

Review
of
Norwegian Programmes within
Education and Research in the
Western Balkans

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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Abbreviations

B&H	Bosnia and Herzegovina
DCED	Donor Committee for Enterprise Development
NOK	Norwegian Kroner
MFA	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mn	Million
PB	Programme Board
RCN	Research Council of Norway
RS	Republika Srpska
SIU	Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education
UMB	University of Life Science Ås Norway
USD	United States Dollar
WB	West Balkans

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1 Summary

- ***The two Programmes*** under review are both in their second four-year phase – and in their last operational year - with an annual financial frame of NOK 15 mn for the RCN/SIU programme, and of NOK 4-5 mn for the UMB programme. This review is intended as one of several inputs to the assessment of a potential third phase.
- While the programmes share both objectives and many of the same partners, ***they are structurally different***. The UMB programme is a University specific programme, while the RCN/SIU programme is open to all qualified institutions.¹

Main Findings

- ***The implementation context is challenging, particularly in B&H*** where the majority of institutions lack basic working conditions, physical facilities and human resources. B&H also lacks a good legislative framework. The institutions in Croatia and Serbia have much stronger capacities and have greater experience in project implementation.
- Generally, almost all projects that are funded under the two programmes appear ***to progress well***, and basically in accordance with plans. Out of 27 projects, one UMB project is discontinued, and one RCN/SIU has stalled.
- Of the 10 projects visited in the field, all are considered ***to have reasonable performance*** - or better - in relation to objectives, and to relevance, efficiency and sustainability.
- ***Key reasons for good performance*** are believed to include the rigorous selection process of projects, experienced partners that know each others, and dedicated projects leaders and individuals.
- ***The problems that have arisen*** are mostly due to lack of project management expertise, lack of adequate WB facilities, different cultures in research and education, and externalities.
- ***The UMB programme is overall found to have met all of its Programme objectives***. It has contributed to improving the capacity of involved partners, it has greatly contributed to networking, and has played a positive part in fostering stability and democratization. Its institutional building elements have been particularly valued by WB partners. On the other hand, projects may have been too small with too few resources in relation to ambitions and challenges facing the partners.
- The same general conclusion applies to ***the RCN/SIU programme, in that it has also met the programme objectives***. A key strength has been its ability to include a large range of participants, and the continued emphasis on quality. As with UMB, however, the RCN/SIU may also have spread itself too thinly in relation to ambitions.

¹ The term "institution" is used to cover both Universities and other non-academic institutions in this report.

- ***The basic strategy behind the programme has proven its validity.*** Contacts and cooperation between institutions and individuals have been initiated and implemented, and the programmes have managed to establish a neutral meeting space. For many, this has been their first opportunity to meet the “enemy” since the war, and this has resulted in real cooperation across borders and ethnic lines.
- ***Regarding the administrative models,*** the two programmes are simply two different ways of organizing support. The key difference is that ***RCN/SIU chooses projects after an open, competitive procedure, while UMB does this as an internal process.*** This gives UMB great flexibility to design the programme, while RCN/SIU has to stick to agreed procedures and has less direct influence over project options.
- ***The main pros of the UMB model*** are that it allows for demand driven processes, it allows design of broad support packages, and gives strategic flexibility. ***The main cons*** are that in the absence of competition, there may be questions about quality, and that the lack of arms length relations between programme and project may pose quality assurance challenges.
- ***The pros of the RCN/SIU programme*** are mainly that the strong routines for project selection ensures quality, that it allows very broad institutional participation, and that it has a sound governance structure with a Programme Board and third party administrators. ***The perceived cons*** are that the current model has an artificial split between research and education, that it is perhaps more driven by Norwegian partners, and that the focus on single applications fragments the portfolio, and makes coherent strategies difficult.
- ***The administrative efficiency*** of the UMB and the RCN/SIU programme is assessed as good. Most of the administration is done within the project itself, between the involved partners. There is nothing in the project results that indicate any substantial difference between the two programmes. The administrative cost per project is higher in the case of the RCN/SIU than for UMB. This is partly a reflection of the key programme difference: ***The UMB is an institution specific programme, while RCN/SIU is not.*** SIU and RCN run more costly procedures, and are as independent institutions less inclined to internalize extra costs - as perhaps UMB may do.
- ***The Programmes should not be merged.*** They are structurally different, and are rather two different tools in the toolbox. The objectives will determine which model is preferable. There is no evidence from this review that one Programme is better than the other in absolute terms.
- Both programmes already have projects with ***business development*** elements, in particular the UMB that seems well positioned to implement such projects. A new effort within this area should ***work with business framework conditions,*** trying to improve the business conditions for a group of enterprises within a sector or sub-sector.
- Three general areas for possible future business development - where Norway has a solid knowledge base – are ***marine resources/aquaculture, energy, and natural resource management.*** However, this is a much too complex area to be decided by this brief review, and ***a series of studies should be made*** to more specifically identify barriers to business development within these sectors.

The Future: Possibilities and Main Recommendations

- The most **important driver for change** is the fact that the situation in the Balkan area has changed from 8 years ago:
 - The **political situation** in the region has improved. Normalization of relations has gone hand in hand with strong currents towards integration with Europe.
 - Institutions in Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia have **grown stronger**. This is unfortunately not the situation in B&H, where Universities and institutions are still weak.
 - There are **fewer barriers to regional integration** than there used to be. The imperative to get people to talk together is less pronounced now than when the Programmes were originally conceived.
- This implies that the political justification for the Programmes has weakened. The following seems to be **important factors to consider** for a possible expansion.
 - B&H apparently **lags behind** the other countries. It is also the country with the most precarious political situation.
 - Most universities want more **broad based institutional development**, consisting of several elements
 - **Top quality research partnerships** are still eagerly sought by most of the WB institutions interviewed – and by several of the Norwegian partners.
 - Most of the institutions involved would dearly like **to continue cooperation** under the programme, expressing worry about sustainability.
 - The universities in particularly B&H struggle with old managements that are reluctant to reform. A new programme could support **developing overall university management** and/or strategies.
 - Developing **integrated university** structures is a linked challenge, which almost all countries face.
 - **Accreditation** of courses and curriculums seems to be a common challenge in almost all WB countries.
 - If programmes should have a **clear political orientation**, it should move away from the general towards the more specific.
- New programmes cannot solve all of the issues and challenges listed above. In fact, a key recommendation is **to narrow the scope of the objectives**.
- A second recommendation is to use some time now to **thoroughly assess what new Programmes should do**. Synergies and particular design features do not create themselves from a vacuum. They are carefully planned for.
- New Programmes should be managed under one strategic heading. They can do different “things”, but together contribute to an overall vision. One suggested vision is for instance: “**A stable, democratic and European integrated West Balkan region**”. Based on such a vision, new Programmes should have two strategic goals:
 - ⇒ **Improve the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina**
 - Institutional development of Universities

- Business development

- ⇒ **Improve neighborly relations**
 - Transboundary issues
 - Research excellence

- Firstly, *improving the capacity and the standards* of Bosnian higher education and research should be a priority, and tying projects more to business development is worth a try. Lifting B&H will be crucial to stability of the region in the long run.

