

Professional partner guideline

1 Introduction

This guideline is a tool for all Norec partners. You find information gathered from many of Norec's experienced partners as well as from Norec staff. We hope that these guidelines will help you to plan and run the Norec exchange project.

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2 Timeline for the partnership

1 BEFORE EXCHANGE

- Recruitment of participants
- Communicate any changes with Norec
- Ask for letter of confirmation from Norec
- Visa applications/work permits
- Purchase of insurances/tickets
- Sign up for Norec training 1
- Prepare participants for the exchange
- Prepare work place/colleagues for receiving participants
- Make transfer plan for the partnership
- Send participant to Norec training 1
- Sign up for partner training (new partners and new partner contacts)

2 During EXCHANGE

- Introduce participants to place of working and living
- Develop detailed work plan for the participants
- Mentor participants during the exchange
- Frequent communication with partners and participants
- Monitor progress in the project according to indicators and expected results
- Communicate any changes with Norec
- Ensure transfer of competencies
- Accounting and administration
- Prepare and plan for follow-up work
- Sign up for Norec training 2

3 After EXCHANGE

- Send participants to Norec training 2
- Overlap with new participants
- Communicate any changes with Norec
- Conduct follow-up work and assure transfer of competencies to home staff
- Assess the outputs and results of the exchange with partners and participants
- Report narratively and financially to Norec

3 Ethical principles

The work of Norec is based on equity, solidarity and reciprocity. At the core of these values lie our ethical principles. Norec participants, partners and employees are ambassadors for Norec and shall act in accordance with these ethical principles in their work and in their relation to others.

We respect human dignity

- We hold that the human rights are universal
- We show respect, through our behaviour, to all individuals, regardless of race, gender, religion, colour, national or ethnic origin, language, sexual orientation, age, functional level, socio-economic status, political conviction, or any other distinguishing feature
- We do not accept any form of harassment, abuse, discrimination, or any form of reprehensible conduct

We are culturally sensitive

- We familiarise ourselves with local laws, culture, moral codes and traditions, and show respect in these matters through our behaviour

We are accountable

- We consider the environmental consequences of our activities
- We do not use our position to obtain benefits for others or ourselves
- We have zero tolerance for corruption and other financial irregularities, and we report unacceptable circumstances or behaviour

4 How organisations learn

In a rapidly changing world, organisations, institutions and businesses need to be able to adapt to their shifting reality and needs of their customers, clients and partners. The ability to understand the changes happening in an organisations' environment, and to adapt to those changes, is more important than ever. In other words, organisations need to be good learners. Learning, building capacity, sharing knowledge, is all at the core of a Norec exchange project.

Learning is a process where people and organisations create, retain, and transfer knowledge within an organisation, and change their practices based on the new knowledge. Learning processes in organisations consists of all the activities which contributes to sharing experience and transferring knowledge between the employees.

Research on learning show that all learning starts with the individual; an individual experience something, reflects on the experience, and shares the reflections with others in the organisation. Who do we learn from? Research shows that we pay most attention and are more open to listen to people we trust and have confidence in. In other words, the relational aspect, and building trust and confidence, is very important for learning, both within an organisation and between partners.

Partners in a Norec exchange can learn a lot from each other. It might be interesting to analyse how the relationship between the partners' function in practice: is the partnership based on trust? Are you open to listen to the other partners' ideas and experiences, and consider them for your own organisation?

For the participants, trust is also key for learning and sharing. Is the relationship between participants, partner contacts and close colleagues based on trust, willingness to learn and listening?

In addition to the relational aspects of organisational learning, research also shows that the following measures often are present in organisations which are "good learners":

- Cross-structural meeting places: organisations which are good learners often have different places where information is shared, across teams and organisational structures. Meeting places can be virtual or physical.
- Collaboration with mentors: new employees work together with experienced colleagues, to observe how tasks are solved. A lot of implicit knowledge might be transferred between the two.
- Decentralised and horizontal communication channels (across hierarchy): quick and informal communication makes it easier to share ideas and knowledge.
- Digital data bases: positive to register knowledge, analyse and compare to older data, and easier to share knowledge which is accessible to all.
- Systematic trainings of employees: organisations which are good learners also have a capacity building strategy for their employees and provides trainings for new and experienced employees regularly.
- An organisational culture based on trust and care: organisations which are good learners put a lot of effort into building a positive organisational culture, which creates trust and confidence between colleagues and between employees and employer. If you don't trust your co-worker or your superior, you will probably not share your knowledge and experience with him or her neither.

