

Strategic Action Plan for Increased External Funding to NIH

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Method	3
3	External funding as a process	3
4	Effort.....	5
4.1	Proposed objectives for external financing.....	5
4.2	Use and further develop Søknadsweb	7
4.3	Strengthen internalcommunication and information – highlight the opportunities	8
4.3.1	COST	9
4.3.2	Erasmus+	9
4.3.3	Innovation projects	9
4.4	Build competence to take advantage of opportunities.....	9
4.4.1	Learning from ourselves.....	10
4.4.2	Learning from others.....	11
4.5	External communications	11
4.6	Further develop international networks – positioning for opportunities	11
4.7	Increase kapasitya.....	12
4.7.1	Buy-out.....	12
4.7.2	Multi-use and reuse of applications.....	13
4.8	Strengthen and showcase support systemet	13
5	Summary of measures proposed in this action plan.....	15

Summary

Based on an increasing demand to obtain external funding through the Research Council of Norway (NFR) and the EU, a working group was appointed in June 2021 with a mandate to prepare an action plan. The measures in the action plan will help NIH ensure stable income from RCN and the EU. The action plan shows that the process of obtaining external funding must best be understood as team sports that involve many and require good planning. The intention is that the measures proposed in the action plan will eventually provide NIH with an effective model for coordinating and integrating the work of external funding across the organization. The proposed measures are summarized in the summary under item 5, page 14.

1 Introduction

In the agency management round for 2021, the Ministry of Education and Research (KD) noted that our (NIH) revenues from the Research Council of Norway (NFR) and the EU are persistently low. KD believes that the gap between NIH's high publication rate and low revenues from RCN and the EU (the Framework Programmes for research and innovation, as well as Erasmus+) is unusual (see excerpt, appendix 1). The ability to succeed in the competition for EU funding is central to the authorities' assessment of the institutions' ability to fulfil their social mission in research. Consequently, KD expects us to increase our revenues from the EU and NFR in the future and believes that our good international reputation should represent a competitive advantage.

While we have low revenues from the EU and NFR, NIH has been the best in the university and university college sector when it comes to external research funding from other sources (Figure 1). This funding has been obtained through tenders from government agencies, announcements from foundations, cooperation with sports and some directly from the business sector.

Inntektsgrunnlaget i UH-sektoren (statlige)

Inntekt pr. UFF årsverk			
	fra NFR	fra andre	SUM ekskl. EU
NMBU	286	193	479
NTNU	229	180	409
UIO	250	134	384
UIB	211	130	341
UiT	127	154	281
NHH	136	120	256
NIH	27	213	240

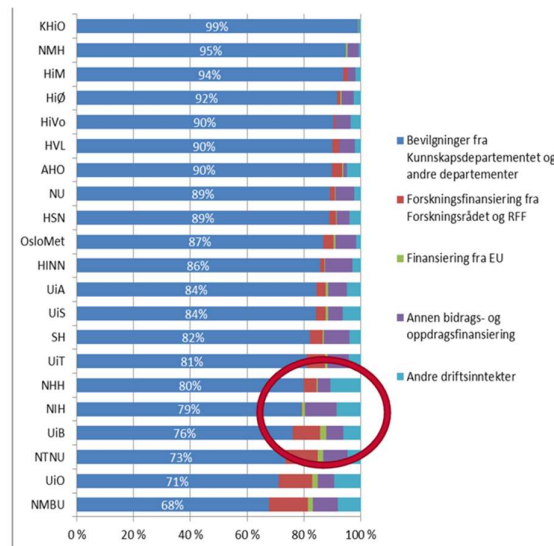


Figure 1: Overview of income from external funding sources distributed by RCN and "others", (based on blank figures. 2018).

KD is aware that NIH has significant external funding from sources other than the EU and NFR, but this does not change the requirement that we must improve on RCN and the EU. Our allocation from the Ministry of Education is calculated largely based on our results in research and teaching. On the research side, you get results allocations for publication points and for externally funded research. The best results are grants from the EU, where the Ministry of Education grants are 70 cents extra for every krone we receive from the EU, compared to 10 cents per krone from other sources of funding.

