The two first reasons are clearly linked to the programme objectives, whereas the third reason can be seen more as a means to an end, i.e. to build competence on Russia and the High North.

2.2.1 Knowledge about the High North

The Stoltenberg II government's strategy on the High North has knowledge as a key priority. The strategy states that «We will be at the forefront of international efforts to develop knowledge in and about the High North²». Furthermore, the strategy also states a wish to develop people-to-people cooperation in the High North and to strengthen the cooperation *with* Russia.

The Research Council had developed its own High North strategy³ shortly before the Stoltenberg II government released their strategy. This strategy was a research strategy and encompassed studies on Russian society and consequently the social sciences. The realization of this strategy also meant organisational changes within the Council, where research related to the High North was to be included in all relevant programmes.

The process in the Research Council involved mapping the Council's projects related to the High North. This revealed that there was a general lack of projects aimed at understanding Russia, developments in Russia and Russia's relationship to the outside world. This formed part of the background for why the Council suggested establishing a project like NORRUSS.

2.2.2 Knowledge about Russia

The focus on the High North has a link to general knowledge about Russia, as pointed out in the Council's strategy on the High North, knowledge about Russian society, Russian economy, Russian politics as well as geopolitical challenges in the High North. However, regional studies on the High North could not shed the needed light on Russian politics and policymaking and Russia as a state. Russia is a

highly centralised state where decision-making in politically important issues to a large degree takes place in Moscow. Thus, the programme's scope was expanded to include research on the Russian state and especially Moscow. Knowledge about the Russian economy and matters that influence the Russian foreign policy was needed.

Together, this clearly pointed in the direction of a research programme with a social science perspective on the High North and Russia, as well as on Russia's interactions with the outside world. This also included economic and legal perspectives.

2.2.3 Stronger research communities

Furthermore, the need for knowledge and competence included more than research reports. As respondents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have emphasised, the Ministry was eager to support research on Russia, in order to improve their own contact with the research community. Furthermore, the Ministry expressed a wish to invite researcher to seminars and makes use of their knowledge in the early stages of policy formation.

Within the research community, as well as in the Research Council and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there was an impression that social science research on Russia had received little funding, and that a more stable source of financing was needed. The Norwegian Research Council had, for example, never financed a purely social science research programme on Russia before.

2.2.4 An INOR-detour

The path leading to NORRUSS has not been smooth. Following the Research Council's High North strategy, as well as the Stoltenberg II government's strategy, a working group led by Arild Moe from the Fridtjof Nansen Institute, was established in 2007. This group drafted a plan for a new programme named INOR. This plan suggested that the programme on the High North and Russia should be based on four pillars:

- 1) Research on the geopolitical situation in the High North,
- 2) Research on the Russian society,
- 3) Research on resources and energy,
- 4) Prerequisites for Norwegian-Russian business cooperation.

² http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/Nordmr%C3%A5dene/new_building_blocks_in_the_north.pdf

³ The first strategy was Forskning Nord (2006). In 2011, the Research Council released a revised strategy, forskning.nord.no.

The drafted plan did not lead to a new programme. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which were supposed to be one of the main financiers of the new programme, withdrew from the process. The eventual outcome of this process was the establishment of a research project on the geopolitical situation in the High North («Geopolitics in the High North»).

However, the NORRUSS-programme plan draws on the INOR-process, and the plan drafted by the INOR-group. The first three pillars are mostly included in NORRUSS, but the fourth pillar in INOR did not become part of the programme. Furthermore, key members of the reference group for «Geopolitics in the High North» have continued as programme board members in NORRUSS. This also includes the chair of the board, whom was formerly the chair of the reference group.

2.2.5 Overarching goals

To sum up the discussion so far, NORRUSS was expected to:

- finance research projects with a long term perspective on strategic relevant issues;
- provide knowledge about Russia including research cooperation with Russia, focused on two thematic areas;
- emphasise the social sciences, and encourage multidisciplinary research and internationalisation;
- provide the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the media and the public, with relevant and important knowledge about Russian society, economy, political and legal system;
- Strengthen the research communities studying Russia.

The elements of these bullet points corresponds with the programme document to a large degree. The difference between them being that the document also includes an objective on Asia's role in the High North. Furthermore, with the exception of the fourth pillar in INOR that is "Prerequisites for Norwegian-Russian business cooperation" these objectives are largely similar to the objectives drafted in the INOR-plan.

The ambition is to fill the "grey holes" in our knowledge of Russia and the High North/Arctic. Furthermore, the interdependencies between research

on challenges and opportunities in the High North and developments in Russia are highlighted in the Programme plan as well as by the respondents in this evaluation.

As the programme evolved, the emphasis on cooperation with Russia became stronger, and the Research Council of Norway established two agreements with the Russian Foundation of Basic Research and the Russian Foundation for Humanities. These cooperation agreements have led to several joint calls for proposals.

2.3 How to achieve these objectives?

The next question we studied was how the programme would achieve its objectives. The programme plan gives several indications to this.

In every research programme, the calls for proposals are central tools to securing thematic relevance in the programme's project portfolio. The interviews with programme board members show that they are conscious of the programme goals in their discussions concerning the calls and the wording of the calls. The board makes strategic choices concerning the thematic scopes of the calls for proposals. Furthermore, other board members have stressed that this is an ongoing process where certain areas are covered each year.

Concerning the calls, there is an emphasis on both the multi- and interdisciplinarity aspects in the programme document, as well as on internationalisation. The multidisciplinary aspect is linked to the scope of the programme and the themes covered.

The programme document thoroughly covers internationalisation and states that:

"The programme will⁴:

- Promote research cooperation internationally, with Arctic nations, Nordic countries, Europe and others;
- Increase the emphasis on international cooperation and mobility in the grant application assessment process;

⁴ The Programme Document, page 19.

- Open to joint funding announcements in cooperation with Russian research funding institutions, in order to strengthen bilateral research cooperation;
- Promote multilateral cooperation with Russia through European research networks;
- Design measures to enhance the qualifications of Norwegian researchers in international and competitive arenas, not least within the EU”.

This shows that the programme has encompassed several tools directed at internationalisation. Some of these tools are linked to project types and the programme plan mentioned several project types directed at international cooperation:

- Visiting researcher grants;
- Grants for overseas research;
- Support for events (conferences);
- Support for networks.

In addition, the calls frequently makes international cooperation a prerequisite for receiving support. In short, the programme has several available tools in order to support and develop international cooperation and networks.

The programme board itself, and especially its composition is yet another tool to increase the internationalisation of the programme. In the member selection process, internationalisation has been stressed, and this has in turn led to a board where a significant proportion of the members are foreign experts.

The building and strengthening of research communities is part of the programme objectives. The programme document does not specify which methods to use to attain these objectives, however, the relevant project types mentioned in the document does indicate some tools specifically directed at research communities, such as:

- Research institution-based strategic projects;
- Partial funding of EU projects and other international projects;
- Fellowships (integrated into projects);
- Doctoral fellowships;
- Post-doctoral fellowships.

The programme also document stresses dissemination, both at the programme level and in projects.

In order to follow up on this point, the programme administration has written a communication plan for the programme.

2.4 Discussion of the programme theory

It is too early to evaluate the programme outcomes at this point. However, we can evaluate, if the programme practice matches the programme theory. This issue will be important throughout the entire evaluation report; however, this section will include an initial discussion of practice.

Overall, the programme theory in NORRUSS is good. There is a large degree of overlap between the expectations presented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the programme objectives. Furthermore, the programme theory shows an internal logical consistency, where the suggested tools are likely to help the programme achieve its goals.

In terms of relevance, the programme board is actively pursuing projects that cover relevant themes. The board rejects proposals that they do not consider relevant, despite high academic quality. This is one role the programme board has as a decision making body in the Research Council. For all relevant proposals, academic quality is considered important for the determination of which project to support.

However, as one programme board member puts it, the programme also has a diplomatic objective, which is to improve the academic output of Russian research through partnerships with Norwegian researchers. This objective, it has been claimed, is dominant when there are conflicts. This is in line with the increased emphasis on cooperation with Russia and the agreements made with the Russian research foundations. As such, international cooperation in this programme differs from international cooperation in other programmes, as the goal is not simply to improve research quality. Thus, the role of and outcomes from international cooperation will be studied more closely in this report.

The strengthening of research communities is an underlying goal for NORRUSS. In our understanding, this objective has both a depth and a breadth perspective. On the one hand, the programme strengthens the communities by giving long-term financing to Russia-related research. This contributes to the depth perspective. On the other hand, the breadth perspective includes supporting and

strengthening several research communities. Consequently, research communities that formerly have not, or have to a small degree, conducted research on Russia, have been supported by NORRUSS. The reason given by the programme board members is that they support high quality and relevant projects regardless of institution. Furthermore, the new communities have contributed with new perspectives, one member of the board argued, and furthermore, the board has not felt an obligation to support the “traditional” Russian-research institutions.

This strategy has somewhat support in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, although not all representatives from the Ministry agrees with the practice. A key el-

ement in this evaluation will be to examine the effects of this practice, and whether or not this is a sound practice.

Given the objectives of the programme, another concern is the relatively low use of recruitment positions in the projects and the fact that this is generally not a prerequisite for support. The interviews indicate that this has not been a much-discussed issue for the programme board. On the other hand, research institution-based strategic projects are frequently used, and these are likely to have an impact on the research communities. Still, Oxford Research believes it is important to discuss why NORRUSS, with these objectives, does not use its power to increase the number of recruitment and career building positions such as post-doctoral positions in the project portfolio.

Chapter 3. Programme relevance and preliminary goal-attainment

3.1 Programme focus and relevance

The NORRUSS programme encompasses two thematic dimensions:

1. Challenges and Opportunities in the High North. Russia's Relations with the Outside World;
2. Developments in Russia - Politics, Economy and Society.

The programme objectives are ambitious and defined with a long perspective. In this chapter, each of the primary and secondary objectives have been discussed based on views expressed in the interviews by various stakeholders of the programme.

Primary objectives

The first of the programme objectives was to develop long-term and strategic competence in Norway on High North relevant issues that have not been sufficiently scientifically explored and that are important to Norway. The research was to produce knowledge in, about and for the High North and contribute to the creation of arenas for cooperation between Norwegian and international research communities on High North relevant issues.

The second objective was to develop long-term and strategic competence in Norway on Russia within the social sciences and humanities, as well as research co-operation with Russia. The research was to produce knowledge on how political, economic and social factors affect Russian policy and decision-making, and should encompass issues of relevance for the whole of Russia, beyond merely the High North.

As regards these two most important objectives, there are several common findings for the NORRUSS programme.

NORRUSS has financed a number of projects covering different thematic fields relevant to the High North and Russia, and the programme has funded research being of importance for Norway in both areas.

The interviews nevertheless bring the notion that NORRUSS so far has not been able to “develop long term and strategic competence”. However, some re-

spondents stated that the programme has contributed to sustaining the existing competence and allowing existing research groups to maintain their thematic focus and size. The two main objectives of the programme require more focus in the future, including funding of new researcher positions and further strengthening of the strategic research conducted in the established research clusters, as well as in new research communities. The existing potential conflict between the two main programme research topics (High North research *versus* Russia research in global perspective) might be a challenge to the goal attainment.

The analysis show that some smaller research groups, which have not been particularly influential in this field before, applied to and received funding from NORRUSS. At this stage, it is nevertheless hard to prove a strategic impact as regards “development of the strategic competence” of the entire programme, only referring to this fact.

Interviewees claim that the project are either too short term, or too small (financially) to develop research groups and to create significant additional interest among researchers in these fields. In order to have the potential to strategically influence the development of existing research clusters, NORRUSS' approach would have to be strategic, with bigger projects of a longer duration.

As for now, NORRUSS has supported existing competence on Russia, but have not had the impact on development or growth that it could have had. Several Norwegian research groups dealing with Russia that are active in NORRUSS, were established in the 80s or 90s with financial support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other sources. In this perspective, NORRUSS has contributed to supporting and developing existing Norwegian competence, rather than creating, or developing it. Concerning this topic, some interviewees claim that NORRUSS is “just another” source of funding that has not been important for shaping the long-term behaviour of the research groups. Having said this, several NORRUSS projects were able to create new topics of interest or give new insights into the research conducted within already established groups. Furthermore, the programme has

funded some institutions that are not part of the “traditional” cluster on research on Russia.

The programme has not had a major impact on career planning for young researchers willing to start their career in the field. The NORRUSS portfolio reveals that recruitment positions such as PhD-positions and post-doctoral positions are not commonly included in NORRUSS projects.

As regards another aspect concerning this objective, the respondents claim that the programme have made the established research groups more visible internationally. The programme has contributed to the creation of arenas for cooperation between research communities in Norway and internationally. A number of partnerships have been strengthened through the implementation of joint research missions. Several of these partnerships would not have been established without NORRUSS support. In this regards, NORRUSS should be praised for strengthening Norwegian scientific cooperation and visibility internationally.

Finally, the third main objective was to develop new knowledge on foreign policy issues of special relevance to the High North/Arctic, with a focus on the interests of China, Japan, South Korea and India in this region, and with the objective to strengthen international research cooperation with leading Asian research institutions.

So far, the programme has conducted one call on this topic, in which the programme received only one proposal.

Therefore the programme has, in its entire portfolio, financed only one project with such focus, this being: “Asian countries’ interest in the High North: Security/foreign policy, energy, shipping and research/climate change” in cooperation with Shanghai Institute for International Studies and Korean Maritime Institute. Also within the “Geopolitics in the High North” project, some of the relevant research and publications are relevant. Finally the project “Arctic Shipping through Challenging Waters” contained cooperation with the Shanghai Ocean University, somewhat addressing this programme objective.

Overall, it must be said, that as one of the main programme objectives, the programme should continue to finance projects in this area in the future. Today, the size of the programme portfolio in this area is disproportionate to the portfolio on the other two areas.