5 Working in partnerships

Ownership, reciprocity and collaboration

Partners should ensure equal ownership of the exchange project by all parts involved. The partners in the partnership need to make sure that the project has the necessary support in the partner institution, from top management to employees. Partners should strive to achieve reciprocity and collaboration in all phases of the exchange project. Building trust, ownership and a reciprocal relationship are the most important ingredients to facilitate an environment where the partnership and the participants can work effectively towards the goals and expected results of the project.

Assure equal participation

The partnership needs to be conscious about how to address inequalities between the partner institutions and strive to assure equal participation in decision making, preparing

applications and reports, and in monitoring and follow-up of the project. Partners should develop their relationship and be loyal to the decisions taken regarding the project. Sharing of work tasks in the partnership should be mutually agreed upon.

Communication and conflict resolution

All partners are equally responsible for maintaining a good relationship. A high awareness of cultural sensitivities is important in this respect. During planning meetings, partners should address issues regarding how to solve conflicts and other situations where communication between the partners becomes difficult.

The result of your exchange project depends heavily on how you work as a partnership and how you work with your participants. As a representative of a partnership you are responsible to do your best to get the most out of the exchange both on an individual, institutional and local society level.

6 Exchanging Norec participants

Participants are at the centre of the Norec concept. They carry knowledge and new perspectives between partners, adding value to the partnerships. The results of the exchanges can only be achieved through a successful exchange of participants.

Norec participants have a strong potential to become change agents both locally and nationally, being inspired and stimulated by their posting to a foreign country. They act as ambassadors for their home countries, and they bring back home new understanding and perspectives from their host country.

Being a host for Norec participants is in other words a key role in and Norec exchange. In many ways, the relationship between the participants and the host is a mentor-mentee relationship. To be a mentor means to enable a reciprocal and collaborative learning relationship, sharing common responsibility and accountability in achieving mutually defined learning goals. It is about helping the participant grow personally and professionally.

7 Recruitment of Norec participants

It is important to identify the right people – the success of your project depend on their success. The successful participant ideally possesses the right combination of professional and personal skills

Formal requirements from Norec

Age

18-35 years

Gender

Overall, Norec is expected to maintain a 50/50 gender balance. All partners are therefore encouraged to design projects that are attractive and accessible to both men and women, and to be gender-sensitive during the recruitment process. Partners should also strive to give moral support and encouragement to female participants, in view of the gender barriers women may face.

Recommendations from evaluation reports and other assessments are unison: the partnerships are more likely to reach their goals, the long-term effects are stronger, and the results more sustainable when the partners manage “to keep” their participants after the exchange. Participants do not necessarily have to be or become permanent staff members if that is not feasible. But important changes can happen when the participants continue to be a resource for the partners and when efforts are made to ensure that participants can share their newly gained competence within the wider professional network of the partner institution.

Professional qualifications vs. personal qualities

There will always be a balance between a candidate’s formal education/job experience and less measurable characteristics such as flexibility, adaptability and motivation. The decisive emphasis will vary in each case. However, it should be noted that a successful candidate most probably has several talents.

Professional qualifications required are specific to each exchange project, and depend on the project content. In addition, experience shows that some personal qualities are significant when identifying a successful participant. The following list is not complete, but may provide an idea of what to look for:

Willingness to learn as well as to teach

Reciprocity is a core value within partnerships: Norec participants should be willing and able to share their knowledge as well as to be open to new ideas and ways of doing things. The successful candidate has a “volunteer” rather than a “consultant” approach.

Motivation and commitment

Check out the motivation for being a participant.

Flexibility and adaptability

Things tend to turn out differently from what you expect. How willing and able is the candidate to adapt to new situations, and to accept unexpected changes instead of feeling that “the world is falling apart”? Work regulations, hierarchy and other local practices may be very different from home, and may be a challenge to some.