The Ministry is gradually reducing the basic allocation to the institutions. Competition for performance-based budget funds is increasing. And in addition, we have a resource challenge with handling new/stricter requirements for how our business should be run. Against this background, we are now dependent on external funding in the order of NOK 40 million per year to maintain operations at the current level. In addition, our financial framework will probably also be tightened due to high rental income when Statsbygg takes over real estate management at NIH.

More funding from RCN and especially the EU will reduce our organisational and financial risk, in addition to helping us maintain our high publication rate going forward. Therefore, increased participation in the EU Framework Program is also anchored in the NIH's current strategic plan ("Knowledge in Motion").

This is the reason why the working group was mandated in July 2021 to prepare an action plan with a ceiling that will contribute to NIH achieving a stable turnover from RCN and the EU. The working group has also chosen to look for improvement points in terms of the operation phase for externally funded projects, since the work on the action plan revealed that many employees perceive reporting and administration as a barrier to applying for funding. The action plan must also be seen as a contribution to the restructuring of the NIH administration that began in the summer of 2021. Finally, the working group believes that the proposals towards most external sources of funding (tenders, applications, and cooperation with the business sector) have many common features, and that measures that make us better at getting funding from RCN and the EU will make us better against other external sources of funding.

The working group has consisted of Elin Kolle (rectorate), Frode Paulsen (AFB), Sigmund Loland (IIS), Sigmund Alfred Anderssen (IIM), Reidar Säfvenbom (ILF) and Tormod S. Nilsen (working group leader, IFP).

2 Method

To ensure that we ended up with an action plan with relevant measures, the working group initially conducted a simple survey among permanent employees in academic positions and employees in postdoc positions at NIH. The objective of the survey was to clarify expectations, needs and attitudes to the work with applications for external funding, as well as identify any barriers to this. After a review of the results, main points were discussed at the four departments. Feedback from the departments, together with experiences from other institutions that have succeeded with external funding, as well as discussions in the working group have formed the basis for the measures formulated in this action plan. The task force has held weekly meetings since August. The final draft of the action plan was circulated for consultation at the departments in November. The feedback has been discussed and has provided adjustments in this final draft that will be submitted to management in week 49.

3 External funding as a process

The working group believes that it is necessary to see the work of securing external funding as a joint NIH process. By seeing the work with external financing as a process, it becomes easier to identify and rectify bottlenecks, remove what does not work, clarify expectations - and finally easier to succeed in the competition. In this process, many employees have important,

but partly different roles. A clear division of roles and responsibilities in management, in the departments, among employees in academic positions and in the support system is important for the NIH process to be as effective as possible.

Based on our social mission, the Ministry requires NIH to obtain more external funding. A description of the NIH's process for meeting this requirement may look as follows:

- NIH's management (board/rectorate) sets targets for external funding for NIH in consultation with the heads of departments, and the goals are regularly followed up in FL
- The departments are each responsible for their share of the total application pool, and the head of department regularly follows up the status of the work to develop externally funded projects at department meetings
- The researchers set aside time to develop externally funded projects in their work plans in collaboration with the head of department
- Relevant calls for proposals are announced centrally and discussed at the departments
- Concepts and application ideas are developed by researchers and further developed in the research groups, in collaboration with the support network
- Researchers or research groups considering applying must inform the head of department. Together they then consider:
 - o whether the researchers have the capacity to write
 - o whether the department and other parties involved at NIH have the capacity to commit to the operation of the project if the application is funded.