- Secondly, the programmes should still *have a clear political angle*, to emphasize the basic reason for the whole effort. Excellent research has been done on several of the so-called transboundary issues during the current phase, and there is clearly scope for more. There may also be other types of disputes between the countries where neutral, quality research and institution building can play a positive role.

- Regarding administration, the two models could be used as follows:
 - *Institution focused model (UMB)*: Concentrate in particular on the twin objectives of business development and institution building. There may be other Norwegian university environments that are as relevant as UMB, like for instance NTNU and SINTEF.

 - *Third party administration (RCN/SIU)*: Focus on institutional development of universities with a view to improve education, and on the “political” research. This implies a conscious split of mandates and terms of references for each stream of projects. SIU will invite project proposals that have more academic institutional building characteristics, while the RCN should narrow its invitation to the political topics that has been chosen as priority issues.

- Regarding *institutional development* the key issue is one of emphasis, i.e. that the focus of a project is as much on development of the cooperating organisation as it is on a thematic objective. Thus projects may include inputs that may not be immediately necessary for attaining the thematic objective of the cooperation – but that are required for long term sustainability of results.

- Additional *general recommendations*
 - Projects should be favoured that are managed by younger individuals.
 - Assess introducing independent monitoring routines.
 - The experience of the university staff from Norway, Croatia and Serbia in the design of project applications could be used to train B&H partners
 - Scientific research should be strengthened.
 - The results of each project should end in affirmation within the professional community and the general public,
 - Reduce number of projects per programme, allowing more resources per project.
 - Reduce number of participants per projects to manageable levels with committed partners.

- Involve counterparts more actively in the planning and preparation of activities
- All agreements, objectives and other analysis made with the aim of managing such programmes should be written in English.

2 Introduction

The Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) currently provides financial support to two programmes² within research and higher education in the West Balkan area. The two are:

- Co-operation in higher education and research with countries in the Western Balkans – administered through Research Council of Norway (RCN) and Norwegian Centre for International Co-operation in Higher Education (SIU).
- Institutional collaboration between academic institutions in Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine in Norway and Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro – administered by Noragric / University of Life Sciences (UMB).

Both are in their second four-year phase – and in their last operational year - with an annual financial frame of NOK 15 mn for the RCN/SIU programme, and of NOK 4-5 mn for the UMB programme. The RCN/SIU programme was evaluated in 2004, while the UMB programme has never been independently reviewed. The future of the two programmes will be discussed later this year, and this review is intended as one of several inputs to that process.

As both programmes work within broadly the same areas, and indeed also with many of the same institutions, the MFA decided to do a combined review. The two Programmes share several aspects and also objectives. One common characteristic is the diversity of projects funded by them. To a certain degree this has been an objective in itself, i.e. involving a wide range of research themes, institutions and networks. There are also important differences between the programmes, in particular with regard to the administrative model used.

As pointed out in the ToR (Annex A), this review is not focused on the achievements of the individual projects, but rather on their programmatic impact, i.e. of how well they contribute to the overall objectives of the programmes. The projects will thus not be discussed or commented in any great detail, except where they provide examples and illustrations to the general analysis.

The Review Team consisted of Professor Zoran Velkovski from the University of Skopje, and Erlend Sigvaldsen (team leader) from NCG. The review started in May 2009, with field visits taking place in the second half of June. A first draft was delivered by the 20th of July 2009, while the report was finalised the 10th of September, after receiving comments from the MFA. We wish to thank all of those that have been involved in the study for their assistance, friendly and unrelenting enthusiasm, and for contributing to great discussions.

² The term "Programme" is used for only the two overall programmes under review. "Project" is exclusively used for the projects funded under each of the Programmes.

2.1 Methodology

The basic methodology is indicated in the ToR, and this has been largely adhered to in the Review. The main methods included:

- **Desk research** of all projects selected according to the scope defined in the ToR. This included review of previous evaluations and monitoring reports.
- **In-depth interviews** with some of the key stakeholders in Norway.
- **Structured questionnaire** to all project partners of all 27 projects.
- **Field visits** of 10 selected projects in the identified countries.

The review worked within very tight time constraints as there was a limited “window of opportunity” – both in Norway and in the Balkans – due to the closing of the academic year for the summer in June/July. We would have wished for more time to understand the projects better – all 27 of them – as we now only had the opportunity to scratch the surface of a few selected. We apologise for any misunderstandings and mistakes we may have made, and bear of course full responsibility for any such flaws.

Following the above, an important caveat is thus necessary regarding our assessment of the projects. While we have read all the reporting, interviewed stakeholders and visited some in the field, time has not allowed us to go in real depth on any of them. We have relied on secondary sources – written and oral – and our assessment should not be interpreted as full independent verifications of neither operations nor results. We do not believe any discrepancies between reports and actuals are likely, but a full project audits would require substantially more resources.

However, we consider that the level of information acquired is sufficient to draw a few general conclusions about the Programmes, and their potential futures. The Terms of Reference uses the word “concrete” with regard to recommendations, and we have tried to phrase these accordingly. However, we strongly believe that several aspects require extended analysis and even policy considerations, and this process must be allowed sufficient space before final decisions regarding the future of the Programmes are taken. Key among these is the question about objectives, and what the overall goals for such Programmes ought to be in the coming period. We will return to this issue below.

3 The Two Programmes: Design and Objectives

Both Programmes operate according to well known methodologies, and are continuations of earlier, similar Programmes. Most elements of the Programmes are thus “tried and trusted”. The RCN/SIU even shares its Programme Board with a Russian programme, which in fact was the model for the Balkan version. Both the UMB and the RCN/SIU are so-called project based programmes, i.e. total available funds are split on a number of particular projects. These projects are chosen after a competitive process, according to pre-determined criteria. However, a key difference between the two Programmes lie in this selection process, as the UMB is based on an internal – to the University – procedure, while the RCN/SIU is done according to a public tender process.