In one interview, the questions “why there was only one proposal for this thematic call?” was taken up.

3.1.1 Thematic relevance

Interviews bring diversified opinions regarding the programme’s thematic focus.

The first group of interviewees claimed that the programme calls were broad, allowing social science researchers interested in the field to submit their proposals. In this group, there were no complaints or suggestions as regards the eventual future topics.

Another group signalled that some fields were missing. One of the most often underlined thematic shortages of the programme was related to business relations. It must be noted that the “Prerequisites for Norwegian-Russian business cooperation” was the fourth pillar in INOR, but not part of the NORRUSS programme.

It was underlined that in order to understand Russia, a detailed analysis on the links between economics and politics is needed. Therefore, projects researching business relations, connecting Norway and Russia, are needed, but missing in NORRUSS. This is to include such sectors as for example seafood, oil and gas, transportation, etc. There is a need to understand Russia’s business operations on the international markets and in the High North. Clearly political analysis will not explain the importance of the business influence on Russia. Exclusion of business-related research seems today a kind of paradox, since this field was, at the time, the one where the most intensive collaboration between Norway and Russia actually existed.

Another field mentioned as not covered by the programme is the Russian foreign policy. This topic is definitely (not only due to the current situation) one of the most important areas of research internationally. Many renowned research groups are dedicated to this topic, being in the centre of current global policy discussion. NORRUSS seems somehow to stay out of this. This results in a notion that the programme is alienating from the discussion shaped by policy needs and public opinion interest.

In addition to these large missing fields, some voices mentioned a number of detailed topics, which might be addressed in NORRUSS, including: the Russian legal system in the area of protection of different groups (children, minorities, etc.); natural resource exploitation (including fisheries, with focus on Bar-

ents Sea cod fish stock); police, and enforcement cooperation; research on import and export between Norway and Russia and exploitation and legal status of the Svalbard waters.

Finally, several interviewees noted that the programme setup is too wide. The large differences in the nature of calls (a mixture of social science and natural science) with many subjects listed as priority areas, is a challenge when the objective is to build strategic expertise.

Discussion

Two experts provided input on the thematic relevance and scope of the programme.

Their main conclusions in this area is:

- That NORRUSS has many targets and themes and that this might make the programme a bit rigid. The conclusion here is that the many themes can be an obstacle for a more current or holistic approach.
- While some areas are covered by several projects, Islam in Russia, Northern Caucasus, Regional economic differences and the Debt crisis effect on the banking system has to a little degree or not at all been covered. Furthermore, Indigenous areas and New Eurasian union, under the first strategic topic, have not been covered.
- The third objective focusing on Asia seems to be covered in a good way by the one project in this area; however, being a main goal, one could anticipate more projects in the portfolio.

Oxford Research agrees with their position. The wide scope of the programme and the many sub-themes seem ambitious in a programme of NORRUSS' size. Furthermore, this makes it difficult to cover all areas of the programme as well as building strong research communities. As can be seen in the analysis of calls in the next sub-chapter, the calls are mostly wide and encompassing in that they mostly refer to the programme document and do not specify the programme objectives into concrete research questions. At the same time, this procedure has the effect that several areas are not covered in the research projects. This might not be a problem, but if it is unimportant whether these subjects are researched, one could ask if these sub-themes should be included.

Some interviewees claimed that the mixture of social/economic science with natural science projects ranging from geography, geology and nano-science, is

not sending a clear message, regarding the programme strategic focus. Diversification of funds to different topics and research fields is also not contributing to establishing strategic competence in Norway.

3.1.2 Analysis of the calls for proposals

Calls for proposals and the following project selection, are the programme's main tools for building a project portfolio that is relevant to the programme document. Hence, an analysis of the calls is an important part of the evaluation. This is especially important because this is a mid-term evaluation, where we have to assess programme performance based not on results, but on early programme activities.

In this section, we will describe the calls before we discuss whether they cover said topics and to what extent they have covered other objectives such as international cooperation, recruitment and strengthening of the Norwegian research communities, as well as supporting multi- and interdisciplinary approaches.

Presentation of the Calls for proposals

The NORRUSS' programme covers a broad range of topics. Even though the programme only has two priority themes, there are close to 30 sub-themes.

Table 1 gives an overview of the calls. There have been 10 calls in the programme, including the 2010 call, but excluding «GeoPolitics in the High North». Three of these calls were joint calls with the Russian Research Foundation for Basic Research and two Norwegian research programmes, PETROMAKS2 and POLARPROG. However, NORRUSS facilitated these calls and the NORRUSS' programme board were part of the project selection process.

NORRUSS conducted these calls because NORRUSS is a country specific programme. As stated in the annual report for 2013, "programme one task has been to promote joint collaboration with Russian research foundations in order to strengthen bilateral research cooperation. (Annual Report 2013:5)"

As the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not fund these calls, they are not part of this evaluation.

Topics covered

The calls vary in how specific they are. The two first calls in 2012, cover one priority topic each, that is *Developments in Russia* and *Challenges and opportunities in the High North* but there is no further specifications mentioned in the calls, except that

they state that the applicant must see the programme document. The third call in 2012 was for a Research Institution-based Strategic Project within the topic *Challenges and opportunities in the High North* but this time with a focus on Asia's role in the High North/Arctic. The call further refers the applicant to the programme document.

In other words, the calls are quite open and the applicants themselves have the opportunity to develop their own perspectives within the framework of the programme.

The first call in 2013, *Development of the Russian economy and legal, social and foreign policy*, mostly covers topic two: *Developments in Russia*, although some areas touch upon topic one. The second call, in addition to the joint call with PETROMAKS2 and POLARPROG, was a joint call with the Russian Research Foundation for Humanities. This covered a wide range of topics relevant for NORRUSS, although with some different angles. However, this is a rather open call, where there are mainly topics listed.

The overall picture here is that they cover main areas of NORRUSS, but that the first of these calls covers many areas and instead of simply referring to the programme document, lists several relevant areas in addition to formulating several questions related to the listed areas.

The call on social science research in 2014 was also a joint call with the Research Foundation for Humanities. The call had to topics: 1) Social problems of health and the human environment, and 2) Global problems and international relations. Again, this is an open call with little delimitation. Furthermore, the call states that proposals that look at the interplay between Russia, its neighbours and the wider world will be of interest.

The maximum project size ranges between 3.5 and 15 million (excluding here "Geopolitics in the High North"), with 6.6 million average size.

Internationalisation and cooperation

International cooperation is generally stressed more today than in the first calls for proposals. In the 2010 call, international cooperation was not necessary. From 2012, project cooperation was a prerequisite for evaluation, as stated in the call for proposals text. In 2013, project cooperation with Russia became a prerequisite. For the joint call with the Research Foundation on Basic Research,

cooperation with Russia was necessary also in 2012. From there on, this has been a prerequisite in all calls, and international and Nordic cooperation is encouraged.

Furthermore, several calls have underlined Russia's relations with the outside world, and the Arctic as well as the Eurasian perspective is evident in the calls.

In general, the calls show a development towards international project interaction and especially towards cooperation with Russia. The latter is partly a result of the agreements made with the two Russian research foundations.

Interdisciplinary projects and recruitment positions

Interdisciplinary projects are generally encouraged in the calls, although they are not a prerequisite in the NORRUSS calls, again with the joint calls with the Russian Foundation for Basic Research as an exception. Instead, the calls state that interdisciplinary research is encouraged or that the projects can be interdisciplinary.

The programme document states that recruitment positions are a way to improve and strengthen Norwegian research and develop long-term, strategic expertise. Despite this, such positions are not a prerequisite in any of the calls. The first call mentions that recruitment positions can be included in the projects, but the other calls do not refer to this. Even though the calls do not mention the possibility of employing a PhD-student or a post-doctoral position, the programme always allows this.

Table 1 Overview of calls made in the NORRUSS programme

Call	Project type	Joint call	Topic	Size, MNO K	Max project size MNOK	Year of call	Inter-disciplinary	Recruitment -positions	Cooperation
10 million for Russia research	RP*		Russian policy and social conditions in the northern areas	10	5	2010		Can be included	Network support can be applied for
The High North and Russia's relations with the outside world.	RP*		Challenges and Opportunities in the High North	25	7	2012			International cooperation is a prerequisite.
Developments in Russia - Politics, Economy and Society	RP*		Developments in Russia - Politics, Economy and Society	25	7	2012			International cooperation is a necessary prerequisite
Asia's role in the High North/Arctic	RISP **		Challenges and Opportunities in The High North, Russia's Relations with the Outside World, article 5.	15	15	2012			International cooperation is a necessary prerequisite
Joint call with Russia (RFBR)	RISP **	RFBR			12	2012	Yes		Russian cooperation is a prerequisite, costs are covered by RFBR
Russia and the High North.	RP*		Development of the Russian economy and legal, social and foreign policy.	25	7	2013	Encouraged		Russian cooperation is a prerequisite, encourages Nordic cooperation
Joint call with the Russian Foundation for Basic Research.	RP*	RFBR, PETRO-MAKS2, POLAR-PROG	Management of the environment, resources (incl. petroleum) and climate change in the Arctic	26	4	2013	Yes		Russian cooperation is necessary, can cooperate with Norwegian/international researchers
3 years projects on social science research	RP*	RFH		10	5	2013	Can be		Russian cooperation is a prerequisite, encourages Nordic and international cooperation
Social science research with Russia	RP*	RFH	Social science research with Russia		3,5	2014	Can be		Russian cooperation is a prerequisite, costs are covered by RFH
Joint call with the RFBR.	RP*	RFBR	Petroleum- and maritime sector in the Arctic	30		2014			Russian cooperation is a prerequisite.

*Researcher projects. ** Research Institution-based Strategic Project

Discussion

In the short period NORRUSS has existed, there have been several developments in the calls. The most obvious change is perhaps the focus on co-operation with Russia. As cooperation with Russia has become a prerequisite, international cooperation is now simply encouraged. Cooperation with Russia thus seems to be an objective that is valued over international cooperation.

Despite the programme's focus on recruitment and the strengthening of research communities, it does not use its power to increase the number of research positions in the calls. At the same time, as the projects are mostly supposed to last for three years, we see that it can be difficult to include PhD-candidates. The employment process for these positions normally takes a while, and hence, there will generally not be time to finish a degree. However, post-doctoral positions can be of a shorter duration. In our opinion, the projects are with some exceptions large enough to include recruitment positions, even if most applicants are from the institute sector. However, bigger projects would likely lead to more PhDs and post-doctoral positions.

The calls cover all topics in the programme plan. However, as they in many cases refer to the text in the programme plan, the calls give little indication to which areas the awarded projects actually cover. Thus, the programme board does generally not use the calls to make sure a specific objective is covered.

A minority of the calls bring in some relevant, yet more concrete research questions, a fact that has been criticised by project managers. From our perspective, we find that the calls are broad, and that this is mostly a sensible choice by the programme board. At the same time, as the programme document covers a wide range of topics, the board and the programme in general should take care not to include more subjects and perspectives.

On one hand, the way the programme conducts many of the calls, by simply referring to the general topics and to the programme plan, makes for relatively open calls in terms of topics and themes. On the other hand, given the number of sub-themes and the guidelines they give, some project managers claim that the calls are too detailed. Of course, there is an exception. The joint calls with the Research Foundation for Humanities listed a

few headlines or topics, but the research communities had the freedom to choose perspectives and research questions within these broad topics. At the same time, the project managers understand the need to make specific calls when there is a need for knowledge and competence in a specific topic.

However, the cause of this issue is to a large extent not the calls, but the programme document and the many topics it covers. Our fear is that the number of topics and sub-themes make the programme too static, and provides the research communities with too little freedom to develop their projects. This might seem like a paradox, but despite the fact that the researchers have the possibility to choose from a wide range of topics, they might not have the same freedom within the topics. With broader calls on the two prioritised areas, the programme board could still afford to be specific in some of the calls, when this is called for.

3.2 Stakeholders and participation

Secondary objectives

The secondary objectives of the programme are very much in line with the list of evaluation questions. The findings relevant to each of these objectives are provided in the sub-chapters below. We have structured the discussion around the evaluation questions, but these are also in correspondence with the programme's secondary objectives.

The research institutions that have traditionally conducted research on Russia have been active in the programme. However, NORRUSS is not the only source of funding for researchers dealing with Russia and the High North in Norway. Most of the institutes operating in this field also receive funding from the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other funding sources, including different programmes in the Research Council. Some also have funding from the industry and business sectors. In this way, the programme cannot cover the entire scope of activity in the field. It is also not possible to engage all of the researchers operating in this thematic area in NORRUSS. There are and will be researchers within the social sciences in Norway who have not been engaged in NORRUSS, but who operate within the scope of Russia and High North thematic.

When discussing the inclusion of new researchers in the projects, it is important to remember that, by definition, the institutes are dependent on grants from various public and private sources. The funds received are primarily covering the costs of research personnel already employed. It is obviously beneficial to engage new students and researchers, but there is no obligation to do so within NORRUSS. As such, the institutes have prioritised regular costs, and not to staffing expansion in their NORRUSS projects.

New research groups that have not been engaged in Russia-studies before have to a limited degree been funded in NORRUSS. However, some of the institutes have received significant resources to help grow their competence on Russia and the High North. Obviously, sustainable groups of social scientists and political scientists studying Russia and the High North existed before, but this size of allocation definitely had positive influence as regards the nine institutes coordinating

projects. As for now, it is too early to discuss the eventual strategic consequence of this process.

Some respondents argued that the programme had had a larger influence on development of groups in North of Norway than in the rest of the country.

That the existence of so many sources of funding might cause overlaps in the information gathered and analysed, was a claim made by some interviewees. Simultaneously, other respondents suggested that such overlaps are not visible, or not even possible, taking into consideration the dynamic of the situation.