- The process of the concrete application one starts:
 - o The application is registered in Søknavsweb
 - o The project description is written
 - o Partners recruited
 - o Budget is drawn up
 - o The electronic form is filled in
 - o Final application should be submitted
- Reply received
 - o In case of rejection:
 - Evaluate the justification for rejection et and learn from den
 - Consider resubmission, if applicable. Adaptation other sources of funding
 - o For commitments/financing:
 - Evaluate the rationale for the pledge and learn from then
 - Revise project description to study protocol
 - Apply to the relevant ethics committee and, if applicable, NSD
 - Drafting agreements and cooperation agreements
 - Advertise positions and hire people
 - Secure intellectual property rights
 - Prepare and enter into a data processing agreement with relevant parties
- Operation of the project
 - o Voting expectations between the project manager, project group and support staff (start-up meeting)

- Enter the project in NIH's Projectweb, comply with privacy
- Report on a regular and financial basis
- Communication and dissemination activities
- Scientific publication
- Possible innovation and commercialization

With NIH's two-tier management model, a managing director has a responsibility to ensure administrative support that best supports our core activities, including the process described above. The working group proposes the support system to be defined according to this process so that researchers are helped as far as possible to achieve the goals set (see section 4.8).

The process described above shows that working with applications for external funding and subsequent projects is teamwork. It shows that writing good project descriptions requires a long-term perspective, and that work on applications must start early for them to be competitive. The ideas for projects should be discussed in the research groups and further developed into specific projects in collaboration with NIH's support system. A good process will require a certain degree of standardisation and must be supported by updated and good information about relevant calls for proposals and regular reminders of external funding from the rectorate and department management. Individual researchers must of course also keep themselves informed about relevant calls for proposals.

The entire process should be evaluated and improved continuously. It is important to learn from why some of our applications are funded and others are not. In order to obtain external funding and to achieve effective management of externally funded projects, it is important that the NIH has the right expertise, in the right place, where the various parts of the process are completed at the right time. In the next chapter, the working group presents its proposals for measures to improve the NIH process for obtaining external funding.

4 Effort

4.1 Proposed objectives for external financing

The working group recommends:

- an overall target of an application volume of NOK 120 million annually, regardless of funding source, of which NOK 20 is allocated to the EU.
- that the total sea volume is distributed among the departments, where the "should" requirement is 35 million and the "must" requirement is 25 million.
- that applications and project planning are put on the agenda in FL at least once a quarter, based on Søknaadsweb

According to the NIH's strategic plan, clear targets for external funding will be set. The working group believes that it is most constructive to set targets for the application volume, i.e., how much funding NIH should apply for and not how much funding we should be pledged for. This is because it is easier to influence the application volume than to predict what we will be pledged for. As mentioned in the introduction, we need about NOK 40 million annually in external funds to be able to continue today's operations, and KD expects us to increase our revenues from the EU and NFR.

Figures from Søknadsweb (see section 4.2) show that NIH is already experiencing a positive development when it comes to applications for external funding, especially when it comes to NFR. From 2019 to 2021, all the departments have contributed to increasing the application volume from 47 to 113 M annually. The success rate also shows a positive change in the same period, from 13% to 22%, which has resulted in our application-based external funding increasing from 6.3 million in 2019 to 26 million. so far in 2021. EU funds make up a very limited part of the applications from 2019 to the present. During the seven years that Horizon 2020 lasted, the NIH applied for a total of approx. 60 million, and we secured 2.4 million.

To increase the likelihood of an income of NOK 40 million per year, the working group therefore recommends that we set an overall target of an application volume of NOK 120 million annually, regardless of the source of funding, of which NOK 20 is allocated to the EU. An application volume of NOK 120 M corresponds to the average of what we applied for in the last two years. With an improvement of the rate of success to 30% this could give us 36 M annually.

	Antall årsverk med FoU-tid	Ulike fordelingsnøkler				Suksessrate		
		Flat fordeling	Basert på FoU-tid	Basert på tidligere søknader	Gj.snitt (FoU-tid og tidligere søknader)	20 %	30 %	40 %
IFP	7,80	30	30	40	35	7	10	14
ILF	8,35	30	32	27	30	6	9	12
IIS	9,50	30	36	17	27	5	8	11
IIM	5,70	30	22	36	29	6	9	12
Totalt	31,35	120	120	120	120	24	36	48

Tabell 1. The table shows four different ways for distribution of the responsibility for a proposal volume of 120 M. Regardless of funding sources at the departments: Flat distribution, equal at all departments; Based on R&D time, calculated based on the number of full-time equivalents with R&D time The departments have available; Based on previous applications, The average of Applications registered in Søknadsweb in 2020 and 2021; Average of the previous two distribution keys. Finally, the table shows count outs with different success rates.