A brief overview of the basic objectives and design of the two programmes are given below.

3.1 UMB Programme

The current project is a continuation of the Programme “Competence transfer and institutional contact and co-operation between faculties of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine in South Eastern Europe”, (2002 –2005). While no independent review of this first phase took place, performance appears to have been deemed satisfactory, and UMB and MFA agreed on a second phase. The same overall objectives were applied:

- *To improve organising, content and quality of academic education and research in agriculture, veterinary medicine and forestry to meet with needs for qualified people in ongoing rebuilding after wars and to reach the general European level and standards.*
- *Create functional and sustainable networks of regional institutions and professionals to support each other and cooperate for optimal use of limited available resources in the SEE region in a difficult rebuilding situation.*

These are rather broad based objectives mixing together a number of sub-objectives, thus to some degree limiting their usefulness as guiding tools for assessment of performance. In the selection of projects, UMB operationalised these overall objectives by prioritising projects that:

- Support and strengthen selected institutions in WB towards obtaining European professional levels and standards.
- Promote networking and scientific cooperation between the WB institutions.
- Promote networking and scientific cooperation between institutions in WB and in Norway

The projects were to be organised in two academic clusters, namely Cluster 1 with a focus on animal husbandry, animal health, food safety and aquaculture, and Cluster 2 addressing forestry, mapping, and use of GIS, land use planning and natural resource management.

The process of selecting projects consisted of three phases:

1. Call for initial proposal from Balkan institutions, of which 60 were received.
2. These were distributed to 15 departments/ institutions within the UMB Norwegian partner umbrella for possible matching. This resulted in 17 draft project proposals.
3. Through workshops and further discussions, 9 projects were selected for funding. The final decision maker was Noragric, UMBs international department, but after repeated consultations with involved institutions.

Noragric is responsible for preparation, coordination and implementation of the Programme, with a part-time Coordinator as the focal point. Otherwise the projects are run as normal for such activities, with a project leader in Norway and project coordinators at each participating institution in the Balkans. Projects report primarily through an annual reporting mechanism, but the Noragric Coordinator has also played an active and energetic role in monitoring and project guiding.

The total budget for the 4 year programme was NOK 18.43 mn, with administration cost to Noragric set at 5%. The average size of the projects is thus rather small, only about NOK 2 mn in total – or 500,000 per year. While most projects appear to have done well within these tight budget constraints, the overall objective of institutional building can only be expected to be realised on a very small scale with such amounts available.

3.2 RCN / SIU Programme

The first phase of the Programme was evaluated in 2004, being assessed as a basically successful programme. It was thus carried forward into a second phase in 2005, with same total amount of NOK 60 mn for 4 years.

The overall objectives for the RCN/SIU Programme are even more general than for the UMB. Formally, in the agreement and the programme document, the objectives are not even stated in English. The ToR for our review translates the objective as

“Through co-operation with the countries in the Western Balkans the programme was to contribute to Euro-Atlantic integration and co-operation to foster stability and democratisation in the specific counties and in the region as a whole. The objective of the programme was to initiate, develop and finance co-operation in higher education and research between universities, colleges and research institutions in the Western Balkans and corresponding institutions in Norway, as well as foster regional institutional co-operation. Projects funded through the programme should contribute to improving competence and capacities at higher education and research institutions in the host

countries. Moreover, the projects were to contribute to equal partnerships between the participating parties. Bologna process' principles were conceptualised as a central framework for the implementation of the programme."

Comparing the above statement with the UMB objective, there are clearly several common features, like for instance the targets of fostering institutional cooperation, and improving capacities and competencies.

The RCN/SIU programme were organised differently than the UMB, as the selection process started with an open call for project proposals from Norwegian institutions. It was then the Norwegian institution's responsibility to contact and agree projects with Balkan institutions.

This whole process was run through two "selection-streams": Higher education projects applied through the SIU channel, while research projects sent their applications to the RCN. Proposals were then thoroughly screened and assessed by SIU and RCN respectively, before the finalists were submitted to the Programme Board (PB) that made the final decision. The PB has 6 members, with SIU and RCN appointing three each. The MFA acts as observer to the PB.

The Programme Board operates based on a set of guidelines that are developed from the broad policies stated in the Programme Document, According to an attachment to the Programme Document, the following are the key criteria for choosing projects (translated from Norwegian)

- Professional quality
- Importance of project and theme for partner institution
- Importance of theme and project nationally and regionally
- Cross border cooperation

Criteria for the project portfolio

- Reasonable distribution of funds and projects across countries
- Distribution between research and education
- Balance between professional thematic areas

Unfortunately this - and the very reasonable analysis accompanying the criteria - are only to be found in Norwegian. This is unfortunate, as it lessens the transparency of the considerations controlling the Programme, for the involved institutions and partners. It is recommended that all agreements, objectives and other analysis made with the aim of managing such programmes should be written in English.

Monitoring of the projects after selection happens mainly through the involved Norwegian institutions. There appears to be little interaction between the projects and SIU and RCN during implementation, except for an annual report forwarded from each project. This is made according to fixed formats to SIU and RCN that are indeed different between the two. While the RCN and SIU projects share PB, they appear to otherwise live their own separate life within their allotted stream.

4 Programme Status and Achievement of Objectives

The ToR focus on achievement of Programme objectives. The main complication for such an assessment is the generality of the objectives themselves, without any type of indicator given to measure overall attainment. This makes any judgment qualitative in nature - and open to reinterpretation by stakeholders with a different set of “value-weights”.

To say anything sensibly about the Programme objectives, it is necessary to briefly look at the projects themselves. Most of these have a “tighter” goal hierarchy with concrete outputs, results and indicators, and are easier to follow from a monitoring point of view. This holds for both the UMB and the RCN/SIU category of projects.

However, to put both programmes and projects in context, it is necessary to briefly look at the overall framework for the Programmes.

4.1 Programme Context

Unlike B&H, where the majority of institutions lack basic working conditions, physical facilities and human resources, the institutions in Croatia and Serbia have much stronger capacities, both physical and human, and have greater experience in project implementation. In addition to projects financed by Norway, they have also implemented other projects, such as Tempus, CARDS, FP6, FP7, etc. The institutions in Croatia are well supported by the government and do not have the financial and other problems characteristic for B&H. The institutions in Serbia and Macedonia have difficulties with the finances (poor Government support) and with the acceptance of “European values” by the older teaching and research staff.

Command of foreign languages, primarily English, by staff in B&H is much poorer than in Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia. Younger professionals are much more proficient in English than the older ones.