Through presentations of projects at conferences organised by The Research Council, good practices has been established. This exchange of information about the projects between researchers from NORRUSS and different other programmes has contributed to stronger research cooperation and understanding of the overall intervention.

As already stated, well-established research groups have been among the important stakeholders of the programme. However, the programme, at this stage, has not had a major impact on the size of the research community, according to the project managers. The programme and its projects are perceived as too short and too small for institutes to build a significant difference in staffing, as well as to influence the amount of scientific outcomes produced as a whole.

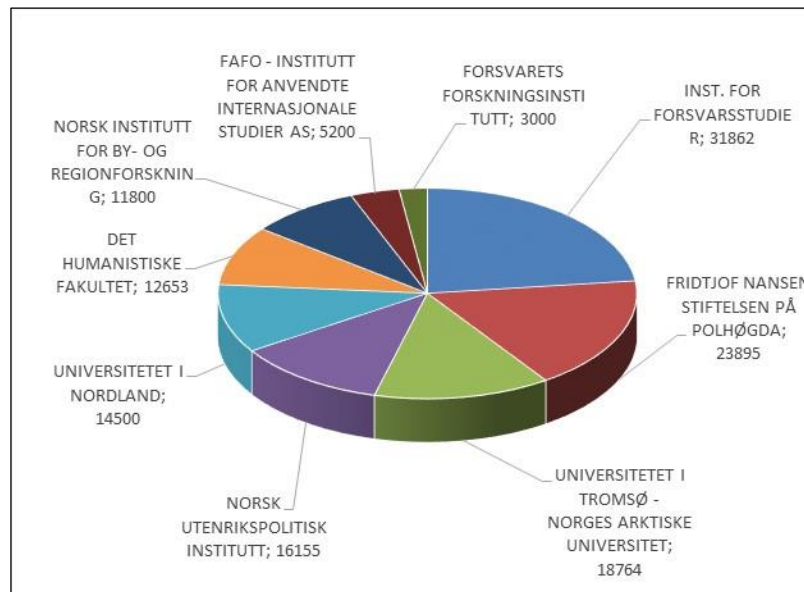
Table 2: Number of projects coordinated and allocation per institution (in thousand NOK)⁵.

Institution	Total allocation (in 1000 NOK)	Number of project coordinated
IFS	31 862	1
FNI	23 895	3
UiT	18 764	2
NUPI	16 155	3
UiN	14 500	2
UiO	12 653	2
NIBR	11 800	2
FAFO	5 200	1
FFI	3 000	1
SUM	137 829	17

⁵ This table shows the breakdown of funds on the institutions that manage the projects. The split of funds between the managing institutions and cooperation partners is not

accounted for here. The sum available to the managing institutions will thus be lower than indicated by the table.

Figure 2: Network analysis of NORRUSS projects' international relation



A topic brought up by several project managers, was that the programme intentionally dispersed the funds geographically in Norway in order to build new research clusters outside of Oslo. The critique has been that the money is spread too thinly and that too many new research groups have been funded by NORRUSS.

There is some disagreement between the programme board and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as to whether it has been an intentional strategy to include new research communities. As mentioned elsewhere, even within the Ministry there are some different opinions regarding this issue.

However, in the programme board, it is evident that some members see the value of including new actors. It should also be noted that in «Geopolitics in the High North» it was a prerequisite to have a project partner from the Northern parts of Norway. With this exception, the inclusion of new research groups seem to be welcomed by the board members, even if they state that they have not intentionally tried to achieve this.

When seen in relation to the data presented in table 2 and figure 2 it is also evident that the total allocation of 138 million NOK to seventeen projects is managed by nine institutions acting as project managers. NUPI and FNI have both managed three projects each, whereas NIBR, UiO, UiT and UiN have managed two. This does not suggest a wide dispersion of resources. Rather it shows a pattern, that at the half-way-mark, some groups have managed to confirm their leading position. However, with only 17 social science projects, these numbers can change quickly with future calls.

Furthermore, our analysis of the project selections indicates that projects have been granted based on scientific quality of the proposal, as well as on thematic relevance. With the exception of «GeoPolitics in the High North», the Norwegian geographic dimension has not been a (formal) part of the evaluation criteria.

Our conclusion is that this indicates that NORRUSS at this stage have somewhat concentrated the funding, still allowing some projects by a differentiated set of research groups.

IFS is so far the programme's biggest beneficiary in financial terms, being responsible for implementation of the project «Geopolitics in the High North» with an almost 32 million allocation. FNI is responsible for three projects, with second largest allocation of almost 24 mill NOK. Obviously in all the projects the total sum granted was subject to splitting between different project partners, information to this regard is however not available in the periodic and final reports. Therefore, as already said, analysis of intensity of cooperation in financial terms cannot be conducted.

At the same time, these research groups are also the most frequent cooperation partners on the Norwegian scene.

The network analysis gives a good overview of cooperation and internationalisation intensity of the NORRUSS programme. The important finding of this analysis is obviously the existence of several research nodes in Norway, as well as a number of institutes internationally, who have cooperated in several projects

with different project leaders. Most of the partner institutions cooperated only in one project. It is important to say that some of the projects and institutions, at this stage of programme implementation, have managed to cooperate with each other repeatedly (the same institutes cooperating in more than one project). Out of 70 institutes being partners in the social science projects, several of them have participated in more than one contract. These are presented in the table below.

Table 3: Institutions active as partners in more than one project

Institution	Count
Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Russia	4
FSI - Fridtjof Nansen Institute	3
UiT Universitetet i Tromsø - Norges Arktiske Universitet	3
Northern Arctic Federal University, Russia	3
NUPI - Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt	2
St. Petersburg State University, Russia	2
UiO - Universitetet i Oslo	2
University of Maryland, USA	2
University of Tampere, Finland	2
UiN - Universitetet i Nordland	2

Discussion

The two experts have concluded that regarding the two goals on building of strategic social scientific competence in Norway on Russia and the Arctic, the programme (so far) has largely influenced one strong cluster on Russia and Arctic competence.

The conclusion is that «Geopolitics in the High North» has been a career making entity in terms of network, visibility and publications. The same groups of researchers have contributed on two other projects that seem to have cemented a structure circling around IFS and FNI. Other projects seem not yet to have not managed establishing the same a critical mass.

This is also confirmed with the results of the network analysis and a view upon international cooperation. The established groups mostly work separately, with little cooperation with Norwegian partners outside of their cluster. Each of the institutes has established its own networks of partners.

This notion of dispersing funds along Norwegian coast is an important discussion in several programmes, not exclusively in NORRUSS. In this context, it must be said that the evaluation of projects by the peer review panel and final decision by the programme board is to assure the allocation goes to projects of highest quality and relevance. Taking this single factor as a baseline, this entire discussion of geographic allocation seems much more as a secondary topic, however (as revealed in the interviews), very sensitive for many actors.

3.3 International cooperation

As regards another core programme objective - to promote international research cooperation and networking with established research institutions, projects financed by NORRUSS must be praised for their international dimension and the networking possibilities created.

In most cases, projects used existing links to other scientific institutions to establish a project proposal. There are two different aspects regarding international cooperation that are relevant for NORRUSS:

- cooperation with institutions in Russia, and
- cooperation with other countries.

The opinions as regards cooperation with Russian partners are very ambiguous. In a number of projects, the cooperation was fruitful and partners delivered high quality and relevant input, as well contributed to publications and other project results. Russian researchers in these projects are regarded as highly committed and delivering results of good or excellent quality. Whether the Russian partners deliver academic output in form of academic publications, vary between the projects.

Some other projects faced difficulties and delays due to under-delivery or simply non-delivery of expected contributions. Several projects faced the necessity of changing cooperating researchers on the run.

Selected interviews reveal that formal agreements with some Russian institutes made the cooperation difficult. Due to bureaucratic procedures, stiffness of structures or general lack of cooperative approach, the cooperation did not bring about the expected results. Sometimes the influence of the so-called “come back of the Putin Era” was signalled as causing problems concerning cooperation. In the case of individual

contacts with Russian researchers, when delays appeared, it was easier to find a replacement and continue with the project.

Otherwise, Russian researchers are in most cases perceived as highly dedicated and delivering good project results. In some interviews, it was noted that the current sensitive political situation makes Russian institutions engaged in the projects even more committed to continue the cooperation and contribute to projects' results. Some of the projects found it difficult to identify relevant partners in Russia, especially when research on legal systems is concerned.

As regards other arenas of international cooperation, the programme should be praised for its efforts. Norwegian expertise with regard to High North and Russia has been noticed in the scientific community internationally. Many initial research contacts from the past were developed into more established cooperative networks. The most important countries where research collaboration was established include the USA, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

As regards the perception of Norwegian research in the field, NORRUSS is seen as a programme with influence internationally. However, interviewees have different perceptions of the significance of this influence. It was defined with words such as "growing" and "important" or "favourable". Norwegian research groups are maybe not perceived globally as leading, or the most significant; however, the Norwegian activity has been recognised and the existence of a separate programme dedicated to Russia and High North is perceived as extraordinary and, according to some opinions, luxurious. For some, the role of Norwegian research clusters has grown over the course of the programme. Obviously, countries like the United States and United Kingdom are in the top of the global race here. Germany and Finland are also mentioned in this context. However, the respondents see Norway as a country with large, well-established and competent research groups, especially compared to country size. For some foreign researchers interviewed, Norwegian circles on Russia seem more important than those of Denmark and Sweden.

International cooperation is one of the important criteria during evaluation of proposals.

Internationalisation was also high on the project managers and international researchers' agenda and they considered cooperation as an important part of project implementation.

International cooperation is necessary but also very time and budget demanding. On the other hand, some projects have provided knowledge that would not have been obtained without cooperation. It was noted in one of the interviews that the quality of research proposals could have been higher if the calls were open to other international actors as project coordinators, and announced internationally.

In this way, internationally renowned researchers would have the option to propose their own project ideas with Norwegian institutes participating. Such an approach may trigger a higher quality of research, more valuable ideas and larger internationalisation of the entire programme.

A concern brought forward in some interviews is that the emphasis on Russia and cooperation with Russia can have a negative effect on international cooperation with other countries. When cooperation with Russia is a prerequisite for funding, and cooperation with others is simply encouraged, Russian cooperation partners will of course be preferred. At the same time, the NORRUSS projects frequently involve several research partners from different countries. Thus, making cooperation with Russia a prerequisite has this stage of the programme not had a large negative impact on international cooperation.

Apart from Norway and Canada, other Western countries engaged do not have separate programmes dedicated to research on Russia and the High North. Researchers in these countries have to compete within other areas in larger, open programmes. This is automatically limiting resources available in this field. As a result, the Norwegian system is considered unique, sometimes even impressive.

The foreign researchers interviewed, had mostly been engaged in the project already at the proposal preparation stage. Some of the researchers underlined the unique opportunity NORRUSS created, as regards their networking with not only Norwegian, but also other international researchers. In addition, the professionalism of Norwegian project coordinators was mentioned several times in the context of organisation of the research cooperation, as well as efficient approach to administration of the project.

As regards the project implementation, an important point seems to be the exchange of researchers. Having Russian and other researchers coming to Norway is regarded as beneficial and effective for project implementation and quality of the research outcomes.

Participation of international partners from other Western countries is considered as positively influencing the projects' quality and relevance. However, some partners had to assure their own financial input from other national sources, which sometimes resulted in close to zero allocation, sufficient only to cover some travel expenses. This limits the amount of networking and cooperation in the project.

The cooperation with Russian research institutes financed under joint calls by the Russian foundations is considered a very sustainable solution.

The research system in Russia is characterised by different cultures and traditions, and social science research is not as developed as natural science. Russia's research traditions in this regard sometimes make it difficult, especially where the subject is research on the Russian political system. This is causing problems with access to data and information required in the projects.

An important issue in the context of the financing of international cooperation in the sharing between the partners. Unlike universities, the research institutes will tend to keep most of the project budget on their own hands, instead of sharing this with international partners. In this way, the concentration of research in-house influences the projects implementation. The projects coordinated by institutes focus on using/obtaining input from other partners internationally, while at the same time limiting the share of budget distributed to these partners. The international input is therefore carefully planned by the project leader and largely defined by real needs for knowledge, relevant for the project that does not exist in-house.

Some respondents claim that administrating projects with Russians as real partners also in financial terms has raised the cooperation to new levels.

Administrating a research project together is different from social meetings on international research seminars and conferences. It creates more challenges, but also forms a good baseline for successful partnerships that can be sustained in future joint projects.

Most implemented projects organise or plan to organise international workshops and conferences. These events have been described at least as "good", "vibrant" or "successful" for producing quality research and exchanging relevant information, as well as in terms of project results dissemination. The research community meetings are valuable.

As regards the joint calls in cooperation with the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR), this part of the programme dedicated to natural science projects is seen in Russia as having a marginal role when referring to programme objectives and focus regarding the knowledge on Russia. This cooperation was proposed by the Norwegian Research Council and focuses on natural science projects as well as knowledge relevant for the High North. These calls are focused on supporting fundamental basic research, where partnership between Norwegian and Russian scientists is mandatory. The projects financed via calls facilitated by NORRUSS that are dedicated to ecology and environment, are of interest for both sides.

As regards the development of the programme focus RFBR welcomed the trend to broaden thematic fields of research. Initially the research was focusing on the ecology and environment in Barents Sea, while Russians are also seeing a large potential in other fields of the natural sciences.