Table 1 shows proposals for different distributions is responsible for the application volume based on available R&D time and previous application experience. Goals that are perceived as unrealistic will, however, be demotivating and counterproductive so therefore the working group recommends that we define the «may requirements» and «should-requirements». The must-demand«» specifies a minimum requirement the department and the "should" requirement represents what the departments should strive for. The working group believes the "should" requirement should be 35 million and the "must" requirement should be 25 million. The objectives should also be revised every two years in connection with the work on the overall activity plan (OVP).

The requirement for an application volume in the NOK 100 million class for NIH and about NOK 30 million for each department may seem demanding to many who are not used to applications for external funding. However, it is important to point out that in practice this means that each department is responsible for sending somewhere between 2 and 4 applications of a certain size to RCN or the EU per year, and that some of these may be resubmissions or reworked applications for which there is less work involved than new ones.

Goal achievement should be discussed regularly in FL, where the rectorate follows up the heads of departments on the status of work on project development and applications. The

working group recommends that applications and project planning be put on the agenda in FL at least once a quarter and that the overviews in Søknaadsweb be used as a starting point for the discussion in FL. In this way, the management can get an overview of how the NIH as a whole and distributed among the departments is doing in accordance with the objectives, and that the support apparatus has an overview of the applications well in advance. Furthermore, the working group recommends that the department heads together with employees plan how the department will achieve sufficient application volume. Applicant opportunities, the status of applications and requests to apply regularly are discussed at the department meetings, or other relevant forums. The working group expects that close follow-up of clear objectives will help to ensure that the positive development in recent years continues, and will result in more long-term planning than we see today.

4.2 Use and further develop Søknaadsweb

The working group recommends that:

- The researchers ensure that their application initiative is registered in Søknaadsweb
- Søknaadsweb is further developed and incorporated into NIH's Teams solution
- Projectweb and Søknaadsweb are coordinated in the best possible way, so that the solutions cover the entire NIH process as best as possible

Since 2019, NIH has had a Søknaadsweb, where the goal is to make it easier for NIH to obtain external research funding. It is desirable and possible that all initiatives to obtain external funding (tenders, tenders, applications) are registered in Søknaadsweb. However, the survey and subsequent workshops at the departments showed that Søknaadsweb is little known in the organisation.

Søknaadsweb facilitates real-time collaboration on applications, both within the researchers and with assistance from the support system. In addition, Søknaadsweb can contribute with experience transfer from other people's applications by making comparable applications available to application writers. Søknaadsweb is flexible and provides - or can provide - the opportunity for overviews of:

- Relevant sources of funding, with examples of previous applications
- Applications we are working on, sorted by department and/or source of funding
- Applications we have submitted and how they have fared, including evaluations
- Funded applications

Application writers can enter information about new applications themselves, thus helping to ensure that the portal provides an updated picture of the application activity at NIH. Applicants also get access to previous applications with feedback from the evaluators. This is a useful resource for researchers who want to seek external funding.

Since Søknaadsweb can provide an overview and ensure progress in applications, Søknaadsweb should also be used for reporting work at several levels: Vis-à-vis KD, in FL and at the departments. Responsibility for infrastructure and increased user-friendliness has been assigned to AFB, but researchers must ensure that the applications they are planning are created/registered, so that the overviews in Søknaadsweb can be used as a starting point for following up the activity regarding external funding and goal attainment in FL.

Applications that become funded projects must be uploaded on NIH's Project Web, which is NIH's overview of ongoing projects, as well as archives for completed projects. Prosjektweb is designed so that we satisfy the legal requirements for document management in the operational phase of the projects. The working group also recommends that Prosjektweb and Søknadsweb be coordinated in the best possible way, so that the systems are recognizable, are perceived as useful tools for users and cover the entire NIH process.