All institutions in B&H face on a daily basis serious problems. This situation arises from a number of characteristics of the institutions. Almost all B&H institutions participating in the programmes have problems that emanate from:

- **Poor physical capacities, equipment and conditions.** Some of the facilities were destroyed during the war and are still being renovated. A number of new faculties and universities have been established that start practically from scratch and still lack elementary working conditions. Most frequently they are housed in

abandoned municipal, state and army facilities. Some locations house more than one faculty, thus lowering the standards to very low levels.

The teaching and research equipment of all institutions is modest. Lack of IT was less of a problem than lack of equipment for the laboratories and the teaching facilities. Given that the majority of institutions are operating in the natural and technical science areas, equipping laboratories is of pivotal significance.

In this area, the projects have been of key importance for the institutions and the participating personnel. Hence, the expressed gratitude of not only the project participants, but also of the management of the faculties/university is strong.

- ***Insufficient human resources.*** The teaching and research personnel in the institutions in B&H was largely divided after the war. Part of them left for other universities created according to political divisions, others went to work in private universities, and a third group took employment in new universities. Thus, a gap was created which forced the institutions to hire teaching and research staff most often from the neighbouring countries. Due to poor finances, hiring of new and young teaching and research staff is difficult and slow.
- ***Lack of defined and clear management mechanisms.*** The B&H Law on Higher Education has been adopted at the state level. However, the acts for the operational regulation of the universities in the cantons, based on the state law, are slow to be developed. Thus, the relations between the faculties and the university management are plagued by undefined responsibilities and management. This situation gives significant power to the faculties. This greatly complicates the implementation of a unified university development policy, planned collaboration and rational utilisation of resources, effective transfer of information, regulated scientific research, application of single standards and criteria, transparent operation and dissemination of project results, etc.

In Croatia and Serbia, the legislative framework is set up and almost all management mechanisms at an institutional level have been defined. Macedonia has almost reached that level as well, and the legislation is almost complete.

- ***Lack of bylaws*** regulating the field of operation and of development programmes. All universities are obligated to undergo transformation in line with the Bologna recommendations. However, the bylaws and rulebooks regulating the field of operation of the B&H institutions have still in the majority of cases not been adopted. The first and to some extent the second study cycle are covered with regulations, but the third cycle (the doctoral studies) is still undefined. Research has still not been integrated as a component of operation of the institutions and is not covered by a precise legal framework.

Development programmes and/or strategies are a rarity. Thus, defined university priorities are absent, leaving the selection of development activities to each individual faculty.

The institutions in Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia are in this regard at an advantage, due to the fact that the majority of bylaws have already been adopted or are in the process of being adopted. The problems these institutions face are the financing of the second cycle in Croatia and Serbia, and the doctoral studies and transformation of the universities into integrated universities in Serbia.

- **Lack of finance.** The B&H universities outside of Republika Srpska (RS) are financed with funds transferred by the respective canton to which the university belongs, and with funds the universities themselves collect from student tuition fees and commercial projects. Financing is decentralised and each faculty still operates two accounts - one for the cantonal funds and one for the funds collected from the students and the commercial projects. The situation is less chaotic in the RS universities – for instance Banja Luka that participates in the Programmes - but funds are also here critically short.

The financing of the universities in Croatia is satisfactory and has strong support from the Government, whereas the Governments in Serbia and Macedonia still do not satisfy the needs of their universities. The most obvious example is the allocation of funds for higher education in these countries, which is much less than it is in Croatia. At the largest university in Macedonia (the Skopje university), for example, over 90% of the funds allocated by the government are spent on salaries, with the rest being disbursed for maintenance and almost nothing for development. The situation is similar in Serbia.

- **Prejudice and stereotypes.** In B&H these manifest themselves more on an institutional than on a private level. Collaboration between staff from different universities, from the same country or from different countries, from the same nationality or from different nationalities, is far better than the collaboration between their respective institutions. What is fascinating to see among the majority of interviewees is the visible effort they invest to overcome the differences and to achieve efficient collaboration with the “others”. This situation is very conducive for continuation of activities which aim at strengthening collaboration.

The situation is similar among the representatives of the institutions in Croatia and Serbia. The academic environment appears more resilient to the consequences of the conflict.

These provide for a challenging implementation context, and the differences between B&H on hand and the other countries are ever present in almost all projects funded. The implementation of the project activities needs to be viewed through the lens of these drawbacks.

4.2 Status of Projects

In spite of the above mentioned challenges, we have found that almost all projects that are funded under the two programmes appear to progress well and basically in accordance

with plans. A couple of projects have stalled and are for different reasons not moving, while a number have experienced delays of different seriousness. Some have yet to reach all planned sub-targets for instance with regard to publications. However, when looking at each project individually, the overall impression of the project portfolio is **basically very good**, with professionally implemented and operated projects. Indeed, the results surpass the expectations of any one who is familiar with the conditions in which they have been achieved.

4.2.1 Summary Status

The status of the projects as at June 2009 is summarized in the following table for the two Programmes. The key sources for the table are the annual reporting from the projects, the questionnaires, and the field visits.

Table 1 Project Status

Programme Focus	Project Progress	Key Achievements	Non-Achievements
UMB Projects, 9 projects			
Institution building, higher education, research.	All except one project (discontinued) are generally on schedule. Some of the publications are a little late.	Several projects have interesting business links, and the projects have – with one exception – included sound elements of institution building.	Some projects leave a “half-finished” impression, in that institutions and projects have many remaining challenges. Networking has possibly not been as extensive as envisaged.
RCN Projects, 9 projects			
Research, capacity/competence transfer	All projects basically on track, with a few minor deviations	The research projects will all able to meet their targets, in very different thematic fields. Ambitions appear well matched, and cooperation genuinely beneficial for both parties.	Challenging implementation for some, otherwise nothing particularly noteworthy
SIU Projects, 8 projects			
Higher Education, capacity/competence transfer	Mostly only minor delays; one project has stalled	Most projects have made good contributions to the integration in the Bologna process. A few have developed courses and educational paths in “new” thematic fields.	A common challenge has been accreditation difficulties, mostly due to external obstructions. However, this is now slowly improving in almost all countries.

In the UMB portfolio, one project has been cancelled (UMB 6). The aim of this project was to develop a joint master programme in Agribusiness. However, after a year, the two involved faculties at the University of Sarajevo appeared unable to cooperate. The annual monitoring report for 2007 answers the question about which aspect of the implementation worked well, with a straightforward: “*Nothing worked well.*” It is an interesting illustration of the organizational fragmentation that some of the Universities

struggle with. University management is apparently another area in demand of capacity strengthening.