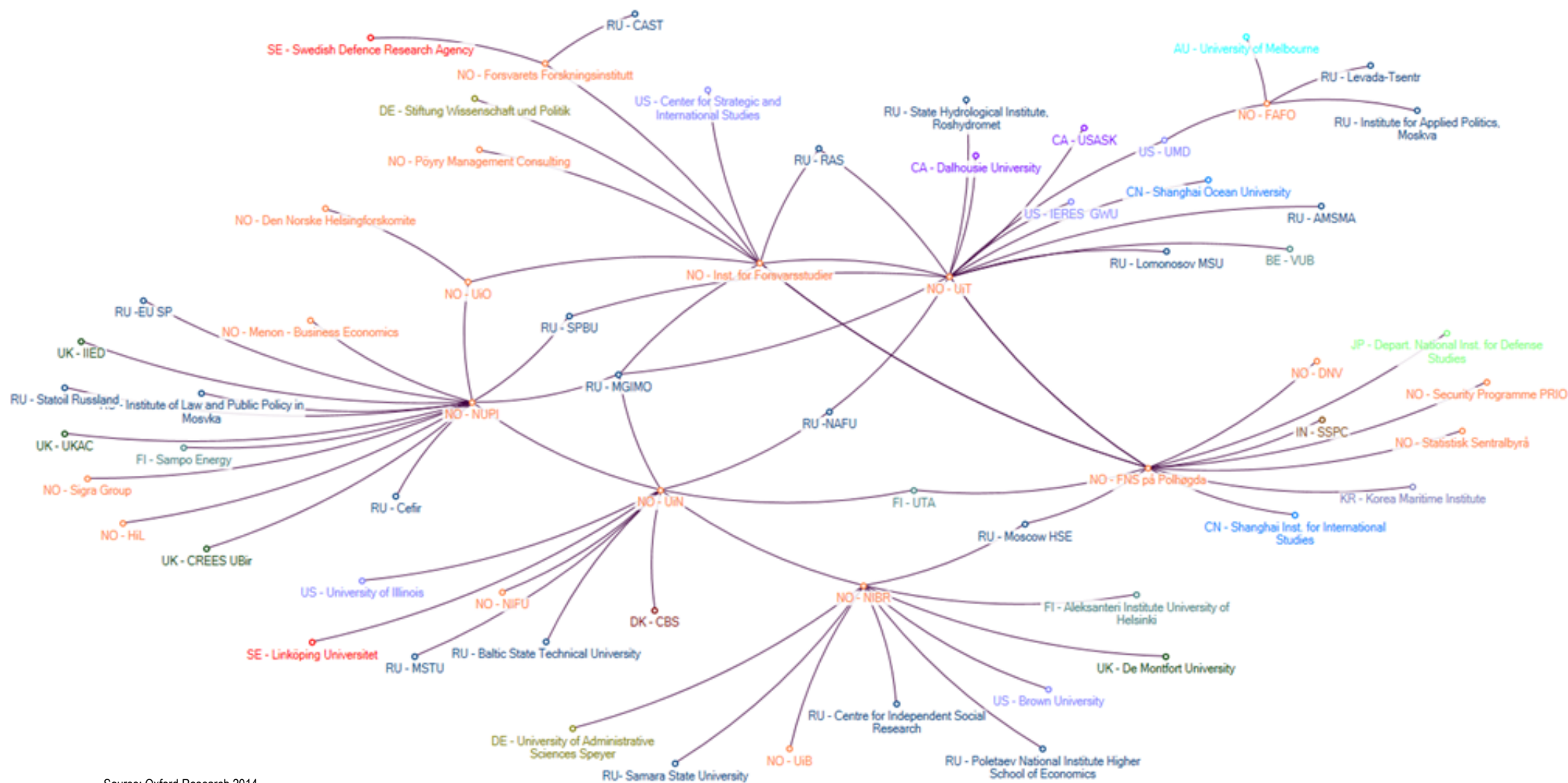
Overall, NORRUSS should be praised for its international networks created. The figure below presents the linkages established by the programme, visualising the most important actors. Several Norwegian institutes organised well-developed networks. A number of central Russian partners have also participated in more than one project.

Interestingly, apart from cooperation with Russian research institutions that in many cases has been shared by Norwegian project leaders, each of the main actors in Norway developed its own network of international partners.

In other words, Russian partners are overrepresented among the partners that have participated in more than one project. Each Norwegian institute has a separate network of corresponding researchers that is almost exclusive. University of Maryland and University of Tempere are the only two non-Russian organisations collaborating in two projects with two different Norwegian partners (such as UiT and FAFO; FNI and UiN).

Figure 3 shows the network analysis. Each country represented in the programme has its own colour.

Figure 3: Network analysis of NORRUSS projects' international relations



Source: Oxford Research 2014.

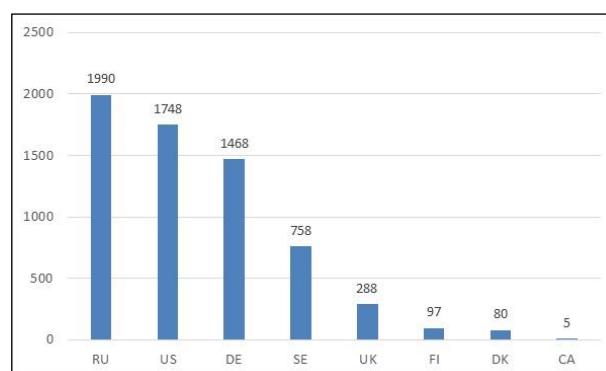
Abbreviations used:

AMSMA	Admiral Makarov State Maritime Academy
CAST	Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies
CBS	Copenhagen Business School
CREES UBir	Centre for Russian and East European Studies University of Birmingham
DNV	Det Norske Veritas As
EU SP	European University at St. Petersburg
FAFO	Institutt for Anvendte Internasjonale Studier
FNI or FNS	Fridtjof Nansen Institute
HiL	Høgskolen i Lillehammer
IERES GWU	Institute for European, Russian & Eurasian Studies, George Washington University
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
Lomonosov MSU	Lomonosov Moscow State University
MGIMO	Moscow State Institute of International Relations
Moscow HSE	Moscow Higher School Of Economics
NAFU	Northern Arctic Federal University
NIBR	Norsk Institutt for By- og Regionforskning

NIFU	Nordisk Institutt For Studier av Innovasjon, Forskning Og Utdanning
NUPI	Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt
RAS	Russian Academy of Science
Security Programme PRIO	Security Programme Peace Research Institute Oslo
SPBU	St. Petersburg State University
SSPC	Society for the Study of Peace and Conflict
UiB	Universitetet i Bergen
UiN	Universitetet i Nordland
UiO	Universitet i Oslo
UIS	Universitetet i Stavanger
UiT	Universitet i Trondheim
UKAC	University of Kent
UMD	University of Maryland
UTA	University of Tampere
USASK	University of Saskatchewan
VUB	Vrije Universiteit Brussel

In terms of financial value of this cooperation, the situation as per October 2013 (periodic reporting) and for the final reports from first three projects (November 2013) brings a general notion of the most important actors, presented in the figure and table below. This is largely influenced by one project only – “GeoPolitics in the High North”, being the largest project in the programme portfolio.

Figure 4: Financial input from international partners (in thousand NOK)



More detailed split is presented in the table below.

Table 4: Financial input per project and partner country (in thousand NOK)

	Project Title	Country									
		RU	CA	FI	SE	US	UK	DE	DK	TR	CH
1	Geopolitics in the High North. Norwegian Interests	1050				1652		1457			
2	Federal Russian Politics: Modernizing Northern Economies	115									
3	Modernizing the Russian North: Politics and Practice	88					190				
5	Nation-building, nationalism and the new 'other' in today's Russia (NE-ORUSS)	320									
6	Arctic Urban Sustainability in Russia	10	5	10	8	16					
7	Network governance: A tool for understanding Russian policy-making?	70		7			10	11			
8	Arctic Shipping through Challenging Waters	20									
9	Local government budgeting reforms in Russia: implications and tensions	200		80		80			80		
10	Higher Education in the High North: Regional Restructuring through Educational Exchanges and Student Mobility				750						
11	Sustainability and Petroleum Extraction: Corporate and Community Perspectives in Northern Norway and the Russian Arctic	117					88				
	SUM	1990	5	97	758	1748	288	1468	80	0	0

Source: NORRUS reporting 2013; Oxford Research 2014

3.4 Cross-sectorial cooperation

It is important in this context to refer again to the list of secondary objectives of the programme. One such objective is that NORRUS should support projects within different disciplines such as political science, sociology, economy, law, history, media-studies, and

social policy. Another goal in this context is to promote links across different types of research, disciplines and sectors. Projects are expected to take a multi-disciplinary approach where appropriate, and encourage innovative methodologies.

NORRUSS focuses on several types of projects: those related to social, political and economic changes in Russia, those dedicated to environmental issues in the Arctic, Asia's role in the High North and finally some basic research projects in natural/material science.

The natural science projects are interdisciplinary by definition. The modern approach to research within ecology, environment and new materials requires interdisciplinarity.

As regards the social science projects, an overview of projects conducted, as well as reports analysed prove a reasonable level of interdisciplinarity both in the entire sample of financed projects, as well as inside many of them. However, projects have stayed within the general division in "large" disciplinary categories. Social science projects have been connecting research disciplines within social sciences, and so have projects within the natural science field, with a few exemptions where natural scientific perspectives were included in social sciences projects.

Social science projects in NORRUSS included interdisciplinary approaches, quite obviously, within social sciences themselves. This includes the following disciplines:

- Economy and business
- Political Science
- International Relations
- Law
- Sociology
- History

History was not referred to as one of the disciplines being in the focus of the programme; however, this has been a discipline supporting the mainstream research in the projects.

As regards the existence of innovative methodologies, the evaluation did not find that new methods have been deployed. The projects have generally used well-established methods, assuring an appropriate level of quality for scientific outcomes. However, there is one example where the project has used methodology from different disciplines, as well as including researchers with different disciplinary background. This has been fruitful, but has also meant changes to the internal peer review process. When researchers with different backgrounds cooperate, it is hard to evaluate each other's quality of work. Thus, other researchers not part of the project has evaluated the work. We consider this a good example of how to carry out interdisciplinary work.

When discussing the approach to empirical work, many of the projects apply standard research methodologies. However, several of the interviewees underlined that new or challenging approaches can be met with regard to scope of the fieldwork, methodologies used for data gathering and data analysis, the fact of cooperation with Russian partners to this regard, or through performing research on samples not covered before. This all brings a notion of good scientific work implemented in a challenging environment.

Projects' internal interdisciplinarity varied in scope and intensity, however it must be said that, in general, the programme has delivered on this objective.

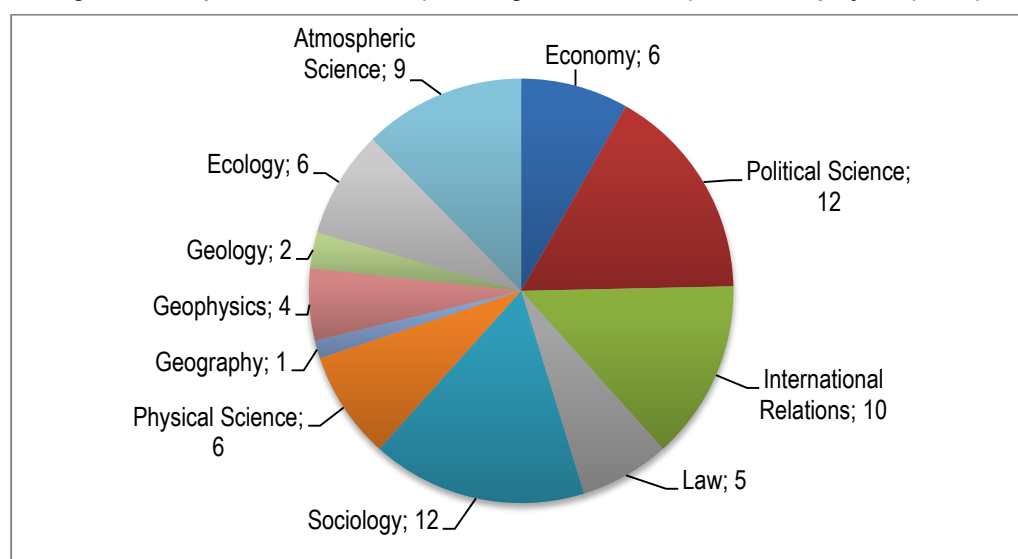
Table 5: Social science projects' inter-disciplinarity overview

	Project Title	Economy	Political Science	Int. Relations	Law	Sociology
1.	Geopolitics in the High North. Norwegian Interests		1	1	1	
2.	Federal Russian Politics: Modernizing Northern Economies	1	1		1	
3.	Modernizing the Russian North: Politics and Practice	1	1		1	1
4.	Asian countries' interest in the High North: Security/foreign policy, energy, shipping and re-search/climate change	1	1	1		
5.	Nation-building, nationalism and the new 'other' in today's Russia (NEORUSS)		1			1
6.	Arctic Urban Sustainability in Russia					1
7.	Network governance: A tool for understanding Russian policy-making?		1			1
8.	Arctic Shipping through Challenging Waters			1	1	
9.	Local government budgeting reforms in Russia: implications and tensions		1	1		1
10.	Higher Education in the High North: Regional Restructuring through Educational Exchanges and Student Mobility			1		1
11.	Sustainability and Petroleum Extraction: Corporate and Community Perspectives in Northern Norway and the Russian Arctic			1		1
12.	Russia's defence industry – an engine for economic growth?	1	1			
13.	The Russian welfare state under quadruple influence: stability or conflict?	1	1			1
14.	New Political Groups and the Russian State (2008-2012) (NEPORUS)		1			1
15.	Legal Culture, Corruption and Law Enforcement: the Russian Case				1	1
16.	Trade Integration, Geopolitics and the Economy of Russia (TIGER)	1	1	1		1
17.	The Individual and the State in Russia: Self-images, Coping Strategies, Civil Society (IN-STARUSS)		1			1
	Count	6	12	10	5	12

Several projects are cross-disciplinary encompassing different disciplines within both the social and natural sciences. There are only eight projects in total focusing on one discipline.