4.3 Strengthen internal communication and information – highlight the opportunities

The working group recommends that:

- Relevant calls for proposals are communicated within the organisation
- One employee at each department is responsible for presenting relevant calls for proposals to the research groups
- the interdisciplinary work within NIH is strengthened
- we exploit the opportunities associated with COST, Erasmus+ and innovation to a greater extent than we do today

According to the survey, there were a few respondents who claimed to be well informed about relevant calls for proposals in the Research Council of Norway and the EU. Priority should be given to strengthening awareness of the funding sources and relevant calls for proposals. The working group proposes the following information and communication structure:

- In general, it should be marked when key calls for proposals are available. This can be done at Innersvingen, where the calls for proposals are presented with links to relevant programmes. The central part of the support apparatus is responsible for this together with the communications department.
- In order for the calls to reach the research groups, the working group proposes that each department appoints a responsible employee who, together with the head of department, takes overall responsibility for presenting the opportunities to the department's researchers and research groups. The role can be anchored in the work plan in the same way as other ways
- The support system and the selected employees should take the initiative to create working groups across departments to work towards interdisciplinary projects
- Together with the communications department, the other support staff will also communicate success stories and create publicity for submitted applications, and not least about applications that reach and are funded

However, it is important that everyone involved in the NIH process for external funding has a responsibility to stay up to date on funding opportunities in relevant areas. While the support system has a responsibility to provide general information about relevant calls for proposals, researchers have a primary responsibility to familiarize themselves with relevant calls for proposals and assess their relevance in relation to their own ideas.

In addition to the funding opportunities for pure research at NFR and in the EU's framework programmes, the working group would particularly recommend that the NIH make greater use of the following opportunities:

4.3.1 COST

COST is supported by the EU Framework Programme, but differs from other international sources of funding, for example by only funding networks and coordination of research - and not research itself. Nevertheless, participation here can help strengthen international networks to the NIH, and it has been shown that inclusion in COST actions significantly increases the chance of success with applications aimed at research funding in the EU. COST has also been shown to act as a career accelerator for young researchers. It is possible to participate in COST actions' activities without having participated when the action was created. COST is also special in that the applications there are anonymous, and that funded applications are openly available as inspiration for new applications.

4.3.2 Erasmus+

Erasmus+ supports mobility and collaborative projects. In the new Erasmus+ programme, the EU sees education, research and innovation in closer context than before. Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe are expected to provide synergies for increased quality in both education and research, the Excellence initiatives (collaborative projects) that are the most prestigious and largest, are exciting opportunities for NIH. Although Erasmus+ does not fund research, participation in Erasmus+ can nevertheless lead to increased synergies between education and research, strengthen efforts to achieve institutional goals, expanded international network, experience, and some publication.

NIH has so far coordinated a very limited scope of Erasmus+ applications. A better overview of what opportunities exist in Erasmus+ and which of these are best suited for NIH can thus provide good opportunities. Benefits include experience with project development, knowledge of the opportunities within Erasmus+ and strengthening the link between education and research.

4.3.3 Innovation projects

Several of the research projects run under the auspices of NIH have innovation as a possible result. Recently, collaboration with companies has received more focus in the educational programmes, and in some cases, this has all resulted in collaborative projects with research. The research communities at NIH that work with business and innovation should consider the possibilities of having this collaboration funded, for example as an innovation project by the Research Council of Norway.

4.4 Build competence to take advantage of opportunities

The working group recommends that:

- Employees who need it are trained in external financing.
- Employees who need it are trained in research and project management.
- The work of evaluating feedback on both approved and rejected applications will be formalised.
- We are inspired by and learn from institutions that have succeeded with external funding.

The survey showed that the actual, real-world experience of applications for external funding is limited among NIH employees. However, most academic employees who answered the survey want to get better at writing applications.

For NIH's PhD program, an optional course (1 credit) on how to obtain external funding is now being created. This course is offered for the first time in spring 2022. Broadly speaking, the course consists of two parts, partly a description of the funding sources and their calls for proposals, and partly a proposal for how applications should be written. The working group recommends that researchers planning to apply, as well as relevant administrative staff, be offered a short version of this course, and that actual applications should be specified if possible. AFB maintains the offer of short or long supervision by smaller research teams (1-3 pers) wishing to apply for external funding.