In some partnerships, participants must be willing to live under modest local conditions. Some participants will suffer from homesickness and feel lonely at times. How serious this becomes will depend on the preparation before the exchange, but also on individual strength. For many participants from Norway, the exchange is their first exposure to poverty, and this may add to a feeling of hopelessness or downheartedness.

Problem-solving skills

When you are looking for solutions rather than problems, you are more likely to succeed.

Modesty and humility

A person who meets you with respect and a sense of humility is usually met with a warmer welcome than the person who behaves like a world champion.

Sense of humour

If you don't take yourself too seriously, you're more likely to avoid awkward and embarrassing episodes.

How do you identify personal qualifications?

The kind of qualifications listed above is seldom found in a CV, and may be difficult to detect during an ordinary interview. One approach would be to present cases which describe a situation or dilemma which the participant is most likely to experience during the posting, and then to ask the candidate how he or she would address it.

8 Norec trainings for Norec participants and partners

All participants in a Norec exchange are expected to take part in Norec training before and after the exchange. This includes Norec e-learning before leaving home, Norec training part 1 at the beginning of the exchange, and Norec training part 2 towards the end of the exchange, before returning home.

During the feasibility phase, representatives from each partner organisation are invited to a three-day introductory seminar. For partners who have a collaboration agreement, coordinators from each partner organisation are expected to take part in Norec partner training, preferably as early in the project as possible. Managers and other relevant partner representatives may also benefit from this training.

A common feature for all Norec trainings is the participatory method. Active engagement from all participants throughout the training is believed to stimulate learning and increase motivation. We strive for a variety of methodological approaches, which include plenary and group discussions, role plays, self-studies and reflection, as well as the more traditional lectures. This methodology and the course set-up with participants from a range of countries and professions will give relevant and valuable training in intercultural and interdisciplinary communication and cooperation.

Norec training part 1

The purpose of the one-week Norec training part 1 is to prepare the participants for the exchange. In addition to an introduction to the Norec model, its principles and values, this includes communication, health, safety and security challenges related to living and working in a different cultural environment. Global issues and power relations are addressed, with a special focus on how the exchange may contribute in a larger development context.

Norec training part 2

The purpose of Norec training part 2 is to prepare the participants for a long-term contribution and engagement in the work-place as well as in the local community after returning home. The participants are encouraged to identify and express new personal and professional learning and experience; how results from the exchange may contribute to the sustainable development goals, and how to communicate this on returning home. Potential challenges related to re-integration after a year on exchange are also addressed, offering a set of tools or strategies to meet these challenges and turning them into opportunities. The training lasts for one week, and is run parallel to part 1.

Norec partner training

Introduces the partners to the Norec model, its principles, values, framework and regulations. As a successful exchange rests on proper preparing and follow-up of the participants, topics related to leadership, mentoring and inter-cultural communication are addressed. Global understanding and power relations are discussed, with a special focus on the Sustainable Development Goals. The one-week partner training is run parallel to training part 1 and 2, with various opportunities for discussions across partnerships. The Norec partner training is compulsory for all contact persons, but each person will only attend once.

9 Mentoring aspects – before exchange

Home partner

Information to Norec participants

It is important that participants know the content of all relevant documents regarding the Norec exchange project. These include the project description, the collaboration agreement, the Norec participant agreement, the partnership's emergency plan and Norec's ethical guidelines. It is the partner's responsibility to give the participants adequate information regarding the exchange, including information on work tasks, allowance, work place, work hours and holiday (also to be specified in the participant agreement).

Preparation of Norec participants

It is important that the partner provides information about the partner organisations, the history of the partnership and discuss the results of the exchange with the participants. Ensure overlap between new and returning participants on project, country, integration at host partner and other relevant issues.

Develop a work plan

Including follow-up work in accordance with planned project results in collaboration with participants and host partner.

Prepare a monitoring & communication plan

Norec participants shall report regularly to both host and home partner, on progress, achievements and challenges in the exchange. It is up to the partners to decide on the frequency and the format of the reporting.