The other project that has stalled is SIU 5, “Gender, Violence and Democracy in the Western Balkans – Educational Projects”. The problem is that Montenegro has not given accreditation to the course. It is uncertain if and when accreditation might happen.

Apart from these two projects, all other projects are basically on schedule. Further, all are found to be relevant for the goals defined in the programme and for the institutions and individuals participating in them.

The three project streams, i.e. the UMB, the SIU and the RCN have different characteristics. As planned, SIU and RCN projects are oriented towards higher education and research respectively, while the UMB projects are a mix. The extent of “classic” institution building is generally more pronounced in the SIU and UMB projects, than in the RCN. Research tends to be more one-off projects – as can be expected with a given time frame and resources – but have on the other hand contributed to real increases in knowledge and competence levels of involved staff.

A key strength of the UMB projects is that they all have some institution building content. To some degree this is also a weakness, as many projects appear as too small and with too few resources compared to overall ambitions. The net result is that cooperating institutions have many challenges yet to address, to safeguard and develop the results achieved so far. This also goes for several of the projects in the SIU and the RCN portfolio. The issue of “spreading the butter too thinly” will be further discussed below.

4.2.2 Relevance, Effectiveness and Sustainability of Selected Projects

The Team visited 10 selected projects in the Balkans to get a better understanding of the practical nature of the Programmes as seen from the partner end of the cooperation. The ToR asks about relevance, effectiveness and sustainability in relation to Programme objectives and we have given our opinion on each of these issues. Most assessments are positive, which is not only because projects have performed well, but also because the objectives for the Programmes are very broadly phrased in terms of *developed* capacity, *improved* cooperation, *increased* networking etc. It is difficult to find a project that has not had at least a marginal success according to these criteria. Table 2 gives a general overview of the visited projects.

Table 2 Overview of Visited Projects

Projects	Status	Relevance	Effectiveness	Sustainability
UMB Project 3 "Standardisation of technology etc for white pickled and hard cheese"	Progress according to plans, some extra activities done.	Highly relevant for business development; and for Norway/WB institutional cooperation	Reasonable, but has met external challenges; many stakeholders involved,	Basic capacity transferred, but legal framework for standardisation and protection a challenge.
UMB Project 5 "Improving nutritional quality and safety of food and fodder crops"	Mostly progress according to plans.	Relevant, i.e. capacity development	Good, but cooperation between many partners take time and resources	Reasonable, basic transfer of capacity OK
UMB Project 8 "GIS and remote sensing for mapping and monitoring in forestry and agriculture"	Progress according to revised work plan on track.	Relevant, GIS technology is basic in monitoring of these sectors.	Good, with a very small budget. Again an issue with too many partners.	Reasonable, but the size of the project reduces impact and thus sustainability.
UMB Project 9 "Plant health and genetic resources in South East Europe"	Mostly according to plan, delays in a few areas.	Relevant, and institutional collaboration a strong point	Good	Reasonable, but require extended laboratory facilities to protect results
SIU Project 2 "Curriculum Development according to Bologna Principles"	Extended the schedule, but ECTS documents and veterinary curriculum should be completed in the course of 2009	Relevant, European integration and Bologna	Reasonable, but missing legal framework (Cantoon HE law), delayed implementation in B&H.	Reasonable, now that the Cantoon law for implementation is finally in place.
SIU Project 3 "Aging and care for the elderly. Post graduate education"	Mostly on schedule - a couple of months delays	Relevant, having established the first post graduate education in ageing and care for the elderly in Serbia and B&H,	Mostly good, took some time to align methodologies and principles	Very good, both Tuzla and Cuprija has introduced these courses
SIU Project 6 "Education, research and Training for Global Environmental Change"	Mostly on schedule, but Bologna process in WB area delayed	Very relevant, in a comparatively new area in WB.	Reasonable, but complex organisation with many partners	Good, new courses are accredited and taught.
RCN project 174856 Informal Practices and Corruption in Post Conflict Areas"	Slightly behind schedule, due to delayed data collection. Extended April 2010	Relevant – and controversial – issue. The study's cross country cooperation a strong point	Challenges with one of the involved institutions, but will still deliver expected results	Most likely yes, in the case of methodology and analytical capacity
RCN Project 174860 "Spinning out of Control: Rhetoric and Violent Conflict"	Ahead of schedule, books already published	Relevant to understanding the conflict	Good, with interesting organisation of two-person teams	As RCN 174856

RCN Project 175183 "High-Resolution Environmental Modelling and Evaluation Programme"	Mainly on schedule, but slow start	Relevant, both the theme and the nature of cooperation	Good, with limited budget.	Very good, with Croatian partners continuing to use models/methods
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Sustainability of the projects is to some degree a matter of interpretation, and depends on what level is analyzed. Increased human capacities at the different faculties and institutions – and these are found in all projects visited - are believed to be clearly sustainable. Institutional sustainability has also probably generally improved, but this depends on a host of other factors than the input from the projects. In general, many of the institutions require much more comprehensive and broad based developments to be truly set on the path of sustainable modernization and improvement.

Lastly, some of the networks initiated under the Programmes are likely to be sustainable, at least on an individual level. This varies considerably between the institutions involved, and while some have found common interest, others are only likely to be viable as long as a foreign funder is present. As one of the WB respondent to the questionnaire says: *“Sustainability: The main challenge is coming from the fact that we will have to strengthen our cooperation in the future. For that purpose, we will need more money in the budget which will be, probably, difficult to reach”*

One of the projects, the UMB 3, works with standardization of production of regional cheese types. This is necessary to be able to register the cheeses as regional trademarks and later to be able to export these to the EU. The project is a good example of active business development with a clear focus on addressing market constraints, but unfortunately suffers from the weak regulatory framework for such standardization processes in B&H. There is simply no adequate protection in the current law. This example illustrates that while a project may perform well, it may still struggle to achieve its prime objective due to externalities.