To ensure efficient operation of the projects we manage to fund, researchers (and perhaps especially research talents) should be given the opportunity to strengthen their expertise in project management and research management, in line with the current strategic plan. Previously, researchers at NIH have sought such expertise through courses organized by UiO. However, these courses have a very limited number of places for external participants. The working group therefore recommends that NIH should enter into dialogue with UiO and investigate the possibility of NIH purchasing permanent places on these courses. Alternatively, we can develop our own courses in research management. In the meantime, other relevant free courses and lectures in project and research management should be utilized (e.g., offered by RCN and trade unions).

4.4.1 Learning from ourselves

The working group wants to reduce the pressure to apply for *more* and strengthen the focus on applying *better*. We can become *better* applicants by learning from previous applications, and by emphasizing the project development phase prior to the work on the project description (application). The working group believes that in the long term this can reduce barriers to applying for external funding and make it easier for us to obtain funding. The goal must be that together we move from small or random success, to the greatest possible degree of controlled success.

The working group recommends that application ideas be discussed in research groups and that the research groups form writing teams around the applications that they decide to write. That way, you can discuss good application ideas, learn together, end up with good applications and improve our success rate.

As in good research, developing good applications is about an analytical and systematic approach. Here, it is in our interests to learn from each other throughout the organisation, since we each write few applications. Feedback from evaluators on both funded and rejected applications should be carefully reviewed by the researchers and support staff, to identify the strengths of the applications and what can be done better in the next rounds. Rejection of an application may be perceived as a defeat for a researcher or a research group. There is a lot of work and often passion behind an application. Nevertheless, it is important, both for the researcher and for us as an institution, that we analyze and learn what we can from the

rejections – and the aggregates. As part of the quality work related to external funding, the working group recommends that the follow-up of rejected and funded applications be formalized – in the research groups, at the departmental level and for the entire NIH.

4.4.2 Learning from others

We should be inspired by and learn from institutions that have succeeded with external funding. The rectorate, management and other relevant parts of the organisation should be aware of how comparable organisations have succeeded with EU-funded projects. The working group recommends, for example, that lectures or workshops on how other institutions have succeeded with external funding be held in relevant groups, at the departmental level or at larger gatherings under the auspices of NIH (such as the "Norefjell seminar").

4.5 External communications

The working group recommends that:

- The Communications Department and the research groups collaborate on strategies vis-à-vis various media where relevant
- that the departments update their own websites

In addition to increasing our expertise in application writing and project establishment, we should also become better at putting NIH's research areas on the agenda out to the general public. The fact that the world outside NIH, including employees at funding sources and evaluators, becomes aware of our research and how we succeed in implementing the knowledge, can help make the projects proposed by NIH easier to gain traction. Examples of this may be the debate about eating disorders in sport, where key researchers at NIH have presented themselves in an outstanding way.

We should therefore strengthen our strategy towards the media to achieve visibility and attention. Preferably with stories about what we should apply for and what significance it may have for individuals and society as a whole. The working group therefore recommends that the communications department and research groups collaborate on possible angles for the media and other ways we can put NIH's research on the agenda.

Furthermore, it is important that both the departments and the employees are presented in the best possible way. A better presentation of researchers at NIH can also help us become attractive partners internationally. The working group therefore recommends that the departments review their own websites in cooperation with the Communication Department to assess whether research activities at the departments are sufficiently well presented and whether the researcher is presented in the best possible way.

4.6 Further develop international networks – positioning for opportunities

The working group recommends that:

- The departments/researchers check out the opportunities in Horizon Europe and start using the PES funds to invite themselves into other institutions' applications
- Senior researchers take special responsibility for establishing projects internationally

Researchers at NIH should establish strong international partners, to strengthen the chances of being awarded larger applications aimed at RCN and the EU. NIH has already received 0.65 million in project establishment support (PES) from RCN for 2021 and 2022 for use in concrete work towards calls for proposals in Horizon Europe, including positioning. There is little demand for these funds. An assessment should also be made of whether other funds can be earmarked for networking work in the form of inviting international researchers to NIH for collaboration on applications. The working group recommends that the departments/researchers check out the opportunities in Horizon Europe and start using the PES funds to invite themselves into other institutions' applications or write their own applications.