Political sciences and sociology are disciplines covered the most in the projects. International relations and atmospheric science were also found among the main disciplines represented in the portfolio. On the other hand, geography and geology represent a tiny proportion of the disciplines encompassed in the full sample of NORRUSS programme.

Figure 5: Disciplines covered in all (including natural science) NORRUSS projects (count).



3.5 Results in knowledge production and dissemination

Dissemination

One of the secondary objectives of the NORRUSS programme contained the dissemination. NORRUSS aimed **at actively disseminating research findings to political authorities, public administrations, trade and industry**, as well as other groups involved in Norwegian-Russian cooperation and concerned with international issues in the High North.

Project managers deliver quite aligned, but modest opinions on these issues.

As regards dissemination, the projects use standard ways of dissemination, with web pages, workshops, presentations on conferences and academic publications.

Events organised are reported to gain the attention of policy makers and the general public through media. Publications are typically available through scientific journals but several book chapters have been recorded as important outcome of the programme.

When discussing publications, some selected project managers said that their project would have benefit-

ted from writing a joint final publication. The arguments was that a joint publication including all the published articles, written through coordinated efforts, bringing project findings and results together in one place would allow for a more strategic overview of what the project had produced.

The opinions received and data analysed do not show a particular interest of the industry as regards the results of the projects obtained. All social science projects remain in the scope of interest of other researchers, policy makers and media.

Strategic expertise

As regards the secondary objectives, NORRUSS aimed to improve and strengthen Norwegian research and develop long-term, **strategic expertise by strengthening researcher recruitment, as well as funding for doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships**.

An overview of project reports (from three completed projects, as well for partial reports from other projects active in 2013 (reporting deadline October 2013) brings information about the use of recruitment positions such as PhD-positions and post-doctoral positions, in the projects.

The overview of results to in this regard was presented in the table below.

Table 6: Projects' results – fellowships and researcher grants

No.	Project Title	Doctoral fellowship	Post-doctoral fellowship	Overseas researcher grant	Visiting researcher grant
1.	Geopolitics in the High North. Norwegian Interests	1	2		
2.	Federal Russian Politics: Modernizing Northern Economies			2	1
4.	Asian countries' interest in the High North: Security/foreign policy, energy, shipping and research/climate change	1			
5.	Nation-building, nationalism and the new 'other' in today's Russia (NEORUSS)	1			
	SUM	3	2	2	1

In short, the performance results, regarding the use of recruitment positions, are weaker than expected.

This statement is also confirmed by the opinions expressed in interviews. Important in this regard is the interpretation of these data and the general perception of the programme intervention.

The researchers and project managers interviewed underlined several issues on the recruitment topic:

- The size of the financed projects did not allow for extensive project recruitment in general.
- Some of the projects, with effective financing of three years only, found it hard to create full doctoral or post-doctoral positions, since this simply requires a longer time perspective, time for recruitment and finally, an appropriate level of resources.
- The institute sector, with more commercial rules for financing, is not interested in opening new positions, while having an established group of

researchers on the payroll. Each of the institutes engaged in project implementation will tend to allocate received grant to cover institutes' expenses and currently employed staff, rather than produce additional positions, that in the longer term will be impossible to sustain. For institutes, it is difficult to include PhD-students with a project totalling around 4-6 million NOK. PhDs are too expensive to be included in small projects, while all other costs of permanent staff, international research etc., have to be primarily included.

- Several projects faced the fact that possible candidates for this very specific research field are very scarce and it is not an issue of selecting from a wide portfolio of candidates, but rather finding a relevant researcher who will meet the baseline criteria. Due to this reason, the recruitment process was not short and easy, but rather reported as "causing delays in project implementation".
- Luckily, the engaged researchers in all cases were reported to be both extremely engaged in the research activities undertaken and, additionally to this, specialists in the field.

The next two additional objectives of the programme might be discussed jointly. The goal was to generate knowledge that can provide answers to relevant research questions through **applied research and empirical fieldwork, and basic research based on solid theoretical work**.

The project's scientific quality in short was not disputed in the interviews. It seems that all projects represent at least a decent level in this regard. Several problems nevertheless appeared in this context.

In some of the projects implemented with Russian partners, the cooperation did not manage to produce expected outcomes, or in some cases, the outcomes were assessed as being of poor quality. The reasons for such situations might be sought on the level of individual researchers professionalism (sometimes lacking), but also on the level of a general approach to cooperation and sharing. Some of the institutes leading projects, simply faced problems in access to data, especially while approaching empirical work in the field, or reported a general mismatch in communication with Russian partners along the project implementation.

In projects where there were no formal agreement with the Russian research partner, but where cooperation was based on contracts with individual researchers, eventual problems have been solved by

changing the researcher responsible for delivery. In other projects, where the cooperation was more formalised, personnel issues were more difficult to handle. The main reason for the situation reported here is the general stiffness and bureaucracy influencing the performance of the Russian institutes and researchers employed there.

Overall, both the project managers and foreign researchers we interviewed assessed the scientific quality of the project's publications as good or very good.

As regards the projects containing the notion of basic research – the partner in the calls – the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR) reported a surprisingly low performance in delivery of scientific articles and publications from the projects so far, as well as dropping interest in submitting joint research proposals.

This topic is outside of the mandate and scope of this evaluation, nevertheless having this information gathered we believe it is valid to present it in the following paragraphs.

So far, only one joint publication has been reported a result of these projects. This is definitely an issue for discussion already at the stage of the mid-term evaluation of the programme that has already been underlined by the Russian Foundation.

Another issue is that the willingness of Norwegian and Russian researchers to submit joint proposals for basic research projects is decreasing. The Foundation reported on 14 project applications in 2012, 12 applications in 2013 and only 4 applications in 2014. This trend shows a decreasing interest in the preparation of joint proposals, which must be addressed for the sake of research quality and the sustainability of the cooperation in general.

The reasons for this might be sought in poor programme matchmaking and marketing of the natural science calls among Norwegian and Russian scientific groups; another reason given was the lack of established experience from previous cooperative projects between Norway and Russia in this area.

Finally, some respondents underlined that the industry has not been engaged in the projects implemented under the joined calls with RFBR. The projects do not have a clear commercial character and market oriented exploitation of results has not been at the core of the research proposed. Industry engagement

is seen as a possible factor for more dynamic consortia building and efficient project delivery, with measurable results in the future.

NORRUSS, as other RCN programmes are expected to generate research findings of high scientific calibre (publications in scholarly, peer-reviewed journals or books by academic publishers), publications in other scientific or professional media, and papers presented at international conferences.

As this is a mid-term evaluation, it is too early to conclude on the quantity or quality of the publications. However, we have asked project managers to reflect on the projects' publication strategies in order to get an idea of the types of publications and dissemination results that are likely to be the outcome of the programme.

Some of the interviewees have reflected on their publication strategies. Academic publications are clearly at the core of their approach. However, they are also aware of their obligations to disseminate results to the public.

The table below does however show a somewhat different picture. Although some project managers in the interviews emphasised the academic output in terms of journal publications and books as the main objectives, we find that this is not the most frequent form of dissemination. Table 7 shows that dissemination for users is the most frequent form of dissemination.

It is too early to say something about the deliveries in the programme, with the exception of the three finished projects.

Table 7: Projects' results – publications and dissemination

No.	Project Title	Lecture presentation	Scientific/scholarly publications			Dissemination measures for users	Dissemination - general public	
			Journals or series	Chapters in Anthologies	Monographs		Popular science publications	New publications in the media
1.	Geopolitics in the High North. Norwegian Interests		53	73	4	342	60	65
2.	Federal Russian Politics: Modernizing Northern Economies	10	5	2	5	16	13	12
3.	Modernizing the Russian North: Politics and Practice		21	4	3	36	14	3
4.	Asian countries' interest in the High North: Security/foreign policy, energy, shipping and research/climate change	41	2			41	9	38
5.	Nation-building, nationalism and the new 'other' in today's Russia (NE-ORUSS)		0			6	7	10
6.	Arctic Urban Sustainability in Russia	12				20	20	
7.	Network governance: A tool for understanding Russian policy-making?			1				3
8.	Arctic Shipping through Challenging Waters			1				
9.	Local government budgeting reforms in Russia: implications and tensions	4	1		4	1		1
10.	Higher Education in the High North: Regional Restructuring through Educational Exchanges and Student Mobility	No data available in the report submitted						
11.	Sustainability and Petroleum Extraction: Corporate and Community Perspectives in Northern Norway and the Russian Arctic						2	1
Source: Norrus reporting, 2013. Prepared by Oxford Research 2014. Remaining projects (not included in the table) did not report any outcomes to this regard in the reports analysed.								

The biggest project in the NORRUSS portfolio requires a special attention. This is the first project, started before NORRUSS was established, "GeoPolitics in the High North". This was in fact an initiative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs following the INOR-process. At this stage (between the years

2005 and 2006), the Ministry was very interested in developments in the High North and possible developments in cooperation with Russia. After the initial project implementation and changes with regard to the Ministry's expectations and perceptions, this

large project, being today listed as part of NORRUSS, has resulted in a very good outcome. “GeoPolitics in the High North” is also in the lead concerning dissemination for target groups, and even when accounting for the programme size, 342 dissemination measures is impressive.

The approach of the “GeoPolitics in the High North” was a combination of research and think tank activity, considered demanding and difficult to manage. This combination was inherently a part of the project, with a number of think tank activities. This think tank dimension was especially visible in other countries, but not as much in Norway. As regards Russia, this particular project faced many difficult policy “issues”. The partners in Russia appeared open, took part in activities but were reluctant in terms of delivering research input and real outcomes production.

“GeoPolitics in the High North” triggered a particular good cooperation with partners in USA. A research group was established in CSIS in Washington. This group has become more and more focused and interested in Arctic affairs. This resource is still alive and active in the USA to some extent due to long term financing perspective within the scope of “Geopolitics in the High North”.

Nowadays, CSIS together with Norwegian partners continue research on Russia and the Arctic, funded at this time from other sources. This cooperation definitely proves the sustainability of the project outcomes.

Long-term perspectives in this and other projects was mentioned many times as offering a great difference to researchers. “GeoPolitics in the High North” offered this perspective, while other projects were not offered as luxurious conditions, in the later calls of the programme.

3.6 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NORRUSS

In this section, we will evaluate whether the guidelines from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have been followed to a satisfying degree.

The Ministry's need for knowledge

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs laid out their guidelines for NORRUSS in two agreements between the Research Council and the Russia-section and the

High North-section of the Ministry. In both agreements, it is stated that the purpose of the agreement is to develop long-term and strategic competence in Norway on Russia and the High North. The agreement with the High North-section says furthermore that this should be achieved through networking with international research communities on issues that are relevant to the High North, and where there has not been enough research. These issues should also be relevant to Norwegian interests. The Russia section, on the other hand, focuses on research within the humanities and social sciences in Russia. The programme should furthermore provide knowledge about the political, economic and social development in Russia. Moreover, knowledge about how political, economic and social factors influences policy-making and policy-makers in Russia. The programme and the projects should cover the whole of Russia. Furthermore, in line with the objectives of the “project cooperation with Russia”-grants, research cooperation with Russia is called for.

The two purposes are recognisable in the prioritised areas in the programme document, as areas one and two. As such, the programme document is in line with the guidelines given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Interviews with several representatives from the Ministry support this, as well as give some nuances to the Ministry's research needs.

In both the sections that fund NORRUSS, there is a general need for knowledge about Russia and the High North. Furthermore, competent researchers with knowledge about Russia is needed in order to strengthen the framework for Russia-related research as this is of importance for Norway. The respondents also underline the need for stronger research groups and communities, quite in line with the programme document.

This corresponds with an impression that it has been difficult to obtain financing for research on Russia.

Furthermore, the respondents from the Ministry find that there is a need for international contacts, as well as more knowledge about the international dimension concerning the High North.

Another dimension here is the need for policy relevant knowledge. One respondent pointed out the need for more than just ordering academic articles

on a specific topic. Instead, the respondent stressed the need for long-term strategic competences.

The overall conclusion from the interviews is that the Ministry is satisfied with the outcomes from the programme so far. They all state that the competence and knowledge on Russia and the High North has increased. Furthermore, they find that the programme has generated international contacts. The Ministry assess the quality of research as good.

Furthermore, the Ministry considers the produced knowledge as useful, and already some of the lessons drawn from the early projects such as «Geopolitics in the High North» have given academic input into the policy process. In addition, these projects, and especially «Geopolitics in the High North» have opened up a fruitful dialogue between the Ministry and researchers. Several researchers that were part of the first projects have reported on their findings in the Ministry and thus given them knowledge input.

A more sensitive issue is the building of long-term strategic competence and strengthening of research communities. There is an overall agreement on the need to do this, but some minor disagreements are obvious when the 'how' is discussed. For example, one of the respondents clearly says that there has been a wish to include more research groups than the groups belonging to the traditional Russian research institutes. This was due to an impression that the strengthening of research groups also involves a breadth element, not just depth.

Yet a second respondent says that it has not been a strategy from the Ministry to expand the number of research communities.

Another respondent however says that the Ministry has gotten an indication that they have not succeeded in strengthening the research group. Instead, the respondent claims that NORRUSS has awarded projects that are not within the main scope of Norwegian research on Russia. In line with this, the interviewee claimed that the established research groups need resources to both strengthen them and to uphold them. The conclusion the respondent drew, was that resources should not be dispersed as much as today, but rather support the research community that has already been established.

There is also some self-critique from the Ministry. The critique is that the Ministry at the beginning

failed to be specific enough in the guidelines they made for the Research Council, and that this has caused the funding of a few peripheral projects.