Take time to talk about personal challenges

Keep an open communication with the participants and talk about how the exchange period can affect their family and social lives, what they can expect from you and what you expect from them.

Host partner

Develop a work plan

Including follow-up work in accordance with planned project results, together with participants and sending partner.

Information to Norec participants

It is the partner's responsibility to give the participants adequate information regarding the exchange including information on work tasks, allowance, work place, work hours and holiday. The partner must inform the participants on country specific issues such as health issues, cost of living, cultural do's and don'ts, transportation system, special customs and nice-to-know matters. Experienced Norec partners recommend a skype meeting/call together with the participants and their future host partner before the exchange starts, to get acquainted, build trust and start clarifying expectations.

10 Mentoring aspects – during exchange

Home partner

Communication

Enable frequent communication with participants and host partner concerning tasks, transfer of competence at host and planning of follow-up work at sending partner, based on the mentoring & communication plan. Feedback from the participants should be considered in the development of the project. An important part of being a mentor is also to use these reports as a tool to develop the participants' skills.

Host partner

Mapping of Norec participants' skills and personal goals

Upon arrival and during the posting period, partners should map participants' skills in collaboration with each participant. A thorough mapping of skills will enable partners to fully use the competence of each participant and find relevant tasks. By clarifying the personal goals of the person, expectations can more easily be adjusted. The work plan developed before the exchange must be adjusted together with the participant. Tasks must be adapted to the expected results of the project and the work plan adjusted to the skills, competencies and knowledge of the participant.

Introducing Norec participants to workplace and tasks

Upon arrival, host partners must have a plan for introducing the participants to the workplace and their tasks. Specific persons should be assigned to implement the plan.

Planning for mentoring of Norec participants

Upon arrival of participants, a plan for follow-up and mentoring of participants must be made. A mentoring plan can consist of regular meetings, where tasks, professional development and integration on work place are discussed. Feedback on job performance must be given on a regular basis.

Planning for transfer of competences

A plan for transfer of competences from the participants to other staff is also to be made. Time to discuss methods, ways of working, share knowledge on specific subjects, technical competence, language skills, and other aspects should be planned for.

From individual to institutional learning

Host partner is responsible for implementing relevant learning from the exchanges at the institutional level. This could be new working methods, new knowledge and a change of priorities. The success of the exchange depends on bringing the individual learning to the institutional level, and by that building institutional capacity.

Provide support in emergency situations

During the posting period, the host partner is responsible for their participants' safety. Specific persons at host partner may be assigned specific responsibilities during an emergency, as outlined in the emergency plan. Norec participants should be acquainted with the emergency plan.

Social and cultural integration – at work and in the community

Assist the participants in social and cultural integration at work place – and in the community. The host partner is responsible for assisting the participants in the process of social integration. Some partners choose to give one or more persons/mentors a specific responsibility for the participants' social integration. An important aspect is to introduce participants to social arenas in the community. The host partner must also assist participants in understanding local culture and customs by being a cultural interpreter.

Personal follow-up

Keep an open and regular communication with the participants to ensure they are doing well emotionally at work and in their free time.

11 Mentoring aspects – after exchange

Home partner

Re-adaptation

Partners should make plans on how to receive the returning participants. It is important that the expectations and plans for the period after the exchange are communicated to the participants well in advance. Home partner should assist the participant in reintegrating in his or her home country and home work place. Active support from the partner contact might be crucial in easing the participants' readjustment.

Follow-up work

The follow-up work is mandatory for all Norec participants and the goal is to transfer competencies from the individual Norec participant to the home partner as an institution. The target group can also be relevant networks outside the institution, the local society, etc. Partners and participants can discuss methods, target group and content for the follow-up activities.

The objectives of the follow-up period and the follow-up activities should be in line with the overall results set for the exchange project. It is important that the partner takes on a mentoring relation towards the participants, to better facilitate the transfer of competencies. It is the partner's responsibility to give time, space and importance to the follow-up work.

Host partner

Keep in touch

Host partners should try to keep in touch with the participants on re-integration, follow-up work and other relevant aspects.