In line with the objective of the strategic plan, which states that we will focus on younger researchers, the working group recommends that our senior researchers take special responsibility for assisting in the establishment of projects so that junior researchers are not alone in this phase. The senior researchers promote the junior researchers' careers by, among other things, introducing them into their national and international networks.

4.7 Increase capacity

The working group recommends that:

- Buy-out of academic staff from teaching, or buy-out of younger researchers for writing assistance, will be considered in the application planning process
- Rejected applications are reused to a greater extent

It is usually time-consuming to write applications, so we must constantly look for solutions that make it easier for us to write applications and make the best use of the applications that have been written. The working group has two proposals:

4.7.1 Buy-out

If the head of department believes that a researcher is in a good position for a particular call for proposals, consideration may be given to whether the researcher can be purchased free from other obligations, such as teaching. However, this must be used with great care, as it is important that the work on applications does not come at the expense of teaching quality, or that other employees receive increased teaching pressure if some are to be acquitted. In such cases, it may also be considered whether motivated junior researchers (e.g., PhD candidates or postdocs) who have capacity can be included as writing assistance in the application work towards an extension of employment periods. For applications directed to the EU, funds from our PES framework grant may be used.

For applications directed at RCN or others, funds available at the department can be used if the head of department deems this appropriate. For applications against the centralised cooperation measures in Erasmus+, there exists a separate PES scheme administered by HKDIR (formerly DIKU) for buy-out and travel expenses, where applications can be made for each Erasmus+ application submitted against the so-called excellence initiatives (collaborative projects).

4.7.2 Multi-use and reuse of applications

There is a lot of work that is invested in the preparation of applications, and this investment should be utilised in the best possible way. Submission of rejected applications should therefore be considered. After the application has been rectified on the basis of the evaluation, the application may be resubmitted to the same funding source or adapted and used for other funding sources.

When there is no immediate research funding available to apply for, funding for the establishment of networks may be a good place for some form of reuse of the application. In addition, there may be good opportunities for reuse of such an application, and applications for funding for the creation of networks (in moderately modified form) can be submitted at least 3 places: COST, MSCA RISE and ERASMUS+.

4.8 Strengthen and showcase support system

The working group recommends that:

- The support staff, including the office managers, clarifies the workflow and optimises the work with external financing
- the administrative support for both the establishment and operation of projects is strengthened by linking the finance department more closely to the NIH process
- The support network for external financing is clarified and made more visible in the organisation

Overall, the responses to the survey indicated that the respondents were uncertain about whether we have sufficiently good systems for following up an increasing number of applications. Furthermore, the responses indicate concern about whether we centrally have the capacity to assist with administrative tasks related to a potential award. Wishes for better helmets for budgeting, financial reporting, and legal expertise for cooperation contracts around projects financed by, among other things, RCN and the EU were also central to the feedback from the department meetings initiated by this working group. Therefore, the working group proposes that the support system be redefined according to the NIH process described above (see Part 3) so that researchers receive as much as possible the help they need to achieve the goals set.

First and foremost, there is a need to define a clear organizational construct (such as a separate unit, or an "address" as at the NIH learning center) to support the work of external funding along the entire process described in Part 3. In part, researchers need answers to (instrumental) questions about deadlines, calls for proposals and where to get help. They need assistance in the concept development phase and most need assistance during the writing phase. Finally, they need assistance in the operational phase. A clear organisation will enable researchers to intuitively know where to easily turn when establishing or running projects. This will ensure better flow in the work on external funding.