3.7 Future success criteria

A central question is to what extent the programme should be continued and what should be changed. Overall, the respondents find that it is positive to have a separate programme dedicated to High North and Russia. However, certain issues need to be discussed.

Some informants have underlined that the way the programme addresses Russia ought to change. In their opinion, research on Russia requires a holistic approach. There is a need to view High North in the context of Moscow as a centre of all decision making, not only through the effects of decisions made in Moscow on the High North. The Northern dimension is only a small "piece" of Russia and requires an appropriate perspective.

A general statement from project managers was that different actors and stakeholders should be allowed to express their views regarding changes to the programme's topics and scope in an open process.

The geographic dimension in project allocation is a sensitive topic. Bearing in mind the statement from the expert panel, as well as the general analysis of the programme, the existence of only one strong research cluster in this area, is not enough to make the Norwegian research base more solid and sound.

According to other project managers, an increased concentration around established research clusters would result in more quality publications.

A general finding is also that more studies are needed on the development of the political regime in Russia, and its interaction with economy, security policy, etc.

Finally, as a strategic topic, it was said that the prolonging of the programme perspective in general, bigger projects and changes in project duration (allowing projects to last for 4 -5 years) would result in increased strategic influence on the research community and the sustainability of the research clusters.

Chapter 4. Organisation, coordination and management

NORRUSS is part of the Department for Cooperation and Development Research under the Division of Society and Health.

4.1 Management capacity

The programme's staff consists of a programme administrator with administrative support from a senior consultant. However, the senior official supporting the programme works with multiple programmes. The programme manager recently left her position, and this position is currently vacant.

The project managers are generally pleased with the support they have gotten from the programme management.

Establishing a new programme is a demanding task. At this stage, where the programme has been active for a few years, the workload is somewhat lighter. Despite this, our impression based on interviews in the Research Council is that this is the programme management has been efficient and has functioned well.

4.1.1 Joint calls

The programme administrator has also doubled as a coordinator for Russian affairs in the Research Council. Through this role, the NORRUSS administration has played a major role in setting up the two agreements with the Russian Research Foundation on Basic research and the Russian Research Foundation on Humanities.

This has led to several joint calls, including other programmes in the Research Council, such as PETROMAKS2 and POLARROG. Although they are joint calls, NORRUSS facilitates the calls on behalf of the other programmes.

Whereas PETROMAKS2 had some contact with Russian academic partners prior to the joint calls, NORRUSS' contact with and later on, agreements with the research foundations, expanded the scope of Russia related research in PETROMAKS2. The NORRUSS administration facilitated these calls and PETROMAKS delegated the call process as well as project selection to NORRUSS. This is not a common procedure, but the solution was chosen because strategic knowledge about Russia was considered essential for these calls.

This process has been characterised as fruitful. However, despite the NORRUSS board's important strategic knowledge about Russia, they lack competence about natural sciences and technologies. Through these calls, the PETROMAKS2 programme board and programme management have achieved more knowledge about and contacts in Russia. In the coming joint calls, PETROMAKS2 will not delegate the call and selection process to NORRUSS. The programmes will conduct the process together, and the PETROMAKS2 board will select the projects.

The programme management in PETROMAKS2 says that the cooperation between NORRUSS and PETROMAKS2 have been very good. Furthermore, they laud the NORRUSS administration's work on encouraging other programmes to focus on and co-operate with Russia.

In terms of project follow-up, the mixture of social/economic science with natural science projects ranging from geography, geology and nano-science, resulting from the joint calls, makes for a somewhat more complicated procedure than usual.

4.1.2 Organisation and cooperation

The researchers interviewed did not express any particular opinions as regards cooperation with the Ministries. The most important underlined factor was that there are separate calls by the Ministry of Defence, as well as funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs available for researchers. Some interviewees pointed out that there might be some overlap between calls and topics from these institutions, and that there has been little coordination between them. However, researchers were satisfied with having the opportunity to apply for funding from multiple sources of financing.

Apart from standard dissemination measures, like articles, workshops and conferences, the projects did not record any particular interactions with policy makers.

The NORRUSS projects do not contain important cooperation with the business sector. Companies in general are not engaged in social science projects, and those with large economic interests in Russia perform their own research dedicated to their needs.

The need for cooperation with industry in the natural science projects has been an issue appearing in the context of analysis of (not extraordinary so far) projects results.

Cooperation with actors in Russia sometimes causes problems. Some of the Russian institutions engaged in the projects did not cooperate to the extent expected; problems appeared also with individual researcher's participation in the research conducted. In general, projects managers revealed that cooperation with individual researchers, who were not supervised by umbrella institutions, was easier and allowed for more flexibility, than cooperation with research institutions.

Cooperation with other international partners was causing problems only on the level of finances available to these actors for implementation of the projects.

4.2 Programme duration

NORRUS has funding for the period 2012-2016. This means that the programme duration is four years. As table 8 shows, the other programmes in the department have a longer duration. NORGLOBAL and SANCOOP also have a duration of four years, but these programmes follow up former, similar programmes, so the allocation of funds to the programme area is more stable than is indicated in the table below.

With this as a point of departure, the duration of NORRUS is quite short. Keeping in mind that the programme document covers many topics in addition to objectives concerning strategic long-term competence and strengthening the research communities studying Russia, this seems too short.

Table 8: The Programmes in the Department of Cooperation and Development Research and their duration.

Programme	Duration
INDNOR	2010-2019
CHINOR	2009-2017
SANCOOP	2013-2017 (fore runner from 2001/2002)
LATINAMERIKA	Established 2008, funding for 7-10 years
NORGLOBAL	2009-2013 (similar programme, POVPEACE, est. 2006)
NORRUS	2012-2016

As such, the programme duration could conflict with the programme objectives regarding building long-term, strategic expertise. Within this period, the first NORRUS projects will finish shortly before the programme is finished. This leaves little room to follow up on the research done and to adjust the course of the programme in light of the achieved results. Furthermore, to build long-term strategic knowledge and strong research communities, the funding must also be long-term. In this perspective, four years seems short.

4.3 Coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The coordination between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the programme generally consists of two mechanisms. Firstly, the Ministry presents the guidelines for the programme to the Research Council in separate agreements. Secondly, the Ministry and the programme management have regular meetings to discuss the programme. In addition, there has been one more agreement regarding support for one project on Asia's role in the High North. The general view, both from the Ministry and from the programme administration, is that the coordination is well functioning. In «Geopolitics in the High North» and at the beginning of NORRUS, the Ministry had observers in the reference groups and the programme board, but this mechanism of coordination has now been abolished.

The impression is that the relationship between the Ministry and the Research Council is good, and that it is a relationship built on trust. Furthermore, the respondents consider it as a close relationship, although, with some room for improvement on both sides.

The relationship has developed since the first cooperation regarding «Geopolitics in the High North», and the first programme initiative with INOR, where some stakeholders called the coordination process «untidy».

One respondent from the Ministry feared that there was too little coordination between research programmes that dealt with similar issues, despite that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs financed them. The fear was that this led to overlap between programmes.

On the other hand, the Ministry was pleased with the way the Council reports, especially because the

Council now labels the projects in such a way that the Ministry can see how their money has been spent.

At the same time, another respondent revealed that the Ministry had not been active enough in using the research produced by the «Geopolitics in the High North» and the other finished projects. The argument also included a critique of the project groups, i.e. that the research groups could market their research better, in order to make the research known to the Ministry, and that the Research Council could play a role in the marketing of projects and outcomes.

4.4 Has the programme board functioned well?

The programme board has a key role in setting the course for the programme through deciding on topics for calls for proposals and project selection.

Therefore, it is important to describe and evaluate how the board fulfils its mandate.

Composition of the board

The Research Council sees the composition of the board as an important tool for internationalisation in the programme. The Council has selected a board with a rather international profile, with members from a range of countries such as Finland (2), United Kingdom (2) and Denmark, in addition to Norwegian members.

The majority of the board members have an academic background, many of whom are active researchers. The chair is a professor of modern history and a former editor. In addition, the Norwegian-Russian Chamber of Commerce have one representative. As such, the board has representation from both the academic sector and the business sector, although the emphasis is on academic knowledge. The researchers mostly come from different disciplines, which gives the programme board expertise in several research areas.

In short, the board composition makes sure the board have a broad international interface, as well as members with knowledge about Norwegian research on Russia and the Norwegian needs for knowledge about Russia. The latter is a necessity given the objectives of the programme.

An important observation is that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the main funder of NORRUSS, does not have a board observer. Instead, they use other channels and means to make their needs and views known. This includes the agreements between the Ministry and the Research Council.

4.4.1 The programme board's procedures

Writing and making calls for proposals and project selection are the key tasks of the programme board, and the tasks that takes up most of the board's time, as revealed in the interviews.

The interviews with the board members as well as with project managers give an impression of an active board filled with strong persons, whom discuss and to some degree scrutinise decisions made by the expert panel.

Calls for proposals

The programme board will normally discuss and prioritise a given topic prior to the writing of the call announcement. The programme administration then writes a proposal that is subject to deliberation among the board members.

When choosing a topic for a call, the procedure is that the board members consider the programme objectives, as well as which topics the programme has already covered. This includes looking for so-called grey areas, which is areas where there has not been done much research or areas that are important for Norwegian interests. The interviews also show that the board members are aware of the international research front, and if a given area is already heavily researched, they will generally choose another topic. An exception from this rule is, if there is a need for growing Norwegian competence in the specific area of research.

The board also see the calls in relation to former calls, to make sure that more topics are covered and that the programme over time covers all areas.

They are also conscious about including new perspectives on Russia research, as well as making sure that new geographical areas of Russia are covered. The geographical dimension has also included Asia.

Furthermore, the board has put more emphasis on cooperation with Russia, in accordance with political signals, as well as signals from the Research Council. This development is linked to the agreements between the Research Council and the two

Russian research foundations about Norwegian-Russian cooperation. One of the board members calls this the diplomatic objective, as opposed to the other substantive objectives, and claims that the diplomatic objective has precedence over other objectives when these are in conflict. Others support the increased weight put on cooperation, but do not go as far as saying that this is more important than other objectives.

The importance of Russian, international and Nordic cooperation is reflected in the calls. Russian cooperation partners have become a prerequisite for support in several calls, and the calls encourage Norwegian and Nordic cooperation, although this is not a prerequisite for support. This shows that Russian cooperation is at the core of the programme.

In addition, the programme board also tries to draw lessons from already conducted calls. They debate whether former calls have been specific enough and discuss lessons of refinements of procedures.

Although strengthening of the Norwegian research communities is a priority in the programme, there has been little discussion about whether to make recruitment positions a requirement for funding.

Picking the winners

Project selection is the next step. Again, this seems to be a process including much discussion among the board members. The board takes an active part in deciding who gets funding, and they deliberate on the suggestions made by the programme administration based on the evaluations from the expert panel.

There is a division of labour in the selection process. The expert panels judge the projects based on scientific merit and academic quality. The administration then group the applications into projects that are recommended for support, projects that can be supported and those that do not meet the qualification criteria. The programme board's main function here is to assess the projects' relevance for the programme objectives before they make a formal decision.

In the review process, the programme board divides the applications between themselves. The applications are assigned to different board members before the board meetings.

The respondents from the programme board states that they have made changes to the recommendations by the administration. The most common reason has been that projects are not seen as relevant enough.

Some of the interviews show that the board has disagreed with the expert panel evaluations on (a minority) projects. It has happened that they have discarded good projects because the relevance is considered too low. Instead, projects that have received lower scores in the academic evaluation have received funding. No projects with a score below five⁶ have been funded, but projects with a score of five, have been rewarded at the cost of projects with a score of six.

One informant stresses the diplomatic goals in this process. Cooperation with Russian partner is important, but they also look at other partners. Proposals, which include other international partners, are preferred, if everything else is equal. The same is true for female project leaders, as the Research Council has made gender balance a priority.

In addition, the board considers Norwegian interests when deciding about projects.

A rather contested point in the research communities is whether NORRUSS has spread its funds too thinly. This is mainly related to the number of research institutions that are funded. The critique is that NORRUSS has financed too many institutions, and that new research groups that have not conducted much research on and in Russia before, have been funded. The board, in general, do not seem to share this concern. Some of the board members state that they have wished to include new research groups and claim that new groups have brought in new and relevant perspectives. Furthermore, one member argued that Norway needs more than four or five research groups on Russia. Still, project quality, given that the relevance is satisfying, is the essential criteria for funding. However, the board members do not want to limit the number of research groups that can be qualified for support.

In interviews with project managers, another concern became evident, this time related to the level of Russia knowledge, both in terms of understanding the culture and the language. The claim was again that groups with low levels of expertise in this field had been funded. Again, the board members

⁶ The Research Council operate with an evaluation scale that goes from one to seven. Only projects that score above five are eligible for support.

did not share this notion; in fact, one member stated that he was surprised by the high level of competence in this field. With this in mind, the same respondent made the point that it had been a problem to recruit researchers with a background in law, and that this problem to a large extent was due to the lack of interest on Russia and knowledge of Russian language among researchers in this field.

General strategic views

The programme board also give strategic input to the programme. The board was not directly involved in the writing of the programme document. Despite this, according to board members they have room to manoeuvre and can influence the strategic choices of the programme.

Recently they have discussed the ongoing Ukraine-Russia-crisis and the consequences for the programme. This has not resulted in changes to the programme, partly due to signals from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Academic cooperation with Russia is still considered important and NORRUSS will continue with joint calls with the Russian research foundations.

The strategic choices made by the board is generally concerning which topics to cover. They also view the calls and project portfolio, in order to make sure that the portfolio reflects the strategic prioritisation of the programme plan.

In general, the board is aware of the framework given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Part of the board's role has been to translate this framework into researchable topics and to make sure that NORRUSS finances research and not simply compilation of information.