12 Practical issues – before exchange

Distribution of tasks

Project-related tasks should be distributed within the partnership, in accordance with the Partnership Agreement. When it comes to financial management, a separate account for Norec project funds must be established for each partner. The coordinating partner plans the transfer of funds in the partnership together with the other partners.

Create a monitoring plan

To outline how and when to measure indicators and results during the project period, to make sure that the partnership is on track with the project.

Recruitment of Norec participants

It is the home partner's responsibility to recruit the participants for their project. The participants must be recruited in accordance with the work tasks described in the project description. Home and host partner must agree on the criteria for recruitment and the selection of the participants. Experienced partners recommend including the host partner in the selection process. Please see section about recruitment below.

Norec participant agreement

The participants must sign an agreement/contract of employment with one of the partners, who will formally be the employer. This must be done before the participant begins his or her deployment. All parties are to keep a signed copy of the agreement/contract. The budget for allowance, housing, etc. is specified in the Norec agreement for the specific round of exchange.

Documents

It is the partner's responsibility to make sure all legal documents (Visa/work permit/passports/travel tickets/insurances) and country specific procedures are taken care of. This can include registration at local authorities, tax authorities etc. Visa applications may take a long time, start as early as possible. Norec can issue invitation letters for Norec participants who need such documents in the visa application process.

Health issues

Ensure that the participants have taken all the necessary vaccinations and completed a medical check-up before leaving the home country.

Sign up for Norec's trainings

Norec organises Training 1 and Training 2 for the participants and a Partner training for new partner contacts. The coordinating partner have the responsibility to sign up all attendees for the trainings. In consultation with Norec the partners will find the time and place most suitable for the partnership. See also separate section in this brochure about Norec trainings.

Housing

It is the host partner's responsibility to prepare adequate housing before the participants arrive. The budget for housing is specified in the budget for the project.

Preparation of co-workers

Inform fellow employees about the content of the Norec exchange project, the role of the participants and the partner's role as a host partner.

Prepare place of work

All partners have been granted funds for equipment to facilitate the participants stay at the host. This preparation can be done in collaboration with the participants and home partner, according to what is needed and suitable.

13 Practical issues – during exchange

Finances and accounting

Please remember that Norec does not refund actual costs, but grants a predetermined amount towards the partners' exchange project. This means that the overall costs of an exchange project may be higher than the grant which the partnership receives from Norec. If project costs exceed the grant, the partnership must cover the excess from its own funds.

Feedback

Communicate changes in your project with your contact person in Norec. A separate amendment application must be approved by Norec with regards to the following aspects: change of length of stay for the participants, major budget deviations, changes in expected results and indicators, change of partners involved. See template on www.norec.no.

Monitoring

On a regular basis, Norec staff will conduct project reviews and mid-term reviews. Partners and participants must be prepared to meet Norec representatives and present relevant documentation on request.

Communication

Regular communication within the partnership is very important for a successful exchange project. Progress and adjustments, follow-up of participants, administration of the project and other issues should be discussed openly.

Monitor progress during the project

Do you reach the expected results set? Are adjustments in activities and tasks needed to reach your expected results? Discuss and evaluate within the partnership and with the participants if there are things to be done differently and whether improvements are necessary.

Annual partner meeting

An annual partner meeting can be conducted in each round of exchange. If the partnership applies for a partnership meeting, describe how the partnership will utilise the time for this and what the main goals for the meeting will be. The venue should change between partners' offices. Progress towards expected results should be discussed and feedback from the participants taken into the evaluation and planning process. The partner meeting is a good opportunity for other staff to meet the partnership and get to know the Norec exchange better.

Payments, salaries and tax

The partners must agree with the participants on how allowance, housing and transportation are to be paid during the exchange. No funds are paid directly from Norec to the participants. Allowance can be paid to the participants via the host partner or the home partner. Normally taxes will be deducted by the home partner, but it is the responsibility of partners in collaboration with each participant to ensure that they follow the host and home country's tax regulations. Housing and transportation costs can be covered by partner or reimbursed to the participants per documented expenses.

Partnerships in the North-South programme can find more information about tax regulations in Norway in the Service Manual (C16).