4.2.3 Key Reasons for Success and Failures

There are likely several reasons for why the project portfolio has generally performed well in both the UMB and the SIU/RCN programme. Two of the more general causes are likely to be:

- The quite ***rigorous selection process*** that each Programme employs to select projects.
- ***Experienced partners***, both at the Norwegian and the WB end of the cooperation. Most know each other from the first phase, and are thus just extending the cooperation

Other reasons include:

- The projects are primarily **led by young persons** with expertise, dedication and readiness for collaboration. The only doubtful reactions to the projects come from a small number of older professors who, despite of having achieved good results in the projects, are decidedly less enthusiastic. They display a much lower level of willingness to cooperate.
- **Support by faculty management.** Most – but not all - deans of the faculties show willingness to support the projects rather than to obstruct them. On the contrary, in an environment confronted with numerous challenges, they manage to set aside and/or equip special facilities within the faculties where the respective projects are implemented. The general conclusion is that these projects have been very well received by the institutions.
- **Dedicated individuals and main champions.** This is connected to the above issue, but it is striking that most projects not only have dedicated persons managing them, but clear champions of the projects they represent. The greatest credit for the success of these projects should thus go to the project managers.

The UMB programme is in a special position as it has been coordinated by a former national of B&H, now professor at Noragric. He has played a major role in administration, caretaking, communication and general facilitation of the projects, to the degree that it deserves mentioning as a reason for achievements. All institutions without exception emphasised the importance of the coordinator.

Except for one – possibly two projects – the programmes have been surprisingly free of real failures. The problems that have arisen are mostly due to:

- **Initial misunderstandings in design of the projects**, as not all assumptions for project implementation were later found to be correct. Maybe equipment was not sufficient, staff capacity not adequate, or logistics more complex than envisaged. Most projects were able to overcome this with changes in priorities and schedules.
- **Lack of adequate laboratory facilities** in the WB area hampered several of the projects that required such analysis to take place locally. In some cases data had to be discarded, and analysis done anew in Norway.
- **Different approaches and cultures in scientific research and training between Norway and WB** have played a role in several projects, complicating implementation and slowing communication and exchange of information.
- **Differences in implementation level between countries.** For instance, the different level of Bologna process implementation in WB institutions participating in a given project, led to substantial problems in the creation of courses curriculum, acceptable for all institutions.
- **Lack of project management experience.** Some WB faculties had problems with basic project management tasks, like making realistic plans, budgeting and

general handling of project issues in a timely and functional manner. This is actually an area where skill training could be a useful project component.

- **Externalities**, like the mentioned delay in providing necessary political and educational reforms in B&H. Accreditation procedures for those projects where that was relevant appear to have been consistently more complicated than envisaged.

4.3 UMB: Achievement of Programme Objectives

The programme objectives can be split in two parts, namely a) improved capacity and b) improved networks. In addition, even though it is not directly stated in the UMB Project document, the MFA confirms that the overall objective of the UMB programme is the same as for the SIU/NCR, namely to : “.... *contribute to Euro-Atlantic integration and co-operation to foster stability and democratisation in the specific countries and in the region as a whole.*”. Both programmes clearly have an overall political goal.

Objective: Improved organisation, content and quality of academic education and research in agriculture, veterinary medicine and forestry

The UMB programme has **undoubtedly contributed towards this objective**. With the exception of the one project that was stopped, all others have to some degree been instrumental in improvement of the above mentioned areas in the involved institutions. Of course impact varies, and not all projects may leave as large a foot print as desired, but the general impression is positive. Of the three issues mentioned – organisation, content and quality – content and quality have possibly seen the most substantial changes, while organisation are a somewhat more complicated area to change. This involves institutional issues at a higher level than where projects actually took place.

Even though impact has been positive, our suspicion is that - because of the small size of the projects - it has also been relatively limited within a university and even within a faculty. In some cases, where institutional structures are open for external impulses, projects may have had a catalytic effect in that project results have given inspiration outside of the project itself. In other cases, with more conservative management, impact is more likely to have been restricted to the persons directly involved in the project.

A final observation is that the combination of equipment, training and practical research was particularly valued by the WB institutions. This gave them the tools as well as the theory to address real issues, and built capacity at a broader level than what more one-sided projects might have done.

Objective: Functional and sustainable networks of regional institutions and professionals to support each other and cooperate created

Overall, *this objective can also be considered reached*. Several networks are created and some of these are likely to be both functional and sustainable in the longer run. However, this is very hard to prove conclusively as the hypothesis can only be truly tested by a period where such cooperation is no longer directly funded. Interviews are not really reliable sources in this connection, as there are strong tendencies (and incentives) to overstate the success of networking.

The design of the projects involved a host of faculties, institutions and universities all over the WB area. In reality, most networks appeared to settle down with a core set of partners, and then an outer circle of other involved institutions. These fade in and out of the projects to different degrees. Some only participated in a work shop or two, others did not even do that.

Generally, the institutional cooperation between the Norwegian partner and the key WB partners was normally successful (*“more than expected”* according to one Questionnaire respondent), while the institutional cooperation between WB partners *“might have been better”*. A key barrier to real institutional cooperation in WB is the inherent conservatism of the management and leadership of the institutions themselves.

What is clear though, is that a substantial number of individuals involved in the programme have found common interest and created very functional networks. We detected eagerness to discuss, to analyze and to simply “do things together”. According to one respondent: *“It was a great challenge the first meeting of colleagues after the war. The Project proposals and active support of Norway institution and project leaders has enabled a very positive atmosphere, and provide excellent basis for further collaboration.”* This “very positive atmosphere” may be the best legacy that could possibly be hoped for from such a Programme.

One common remark from almost all of the projects is that fewer institutions should be involved. The quality of the project suffered because time and resources were spent on administering a very broad network of potential partners. A Norwegian respondent said a problem of the Programme was the *“.....contradiction between (a) Noragric/WB-Partners ambitions and wish to include many local partners; and (b) our need to keep the project realistic with respect to the budget constraints.”* Thus a key challenge of implementation was the *“...handling as many as six partners institutions in WB on a very tight budget without spending too much of the budget on administration.”* The advice is thus not to include so many WB partners in the project without expanding the budgets considerably.

Objective: Foster stability and democratisation

The Programme has undoubtedly contributed in its small ways towards fostering stability and democratization. Most of the impact has come through increased contact and cooperation, and the opening of old lines of communication. A quote from a questionnaire from Belgrade can illustrate the impact: *“The institutional cooperation between the Faculty of veterinary medicine, University of Belgrade and the Faculty of veterinary medicine, University of Sarajevo is very successful. As a very important result*

of Program activities, the collaboration between the two institutions is rebuilt after the war, and nowadays we have a plenty of joint activities, such as publishing text books, exchanging academic stuff, dissertation committees, etc.”

It is doubtful if such collaboration had happened without a “neutral project” to instigate the process.

4.4 RCN/SIU: Achievement of Programme Objectives

Interpreting the overall RCN/SIU objective results in nearly the same two basic objectives that the UMB project works by, namely a) institutional cooperation, and b) improving capacities and competence. Most observations under the UMB programme also apply for the RCN/SIU, particularly regarding cross-country cooperation.