The Ministry does not interfere with the board. The Ministry do not have a board observer as mentioned above, although there are several examples of other ministries having observers on the board in other programmes. This seems to be a conscious choice from the Ministry.

There has not been made any changes to the programme document at this stage of the programme.

Project follow up

The «Geopolitics in the High North» reference group, which largely resembles today's programme

board, played an active role in following up the project. This included giving advice on project cooperation partners, as well as project dissemination.

This is not the case in NORRUSS. The portfolio is too big to allow scrutiny of the ongoing projects after the project selection. The projects managers, or at least some of them, have presented their projects for the board. Furthermore, project managers report project related issues and problems to the Research Council and hence to the board. In some cases, the board has given advice on how to conduct field research in Russia, when projects have encountered this type of problems. Furthermore, the programme board members we have interviewed have all mentioned the importance of dissemination of research results. This is also a point that has been included in the discussion on project selection.

Discussion

The programme board's role is mainly related to the running of the programme, understood as making and deciding on topics for the calls and project selection.

In general, Oxford Research finds that the programme board is an active board that has functioned well. The composition of the board is relevant to the topics of the programme, and together the members cover a broad range of disciplines from international law to modern history. This is an advantage for the programme.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs do not have observers on the board, as already mentioned. This indicates an arms-length approach to the programme. The interviews with the administration supports this, and suggests that the Ministry exerts their influence on the programme through other and more formal channels.

The board members have chosen an active role in discussions regarding project selection. However, as mentioned before, they have also been giving advice to on-going projects. Given the background of some of the board members, providing advice on Russia research, is not surprising. In our opinion, this is somewhat unusual. We consider this an advantage for the programme, as long as this does not interfere with the running of the projects.

Other Research Council programmes have chosen to limit the role of the board in project selection⁷,

⁷ Furre et al. 2013. «Fast i fisken». Kristiansand: Oxford Research

and put more emphasis on the board's strategic role. This is not the case here. We see that the active role the board plays is a cause for distrust for a minority of project managers. Others do not appreciate the programme board's active role and some of them have criticised the board on this account. Some of the critics relate this to the board having chosen projects with lower evaluation scores, but higher relevance over projects with better evaluation scores. Others are critical of the board cutting budgets.

In general, both these practices are within the mandate of the programme board. However, it is our impression that the applicants are not always familiar with criteria for project selection, including project relevance and international cooperation. This might be a cause of the critique.

4.5 Management of the programme

The researchers interviewed presented a rather unified opinion as regards cooperation with the Research Council. At the stage of calls for proposal preparation, the contact with the Council's staff was available through formal channels, when the Research Council published documents at a formal hearing. Also during the calls, clarifications were easily available.

In terms of contact with the Norwegian Research Council along the projects implementation, financial and results reporting, projects in NORRUSS were subject to standard Research Council procedures. In most of the interviews conducted there were no complains as regards this side of programme implementation.

The staff has been reported to be professional and helpful, constructive and productive. This includes also annual reporting to the Research Council and the Programme Board.

The Research Council has also allowed for reasonable delays in recruiting, which happened in several projects. In general, the cooperation to this regard has been perceived as smooth and flexible.

The administrative side of the project implementation has functioned well. Participating institutes in most cases have established routines for the implementation of such projects. In addition, assistance in preparation and submission of project's final reports has been appreciated.

It must be mentioned that the period when NORRUSS was created did not influence the implementation of "GeoPolitics in the High North project". The reference group did not changed. Procedures stayed the same, as did the contact person.

One individual interviewee expressed very critical opinion as regards the peer committee composition as well as experience and understanding of the needs of programme sponsors in the board. Others complemented the system for evaluation of project proposals for its efficiency. With six different peer reviewers with different background and disciplines, including face-to-face meetings between the reviewers, this process was considered as solid. Such an approach, by definition, gives a variety of opinions and prevents individual perspectives influencing the process. International peers interviewed assessed this process as excellent and recommendable.

Chapter 5. Conclusions and recommendations

The evaluation's overall conclusion is that NORRUSS is a well-managed programme that is on the right path towards goal attainment. We recommend the continuation of NORRUSS also after 2016.

However, we find that the programme management must address and improve several issues in order to increase the likelihood of reaching the programme objectives.

5.1 Preliminary goal attainment and effect

The programme is ambitious in its attempts to cover a wide range of topics regarding Russia and the High North.

The evaluation of preliminary results show that the three completed projects have delivered well in terms of publications and general dissemination.

Furthermore, we find that the programme has clearly increased internationalisation and international co-operation.

Building long-term strategic competence

This is a mid-term evaluation, thus, we cannot conclude on whether the programme has strengthened the crosscutting objective of building stronger research communities and long-term strategic competence. Overall, looking at the funded projects, the dispersing of funds on different research institutions, the indicators point in the right direction. Yet, the programme needs to address certain issues.

The two main areas both relate to the first two main goals of the programme aimed at "development of long term and strategic competence" in the High North and Russia. The evaluation findings point at two areas of concern here, one being the tools used for building long-term strategic competence and strong research communities, as well as the dispersion of funds among different institutions.

As regards the means applied to improve and strengthen Norwegian research and develop long-term, strategic expertise by strengthening researcher recruitment, our conclusion is that the programme,

so far, has not met this objective to a satisfactory degree. Only a small minority of projects have included PhD- or post-doctoral positions. As outlined in the programme theory discussion, we view recruitment as a central element in building long-term strategic competence in the fields of Russia and the High North. On a short-term, the projects could contribute to strengthen the research group without including recruitment positions; however, recruitment is necessary to increase the long-term competence.

The second point, the dispersion of funds among different institutions, is to a large degree managed well in the programme. Based on the data collected here, our view is that in order to build long-term competence in Norway, the programme should stress both depth and breadth and we have assessed the programme in light of these dimensions.

In terms of influence on research groups, the programme has managed to sustain the existing competence and allow existing Norwegian research groups to maintain their thematic focus and size. The large projects have been awarded to institutions with a long tradition in studying Russia and the High North. However, some newer research groups have also surfaced, e.g. from the University of Nordland. The conclusion is that there has been some widening of the scope, while at the same time the traditionally important institutes in the field have maintained their position.

In general, indicators referring to the formation of research clusters, the size of financing and number of research projects financed, indicates that two institutes (FNI and IFS) have played the major role in implementing the programme so far, but NUI is also a significant player. A similar pattern is visible among the Norwegian cooperation partners, where several of the same groups appear as preferred cooperation partners. At the same time, these partners do not dominate the scene. Researchers from other institutions are well represented, as both cooperation partners and project managing institutions.

The number of "new" institutions funded by NORRUSS has been a source of critique by some researchers. We find that at this stage, we cannot conclude

that the funding has been spread too thinly across different institutions.

From our perspective, we see one cluster of research groups, centring on FNI, IFS and NUPI, with other actors surrounding them. Furthermore, we can see the contours of emerging research clusters in Northern Norway.

This seems to be a sensible dispersion of funding, and we find that programme has added some depth to the research groups funded, but it is perhaps too early to draw a conclusion on the breadth.

Although the balance between the two is satisfying today, the programme administration and the programme board should be aware of and monitor this issue.

Furthermore, another issue related to these two challenges is the programme duration. The duration of NORRUSS is short in our opinion; both compared to other programmes in the department and in light of the objective related to long-term competence and the many sub-themes of the programme. The short duration makes long-term projects more difficult to fund, most projects have a three-year limitation, which in most cases will be too short for including a PhD-student, and perhaps even to include post-doctoral positions. The project size could also be a cause for this. A minority of the projects are between 3.5 and 5 million NOK, which might not allow for the inclusion of recruitment positions. On the other hand, the median project size is 7 million, and this will in most cases be sufficient to include PhDs or post-doctoral positions.

At the same time, larger projects can be an efficient tool for increasing the depth dimension related to strengthening the research groups.

Regarding the short programme duration, this yields another challenge, as it limits the programme's ability to revise the strategy and to prioritise between topics based on results from on-going projects.

Interdisciplinarity

An overview of the NORRUSS portfolio, as well as reports analysed prove a reasonable level of interdisciplinarity both in the entire sample of financed projects, as well inside many of them. Not surprisingly, projects stayed within the general division in "large" disciplinary categories. Social science projects were connecting research disciplines within social sciences (econ-

omy, law, sociology, political science, reaching sometimes to geography) and so did projects within the field of natural science.

However, it appears unclear whether the projects were in fact interdisciplinary, or rather multidisciplinary. Some of the projects include active cooperation between researchers of different disciplines, while others consists of separate deliveries from different research fields, where interdisciplinary cooperation in fact was not strong or not occurring.

Dissemination

The projects utilise standard ways of dissemination, with web pages, workshops, and presentations on conferences. Academic publications are the central output, from the point of view of the project managers. In terms of number of dissemination activities, the three completed projects have conducted a large amount of dissemination activities directed at their users or target groups.

Events organised have gained the attention of policy makers and public through media. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs have established contacts with several of the project managers. However, they also feel that the projects could improve marketing of their research. Furthermore, also the Ministry itself has potential of improving the way it works to make the research relevant for its needs.

Publications are typically available through scientific journals but several book chapters are also important outcomes of the programme.

In selected cases more focus could have been given towards producing summative publications, allowing for demonstration of projects' consistent findings and allowing for better integrity and visibility of the outcomes.

Our conclusion is that the programme is doing well at this stage, although the bulk of dissemination activities is likely laying ahead of us, as most projects are still on going.

Internationalisation and international cooperation

Internationalisation was also high on the agenda from the perspective of project managers and international researchers participating, being considered as important part of project implementation.

NORRUSS deserves praise for the international networks it has contributed to create. The project managers consider participation of international partners from other Western countries as a positive influence on the projects' quality and relevance.

The opinions on cooperation with Russian partners are ambiguous. In a number of projects, the cooperation has been fruitful and partners have delivered relevant input of high quality, as well contributed to publications and other project results. The project managers regard the Russian researchers in these projects as highly committed and delivering results of good or excellent quality.

Other projects faced difficulties and delays due to under-delivery or simply non-delivery of expected contribution. Several projects were on the brink of replacing cooperating researchers. Due to bureaucratic procedures, stiffness of structures or general lack of cooperative approach, the cooperation have in some cases not given the expected results.

An issue that have been raised is that the cooperation with Russia could mean less cooperation with other potential international partners. We also have some input from the programme board regarding this issue, where a (minority) of the respondents claim that the diplomatic goal, i.e. cooperation with Russia, is prioritised over other objectives, when conflicts between goals arise. This means that cooperation with Russia, in some cases, will be preferred over cooperation with other countries, although the latter would more likely yield higher academic quality. Furthermore, in terms of programme theory, this indicate that there might be an "informal programme theory"⁸, which means that in addition to the formal programme theory described earlier, the programme also explores other ways to obtain the goals.

This is a possible conflict of goals, one being a wish to cooperate more with Russia, the other being improving academic quality, which the programme needs to be aware of or actually address.

5.2 Programme relevance

The evaluation also included an assessment of the programme relevance. This encompassed studying the thematic scope of the programme, the linkage between the guidelines expressed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the programme, as well as

whether or not relevant research groups had been included. The programme theory has been an important tool in this regard.

Thematic scope

The NORRUSS programme document describes two strategic topics, which each consists of several sub-topics. Furthermore, there are three main objectives and several secondary objectives. Together, this makes for an ambitious programme.

Firstly, the guidelines given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the two⁹ agreements between the Ministry and the Research Council are clearly recognisable in the programme document and the programme objectives. As such, the programme's external relevance is high.

Furthermore, the Ministry is mostly satisfied with the preliminary results from the programme.

Secondly, as already mentioned, the thematic scope is ambitious, with a large number of sub-topics to be covered. The projects have covered some of these areas well, while others are not covered at all. As the programme period is not finished, it is as expected that the programme has not covered all topics yet.

The way the programme conducts the calls for proposals, largely referring to the programme document; makes it difficult to assure that all areas are covered. We do not necessarily see this as a problem; in fact, it could be a strength of the programme in that this allows the researchers to decide which themes are important. However, if all sub-topics are of strategic importance to Norwegian interests, this is a problem.

Another side of this is the relationship between Russia and the High North. Some respondents have claimed that the programme must view Russia, being a centralised country, as a whole, not only through the perspective of the High North, where Norway has the most important interests. Therefore, the history and development of NORRUSS, approaching the main object of investigation from the High North perspective, might result in the creation of a biased picture.

Although the data gathered from project reports show that all disciplines in the social sciences are represented in the portfolio, the interviews show that it

⁸ See Vedung, E. 1998. *Utvärdering i politik och förvaltning*. Studentlitteratur; Lund.

⁹ There is a third agreement on Asia's role in the high North, where one project is supported.

has been difficult to get high quality projects in the field of law.

Our conclusion is that the programme has managed to mobilise the relevant research communities.

5.3 Organisation and efficiency

Overall, NORRUSS is a well-managed programme. Despite the relatively small staff, the programme has delivered a wide range of calls, as well as being a facilitator for cooperation between the Russian Research Foundation for Basic Research and other programmes in the Research Council.

This has led to joint calls between the foundation and POLARPROG and PETROMAKS2, as well as NORRUSS.

While we view this as a positive outcome of NORRUSS' activities, this makes project follow-up more complicated. However, this minor issue is likely to decrease as the other programmes are taking more control over the call-process and the contact with Russian partners.

How has the programme board functioned?

The board is internationally composed, and consists mostly of people with an academic background. This means it is a competent board on issues regarding Russia. However, this is also an active board with at times vivid discussions regarding project selection. The board has differed with the suggestions made by the programme administration and the evaluation panels.

While there has been some critique of the role of the board (formerly the reference group) played in the «Geopolitics in the High North», where the board actively changed the cooperation patterns in the project, this has been less criticised in the NORRUSS years.