Inform Norec participants about country-specific safety issues

Upon arrival, all participants must be briefed about safety issues and emergency preparedness. All participants and partners should have a copy of an emergency plan available, and it must be updated regularly. It contains contact information to embassies and hospitals and says who has which responsibility in the case of an emergency. Upon arrival, partners should also inform the participants about general and specific safety issues of the host country and the host city/area. The information shall enable participants to practice safe behavior when it comes to areas to be avoided, safe transport means, handling valuables, dress codes, etc.

Work hours and holiday

Must be specified in the Norec participant agreement. Partners and participants should agree early on the timing of holidays, to make sure that it fits with work plans and the expected results of the exchange project.

Registration in host country

Upon arrival, all participants must be registered with the embassy, the local authorities and/or police. Host partner is responsible for helping the participants to register.

Work permit

If not obtained as a part of the visa, host partner is responsible for assisting the participants to obtain the necessary documents allowing them to work in the host country.

Language course

Host partner is responsible to sign-up the participants to language course or to find a qualified language teacher.

14 Practical issues – after exchange

Reporting

All reports shall be made on Norec's templates for reporting. A close collaboration between partners is needed when it comes to reporting, both narrative and financial. Each partner reports on their expected results, activities/tasks performed, unintended results and most significant change, as well as deviations that have occurred during the exchange. The partnership must respect the set deadlines for reporting, which is defined in the round agreement. See www.norec.no for templates.

Evaluations

Evaluating the exchange project should be a part of the monitoring system of each partnership, and done regularly together with partners and participants. An internal evaluation by Norec or partnership staff shall take place in connection with the completion of a collaboration agreement. Generally, there shall be an external evaluation (contracted by Norec or the partnership) of the project at least after the second and fourth collaboration agreement. Any new agreements with Norec depends on the result of the evaluations.

Follow-up work

The follow-up work is mandatory for all participants and the goal is to transfer competencies and knowledge from the individual participant to the home partner as an institution. The target group can also be relevant networks outside the institution.

Norec covers the participant's allowance two weeks after returning to sending partner, and the participant is still considered as part of the exchange. The follow-up work can be conducted during two consecutive weeks, or be split into several shorter periods. Norec may grant funds for conducting follow-up activities. See your project's grant calculation sheet.

15 Start-up checklist

This checklist is a tool to ensure that the operational mechanisms of the exchange have been successfully established at the start-up of a new round of exchange, in particular that the participants' interests have been looked after and that the partners have established a good common management system. It can be utilised by the coordinating partner, but also by other partners and Norec alike.

Norec participants

Administratively

- Signing of participant contracts
- Completion of visa, residence and work permit formalities in host country
- Provision of safe accommodation for the participants
- Establishment of the required insurance schemes
- Registration with home embassy in host country
- Host partner working language course (if applicable)
- Establishment of routines for regular payment of allowances to the participants

Work-place (host partner)

- Job introduction, hereunder familiarisation of activities to be performed/completed
- Acquaintance of participants with expected project results/institutional results
- Acquaintance of participants with the operational aspects of safety precautions, crisis handling and emergency procedures, as laid down in the overall project description (B01)
- Assignment of contact person for the participants
- Social adaptation and integration measures (as required)
- Acquaintance of participants with local safety issues, partner emergency plan, and related preventive measures to be taken

Norec partners

Administratively

- Acquaintance of all partners with the collaboration agreement and the overall project description (B01)
- Acquaintance of all partners with the round agreement with activity plan, commitments, and budget
- Establishment, understanding and respect for the role of coordinating partner
- Distribution of updated contact and bank account information for all partners and for Norec
- Distribution of budget from coordinating partner to the other partners according to the round budget
- Establishment of routines for reporting and consolidation of reports, in preparation for the future results report (C06)
- Establishment of routines for accounting and consolidation of accounts, in preparation for the future financial report (C04) with audit

Management

- Establishment of communication channels and routines between home and host partner for general management of the participants
- Establishment of communication channels and management routines between home and host partner for handling possible conflicts
- Establishment of feedback channel for participants to the host and home partners
- Preparations for mid-term review and partner meeting
- Preparations for activities to be performed by the participants at home partner after return