Objective: Initiate, develop and finance co-operation in higher education and research between universities, colleges and research institutions in the Western Balkans and corresponding institutions in Norway, as well as foster regional institutional co-operation

Individual networks have clearly developed, and we have yet to receive any negative comment from any participating institution about the cooperation between the Norwegian and the WB partner. Regional cooperation has been most pronounced in the higher education projects, developing common curricula and courses, harmonizing teaching practices, student and teacher mobility through different programmes, and even common project applications for instance to Tempus IV. The programme has yielded several such agreements between Universities. A prerequisite seems to be that the Universities are at the reasonably same level of development.

One example is the project within the geriatric area, where two relatively small institutions in Norway and Serbia have developed what can only be described as a very close relationship, undoubtedly strongly supported by particular personalities at each end. This cooperation now also includes Tuzla in B&H, where many of the same dynamics seems to be at play. A relatively small project like this has had decisive and visible impact outside of the project itself. Such multiplier effects are less visible in the cooperation between larger universities/institutions.

Research projects show a more varied pattern, with some of the social science projects being more limited in collaboration scope, closing formal cooperation when the project finishes. But in others, there are clear expressions of interests for long term cooperation, like the project within meteorology, where the Norwegian partner says that it “...is keen to work with the Croatian experts, in order to benefit from the Croatian expertise and as an important part of the effort to build an EMEP model community”. In general, the research projects appear to have partners at more “equal” levels than the higher education and the UMB projects. There is less development flavour over these projects, which

should not be surprising given the RCN's general focus on professional excellence, meaning that the partners must already have a certain skill level.

In conclusion, the RCN/SIU programme has undoubtedly *contributed towards archiving the programme objective.*

Objective: Projects funded through the programme should contribute to improving competence and capacities at higher education and research institutions in the host countries.

The Programme has met this objective. We cannot find any project where there has not been building of competencies and knowledge. For some it may be more at the individual than the institutional level, but the WB partners have generally shown great receptiveness to new knowledge and willingness to use this in their work. For instance, most WB partners have made academic articles and policy briefs. The technical skills they have acquired through the project – as well as the data they are now able to utilise – have allowed them to strengthen their academic position.

Other capacity enhancing effects include the exposure to Norwegian setting and way of working. One questionnaire says that: “... *has allowed the Serbian project partners to get acquainted with institutional setup in Norway, both regarding the public administration, the research structures, and the operating environment. In addition, the Norwegian partner was able to present to the Serbian public administration in our field of expertise, how the legislation is being implemented in practice in Norway, and in what way is it underpinned by research.....*”

Whether this type of exposure has any effect on the listening Serbian authorities is another matter, but exposure is an important first step in any type of reform.

Other important achievements include introduction of “new” educational topics. The SIU project 3 contributed to develop and establish the first post graduate education in ageing and care for the elderly in Serbia and B&H, as well as introduced students to active pedagogical methods as described in the Bologna declaration

As with the UMB projects, and given the institutional challenges, the RCN/SIU projects also appear a little timid in resources, particularly at the B&H end of the activities. Institution building is a complex and long term process, and the projects have mostly been content with scratching the surface of the problems that some of these institutions face.

Of course, comprehensive institution building was never the target for neither this RCN/SIU Programme or for the UMB one. The Programme strategy in both has been more a “light touch of inspiration” to as many stakeholders and institutions as possible. The Programmes have had a multiple set of objectives where the single word ***cooperation*** has been the key, to some degree at the expense of the other sub-objectives. This strategy has given tangible results, but further progress may now necessitate more targeted efforts.

Having had their appetite wetted, all – absolutely all – WB universities and institutions interviewed now wanted institutional development in depth.

Objective: Foster stability and democratisation

If one believes normalisation between former foes foster stability and democratisation, then the project has made substantial contributions towards this objective. Contacts and cooperation between institutions and individuals have been initiated and implemented through the projects, and the programme has established a neutral meeting space which was not there before. For many, this has been their first opportunity to meet the “enemy” since the war, and this has resulted in real cooperation across borders and ethnic lines. In our opinion, the basic strategy behind the programme has thus proven its validity.

4.5 Recommendations from 2004 Evaluation

The ToR asks for an assessment of whether the recommendations of the 2004 evaluation of the RCN/SIU programme were implemented. We have used the summary of recommendation at the beginning of the report (page 4) as basis for the assessment. There are also a number of more detailed recommendations, but most of these are to some degree covered by the major ones.

The Evaluations says that (page 4) “...any successor would benefit from significant changes in the way it is to be implemented. These considerations include:....”

Recommendation 1 and 2

- The focus of the streams of the programme (or indeed whether there should be any)
- If so efforts to seek and match projects to those streams

It is unclear how strongly the former evaluation recommends increased focus, and the PB makes a brief discussion in their (Norwegian) attachment to the Programme application. Thematic areas should include social science, natural resource management and marine issues, and public health issues. While most projects in the current portfolio can be matched to one of these thematic streams, it is not clear what advantages this focus is supposed to have had for the programme as such. If synergies were to be realised, the overall programme objectives should reflect this, and indicate a strategy where this was taken in as a design objective at the programme level. It cannot be concluded that this issue has been assessed in any depth, and to the degree that the Evaluation wanted more stringent streams, it has not been heeded in the current Programme.

Recommendation 3

- Continued and intensified efforts, including seed money, to encourage and develop cooperation among similar projects, either by their research orientation or geographic scope within the region, or both:

A seminar was held in Belgrade in 2008 where all projects presented themselves at a type of roundtable discussion. Otherwise, there has to our knowledge been no effort to “develop cooperation among similar projects...”

Recommendation 4

- Mechanisms, such as appointment of a specific person, to assist in the coordination of these projects to maximise cooperation and streamline spending

Apart from the general arms-length administration of SIU and RCN, this has not been done.

Recommendation 5

- A much more thorough and verifiable system for projects to report their progress (or in some cases, the lack thereof)

Reporting is now annual, and the projects report on either the RCN or the SIU template. These reports ask specifically about progress and attainment of milestones, and do discuss problems of non-achievements. This system could possibly have included some method of independent verification, but are otherwise quite sufficient in our view. Any more extensive reporting would only increase administrative costs.

Recommendation 6

- The possibility to include limited funding for participation by scholars and/or students from neighbouring countries that are not included in the present programme where this would strengthen a given project, in particular with regard to confidence building and reconciliation.