The critique raised against the board is that the project selection process has not been sufficiently transparent. This is mostly concerned with the application of different selection criteria. Our general impression is that this is a point that has improved, however the impression is that other criteria than academic quality have played too large a role in the selection process, and that this has not been communicated to the applicants in the calls or application phase.

This is a view held by several researchers and could possibly affect the legitimacy of the programme. It is

of course important for the programme that the procedures are transparent. However, the potential project managers must also perceive the evaluation criteria as transparent.

Recommendation

A new open discussion of the programme scope is advised. The discussion should include important stakeholders.

This is also related to the way the board functions, especially regarding making decisions that differ from those of the programme administration and evaluation panel. Generally, when the board alters which projects to fund, relevant stakeholders perceive this with suspicion. Even if the board bases their decision on significant criteria like thematic relevance, which is an important part of the board's mandate, it is essential to be clear on the criteria applied in the selection process. This implies giving clear feedback to the applicants, and clear communication with the relevant research groups, so that the researchers know the selection criteria and the procedure.

5.4 Recommendations

Thematic scope

The wide scope of the programme and the many sub-themes seem ambitious in a relatively small programme, making it difficult to cover all areas of the programme with financed projects. The calls for pro-

Recommendation

The programme management should consider changes to the programme document and the many sub-topics. We advise that the two main topics should be continued, but that the sub-topics could be formulated in broader and more aggregated themes. Operating with broader areas in the call, would give the opportunity to cover the programme's main objectives, and simultaneously allowing the researchers for proposing their own ideas for research topics within the broader categories. In addition, the programme management could make specific calls for proposals on areas they consider important.

posals are wide and encompassing, referring to the programme document, and they do not specify the programme objectives into concrete research questions. At the same time, this practice has the effect that several areas are left untapped.

Discussion with the Ministry and most engaged stakeholders concerning future topics and scope of the programme should be triggered, allowing different actors to express their views in an open process.

Asia's role in the High North

The programme should continue its efforts to in-

Recommendation

Disseminate information about the calls internationally, through other national research councils. This will allow foreign researchers to take initiative for formulation of project ideas and new research consortia with Norwegian partners. Safeguarding important Norwegian role in the project might be kept as a prerequisite.

crease knowledge on foreign policy issues of special relevance to the High North/Arctic, with a focus on the interests of China, Japan, South Korea and India. Although one large project was financed and other projects contributed to the topic, there seems to be untapped potential in this field.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided a grant of 15 million NOK for one project on the Asia's role in the High North. The programme administration received only one application in this call. This means that there is only one big project covering the third objective. This creates an imbalance in the programme portfolio. We find it puzzling that one projects makes up a whole area, and whether this is enough to generate long-term strategic competence in this field.

Recommendation

The programme management should discuss whether there is a need for more projects in this area, given that it is a main objective in the programme. If more projects are to be financed in cooperation with Asian research institutes, it is important to undertake some kind of matchmaking missions in relevant Asian countries, in order to enhance consortia formulation for future projects.

International cooperation

Internationalisation is a key in the programme, and a secondary objective. The amount of international cooperation in the programme is notable. The cooperation, especially with Russia, gives the projects perspectives and knowledge they would otherwise not achieve. More engagement of renown international researchers might positively influence programme overall research quality.

Programme and project duration

The programme and project duration (and to some extent budget size), influence the possibility for engaging doctoral or post-doctoral positions. Development of research groups in this way requires longer time perspective, time for recruitment and finally, appropriate level of resources. Furthermore, the pro-

Recommendation

The programme should consider allowing projects with a duration of 4 to 5 years, and emphasis room for PhD's and post-docs, or even make this a prerequisite in the larger projects.

The programme duration should also be debated, as it is short compared to the programme's objectives and ambitious thematic scope.

gramme duration is short, and this has been a problem for financing long-term projects.

The programme board

The active role of the Programme Board is a cause for distrust among a minority of project managers. Some of the critics relate this to the board having chosen projects with lower evaluation scores but higher relevance over projects with better evaluation scores. Others are critical of the board cutting budgets.

Furthermore, open and well-known criteria are a prerequisite for good and transparent project selection processes. The criteria must be open and known prior to the application process.

Recommendation

The programme should consider taking action to increase knowledge about the evaluation criteria and how they are weighted against each other.

Interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary projects

Recommendation

Projects consortia could be required to present detailed Interdisciplinarity strategy for the proposed research, where interdisciplinary research is vital for the outcome.

The interdisciplinarity in the projects is assessed as good, although in some cases it might be rather referred to as multidisciplinary. In order to assure researchers real interdisciplinary cooperation, this programme could give more attention to this issue.

Annex - Input from the expert group

Two experts from Akvaplan-niva AS contributed supported Oxford Research in the evaluation of NORRUSS. The written input from the experts is included below. The group also functioned as a dialogue partner during the evaluation period.

The expert group's mandate was to evaluate and support Oxford Research on the following themes:

- Do the projects cover the programme's thematic scope? Which areas do the projects cover?
 - Are some areas covered too much or too little compared to the weighting of different areas in the programme document?
- To which extent are different research groups/communities represented in the programme?
 - Are some research groups over or underrepresented?
 - Are the funds spread too thinly, given the programme objectives of building long-term strategic competence?

In addition, Oxford Research and the expert groups discussed conclusions and recommendations regarding the programme's next phase.

Written statement from the expert panel

By Salve Dahle and Ole Øvretveit, Akvaplan-niva AS.

The evaluation has been conducted by Oxford Research but two experts from Akvaplan-Niva have contributed to the evaluation. This box presents their evaluation of the programme topics and objectives.

Topics

Two main priority topics: the development of Russia as a foreign political actor, and internal political development in Russia.

Possibilities and challenges in the North and Russia's relationship to the rest of the world.

This priority topic has twelve themes: Security interests, Energy interests, Polar and climate research, Historical relations and the development of law, Indigenous issues, Russia's relationship to Europe, Russia's relationship to the USA, Asia's interests in the North, Russia's geopolitical role in the Arctic, Russia's role in international institutions and organizations, the New Eurasian union and Economic and commercial interests and new transport routes in the Arctic.

IFS' GEOPOLITIKK - NORD project performs a deep analysis on security interests in the North. This program also has work packages on EU, USA and the Arctic, Polar and climate research and legal development.

Legal development is being scrutinized in UiT's *Arctic Shipping through Challenging Waters* project, which also studies economic and commercial interests and new transport routes in the Arctic, as well as Russia's role in international institutions and organizations. The GEOPOLITIKK - NORD project examines energy interests as does CICERO's project *Sustainability and Petroleum Extraction*. GEOPOLITIKK - NORD has a work package on Russia and Norway in which Russia's geopolitical role is analysed. FNI's *The Asian countries in the High North* project discusses Asia's interests in the North, energy, economic and commercial interests and new transport routes in the Arctic, as well as security and Polar and climate research.

With this we can conclude that all but two issues, Indigenous peoples and the New Eurasian union have been covered by the different projects in this target area. This should be satisfying. It is however worth noting that most issues are covered by the encompassing projects *The Geopolitics of the High North* and *The Asian Countries in the High North*.

Internal development in Russia – politics economy and society

This topic (temaområde) has two main categories, *Political challenges* and *Economical challenges*. The former has eight themes: Controlled democracy, Electoral processes, Local democracy, Development of rule of law, the Role of the media, Islam in Russia, Nationalism and political identity and Northern Caucasus. The latter category has nine themes: energy and commodities export, the need for development of new sectors, Russian economic modernization, the need for investments in Siberia, Caucasus and other Arctic areas, Management and prevention of entrepreneurship, physical infrastructure, regional economic differences, the debt crisis effect on the banking system and domestic industry and consumption.

Also in this target area most of the themes are covered by the financed projects. It should however be noted that most of the themes prioritised are covered by two quite encompassing projects. FNIs *Federal Russian Politics: Modernising Northern Economies* and NUIs *Modernising the Russian North* discuss Electoral processes, The need for development of new sectors, Russian economic modernization, The need for investments in Siberia, Caucasus and other Arctic areas, Management and prevention of entrepreneurship and Domestic industry and consumption. The FNI project also covers Development of rule of law and Energy and commodities export while the NUI project covers Controlled democracy, Local democracy and the Role of the media. In addition the Role of the media and Nationalism and political identity are covered by UiO's *Nation-building, nationalism and the new order in today's Russia* project. NIBR's *Network governance: A tool for understanding Russia* project covers Electoral processes. UiN's *Local government budgeting reforms in Russia: implications and tensions* project covers Local democracy, CICERO's *Sustainability and Petroleum Extraction: Corporate and Community Perspectives in Northern Norway and the Russian Arctic* covers Local democracy and UiTs *ARctic Urban SUSTainability in Russia* covers Physical infrastructure.

The prioritised themes that are difficult to detect in the project list are Islam in Russia, Northern Caucasus, Regional economic differences and the Debt crisis effect on the banking system. Again we see two major projects covering the bulk of the target area with several minor projects playing a more peripheral role. It is worth noting that the two projects overlap both in theme, geographical scope and method, using the northern part of Russia as a case for understanding macro tendencies in Russia. It is also worth noting that the UiN project *Higher Education in the High North: Regional Restructuring through Educational Exchanges and Student Mobility* doesn't really cover any of the prioritised themes, but may have a more meta scope as it deals with one of the main targets of the NORUSS program, to establish Norwegian-Russian academic networks.

Project goals

NORUSS has three main goals:

1. To develop long term strategic competence in Norway on relevant Arctic questions and to develop relevant international academic networks.
2. To develop long term and strategic and competence in Norway on Russia, also outside of the Russian north in the field of social science and the humanities. The scientific work will bring forth knowledge on how political, economic and social factors affect Russian politics and decision making. In addition the program is expected to develop long term academic cooperation with Russia.
3. To bring forth new knowledge in foreign political questions with special relevance for the Arctic and a focus on the interests of China, Japan, South Korea and India in the region and with the purpose of strengthening the international research collaboration with leading institutions in Asia.

In addition the program has eight targets, most of which are covered by the text in the main goals. Four targets deserve attention in this report:

1. To improve and strengthen Norwegian science and strategic expertise by strengthening the recruitment of researchers and financing PhDs and postdoc scholarships.
2. To convey research findings actively to government, business and other groups who are involved in the Norwegian-Russian cooperation and who are occupied by international questions in the Arctic.
3. To promote links between different fields of science and sectors. The projects are expected to have interdisciplinary approaches where relevant and are also expected to stimulate the development of new methods.
4. To generate RND of high scientific quality which is presented in peer reviewed journals, at scientific conferences or in the media.

The first target calls for the strengthening of Arctic social science by recruiting scientists to the field. Nine fellowships can be counted in the portfolio, 6 of which are developed within the GEOPOLITIC-NORD and the Federal Russian Politics: Modernizing Northern Economies projects. As for the second target, it is a bit more difficult to conclude. Still, tentatively, one might speculate that here the major projects hosted by IFS, NUPI and FNI are most frequently utilized for government and commercial consulting. The third target calls for interdisciplinary cooperation. Although *ecology, atmospheric science, physical science and geography* are represented in the portfolio, the bulk of the projects are founded on core social sciences as *political science, economy, law, sociology and international relations*. In a strict interpretation one might call this interdisciplinary, but it is more intra disciplinary within the social sciences. Thus, the projects in total might deliver better on the interdisciplinary side. As for the last target there seem to be a high degree of visibility, both in the media and the academic world, especially from the larger projects.

As regards the main goals. The third, focusing on Asia seems to be covered adequately by *The Asian countries in the High North project*. Still, being one of three main goals one could anticipate more projects in the portfolio working on the region. The two first main goals call for the building of strategic social scientific competence in Norway on Russia and the Arctic. The GEOPOLITIK - NORD cemented a solid professional network and encompassed development of international networks on these issues. Visibility and bulk brings status and, in turn, talent. The GEOPOLITIC – NORD project is to a large extent a career making entity both in terms of network, visibility and publications with a gravity of its own. The hub of this network is the collaboration between IFS and FNI, and within the NORUSS program it has its prolongation with *the Asian countries in the High North project*. It seems to be a very positive outcome of the program. The other FNI project, *Federal Russian Politics: Modernizing Northern Economies* also seems to cement this structure. That being said, the other projects within the program do not seem to have established a critical mass which alternative professional environments may be founded on. This leaves Norway with one relatively strong cluster on Russian and Arctic competence. Is this sufficient? With the Arctic and the North being one of the most important areas in Norwegian foreign policy the answer should be no.

Conclusion

With its many targets and themes the NORUSS program might be a bit rigid. The last few months have showed us very clearly that with an actor like Russia things might change fast. The many themes may be an obstacle for more current or holistic approaches. One question that must be asked is if the geographical scope may seem a bit constructed. Arctic social and political analysis should encompass both Russia and the new interest from the East Asian countries, and Russia as a foreign political actor might be analyzed alongside the country's internal issues. The program should perhaps make up its mind whether to be on Russia and the north or the north in general.

NORUSS has to a large degree been successful in regards to the goals and targets set for the program. The projects have built international networks and have brought and are bringing forth relevant knowledge. Still, the large range of issues in the portfolio and the many priority themes may have reduced the in depth research as far as the main targets in the program are concerned. Has NORUSS developed long term strategic competence on the Arctic and Russia? The answer to that is *to some degree*. A more correct answer would be that NORUSS has cemented FNI, IFS and NUPI as dominant actors. Highly competent groups have been given resources to get better within certain important strategic areas. These three institutions have the same geographical location. In

order to secure a more vital social scientific environment in Norway with competence on Russia and the Arctic, NORUSS should focus its remaining period on larger projects, with fellowships with larger geographical foothold.



A MAP of the Countries situate about the NORTH POLE as far as the 20th Degree of North Latitude