Cooperation within the support network must be optimised. In this context, "support system" means anyone who has a non-professional role in the work of obtaining external funding. Specifically, it is the office managers, AFB, the international office, the finance department, HR, archives, and communications. For the NIH process to be as efficient as possible, it is important that the division of responsibility and workflow between the central support

functions (AFB etc.) and the support function at the departments (office managers) is clarified, and that the capacity of the various levels should be evaluated and optimized. It is important that everyone involved has a good understanding of roles, and that both central and peripheral support functions have the capacity to follow up their respective areas of responsibility. In some cases, this can be helped by an increased degree of standardisation, i.e. that we do things the same way throughout the organisation. This becomes particularly important with an increased application volume and an increasing success rate, as is the purpose of this action plan.

The working group recommends that the administrative support for the establishment, negotiation and operation of projects be strengthened by linking the finance department more closely to the NIH process. Thus, we will achieve a closer coordination with NIH's financial systems and include our legal expertise, in addition to seeing Søknadsweb and Prosjektweb in context (see section 4.2).

5 Summary of measures proposed in this action plan

To facilitate increased attention and increased application availability and finally increased income from competitive sources for research funding, the working group recommends:

- That the work of obtaining external funding is considered a process (the NIH process).
- That management sets clear targets for application volume, and that the total application volume for the departments is shared. The work to achieve the goals is followed up in FL and at the departments.
- That Søknadsweb, with all the resources and opportunities inherent in this, is made better known in the organization. And that Søknadsweb will be further integrated into MS Teams.
- That relevant calls for proposals are made known to a greater extent to researchers at NIH. The working group recommends that AFB and the Communications Department cooperate on matters at the intranet, and that each department appoints an employee who is given special responsibility for communicating relevant calls for proposals to researchers and research groups at their department.
- That the work to raise competence in application writing and project establishment/operation is formalized.
- That the work of evaluating both rejected applications and funded applications is systematized, so that we build expertise in applying for proposal writing in the organization.
- That work on external funding is put on the agenda at relevant meetings, where we invite our own employees and representatives from other organizations who have succeeded with financial support.
- That we become (yet) better at putting our research interests on the agenda nationally and internationally, and that we develop strategies towards the media to achieve this. Making the departments and researchers (research groups) visible online can be a key part of this.
- That we strengthen our position internationally to increase our chances of joining EU applications or writing our own applications. There are PES funds available for this work, and consideration should be given to whether we can earmark other funds to invite good international researchers to NIH for collaboration.
- That buy-out is being considered by researchers who are in a particularly favourable position to apply for funding of a certain size in certain situations. Or that junior researchers can be relieved of their obligations to assist in the writing work if a senior researcher has limited capacity.
- That the roles in the support system around the work of obtaining external financing and operation of externally funded projects are clarified, and that the support system is made visible in the organisation. Furthermore, that all inquiries concerning work with external funding can be sent to a defined address (as at the NIH learning center).



egne strategiske prioriteringer. EU legger opp til sterkere synergier mellom ulike EU-programmer i perioden 2021 til 2027. KD forventer at universitetene og høyskolene utnytter synergiene mellom Horisont Europa og Erasmus+.

Kvalitet i forskning

Departementet ser positivt på at den høye publiseringstakten vedvarer, men ser samtidig at NIH har lave inntekter fra Forskningsrådet og EU. Dette spriket i resultater, som begge er indikatorer på vitenskapelig kvalitet, er uvanlig. NIH sin høye skår på publiseringspoeng sammen med høyskolens sterke internasjonale renommé, kan representere fortrinn i søknader om konkurranseutsatte midler.

NIH har sendt inn to søknader om støtte fra EUs forskningsprogrammer i 2020 og vurderer selv at søknadsaktiviteten gir verdifull læring som i sin tur kan gi bedre søknader og uttelling på en større andel av søknadene. KD forventer derfor at NIH har større oppmerksomhet på å øke bidragsinntektene fra de konkurranseutsatte midlene i Forskningsrådet og EU.

Regjeringen ønsker at universitetene og høyskolene øker deltakelsen i Horisont Europa sammenlignet med Horisont 2020. Kunnskapsdepartementet forventer at institusjonene videreutvikler arbeidet med å mobilisere, støtte og veilede sine fagmiljøer, både på egen hånd og i samarbeid med det nasjonale støtteapparatet.

Samarbeid med omverden