This has not been followed up in the current programme.

Recommendation 7

- The creation of a specific procedure to validate proposed modifications of the profile, goals and time schedule in the course of the project

This does exist, with proposed modifications going through either SIU or the RCN, before being presented to the PB for final decision. Several projects have made moderate changes in project activities, and for instance the transfer of budget funds from one year to the next is now relatively straightforward to do.

Recommendation 8

- The creation of an explicit mechanism for reviewing projects or making better known and discernible any existing mechanism and their decision-making processes for identifying delays and serious problems within projects and dealing with them.

This has not been done, and the identification of problems is primarily an internal project matter. For the current crop of projects, this seems to have worked quite well, and we are

hesitant towards recommending any extra layers of administration through reviews etc. It may be that the existence of a programme coordinator – as in the UMB programme – could contribute to early problem solving and thus in reducing project frustrations, however.

Other Recommendations

The evaluation also includes a number of more detailed recommendations. We cannot find that many of these have actually been taken into account. Indeed, from the interviews, the impression is that the second phase of the RCN/SIU programme was allowed little space for planning and reconsideration, before it had to be launched. Thus, it was more or less a copy of the first phase with only minor changes in design. For instance, many of the projects in the second phase were just a continuation of the first.

An additional comment that came up is that the Evaluation was never formally finalised, and the Programme Board may for that reason have had limited ownership to its preliminary conclusions.

Whatever the reason, the key lesson to be drawn is that redesign of such programmes should be allowed sufficient space in terms of time and resources to properly prepare for a new phase.

5 Administration and Management

This is a key point in the ToR: *“The relevance and appropriateness of continuing project activities within the current administrative structure should be assessed and reported on very concretely.* Further, the ToR asks to specifically address the question of merging the two programmes.

However, both of these questions really hinges on a third, namely **“What should the objectives for a third phase be?”** The UMB and the RCN/SIU programmes have different characteristics, which will play differently under different types of objectives. To generalize somewhat crudely, the UMB is more “academic development aid” oriented than the RCN/SIU, while the RCN/SIU is the more encompassing - and more political in the sense that it creates a larger platform for cooperation between involved countries. To complicate the issue further, the RCN and SIU have two rather different project streams that also have different characteristics and strong/weak points, depending on objective.

Thus, whether a factor is a positive or a negative depends on the objective, and several of the ones mentioned below have “shadow” interpretations of reverse value.

So, there are a number of questions to answer with regard to future objectives, before final decisions about administrative structure can be taken. However, we will begin in the other end by briefly describing some of the strong and weak points of each model.

5.1 Two Different Models

The two programmes are simply two different ways of organizing support, even though they – interestingly – end up with supporting many similar types of projects with common elements and goals. However, there are also a few important differences, of which the following is the key

➔ ***RCN/SIU chooses projects after an open, competitive procedure, while UMB does this as an internal process.***

This gives UMB great flexibility to design the programme, and the components to be included. RCN/SIU has to stick to agreed competitive procedures and has less direct influence over project options. The PB can guide through the criteria in the tender document, but has to follow the rules of the competition. So while UMB can prepare projects over several rounds, going to and from project partners, allowing RCN/SIU applicants such leeway would break the rules of the public tender process that RCN and SIU use.

This competition issue is the central difference of the two programmes, and one that makes it difficult to “just merge them”. They cannot be put under one administrative heading, unless you change one into a copy of the other.

5.1.1 UMB Programme: Pros and Cons

Noragric and UMB are among the most experienced institutions in Norway within international cooperation of this type. That they are also competitive is illustrated by the fact that they did get one of their project proposals accepted by the RCN/SIU Programme Board.

However, several Norwegian universities and institutions interviewed found it close to offensive that UMB were just given money to implement such a programme, without any type of competition. We will not delve into the fairness argument – or indeed the broader argument about tied aid - but there are certain advantages of having one institution designing a full programme package like in the case of UMB.

Main Pros:

- Allow for demand driven processes, with UMB **first** inviting project proposals from Balkan institutions before trying to match these among their departments and partner institutions.
- Allow for design of a broad support package per project, with research, education and also institutional strengthening elements.
- Strategic flexibility, allowing for potential integration and synergies between projects. The two projects UMB 1 and 2 within aquaculture is an example. A tight overall vision is possible, as is thematic specialization.

This flexibility has in the last round of projects rather been used to spread each project on too many institutions however, being perhaps too ambitious with regard to regional cooperation.

- The Programme “feels” closer to the projects, particularly due to the coordinator position. Almost all WB partners had stories to tell about how the coordinator had assisted them on even minute details and helped allay frustrations. This position also allows for more on-time monitoring.

It is difficult to fully attribute this aspect of the programme to the UMB model as such, as the particular qualities of the coordinator clearly played a role. His background made him well suited to solve issues related to what can be described as “the culture gap” between WB and Norwegian partners.

Main Cons:

- Question of quality, in the absence of full competition. However well the UMB programme may have done, we cannot know whether the resources would have been even better spent if the programme had been publicly tendered.
- Lack of arms-length programme relations. Unlike the SIU/RCN programme, the UMB programme does not involve a third party institution or monitoring body. This is a quality assurance issue, and can lead to less efficiency if the internal relations get “too cozy”.
- It restricts the programme to the subjects that UMB and its partners cover. This is of course only a drawback if the objective of the programme is to include a wide range of partners, themes and institutions – as has been the case with the RCN/SIU Programme.

In general, the UMB model is well suited to design and develop an institutional development package within the thematic topics covered by UMB. The full potential of this flexibility has not been fully realized in the current project period, primarily because it has been somewhat too ambitious with regard to number of partners per project, and indeed the overall number of projects.

5.1.2 RCN/SIU Programme: Pros and Cons

The RCN/SIU project is built on a model from a similar Russian project. When the RCN/SIU started, the same Programme Board was used and the same dual operational procedures. Combining higher education and research projects with different administrative procedures into the same programme is complicated. However, the two secretariats have cooperated well in order to smoothen the in-built differences.

The two stream policy results in more specialised projects than what is the case in the UMB programme, by splitting research and education. One common theme - the topic of gender and violence in the Balkan area – is in the RCN/SIU Programme split in two projects. Intuitively, a combined project would seem to make more sense.

The PB has enjoyed great discretion in implementing the programme, and in interpreting objectives. The programme is thus painted over a very broad canvas. A different practice of the model may have yielded different pros and cons than what is listed below, but we have tried to stick to the general model characteristics.

Main Pros:

- Competitive bidding assuring selection of sound projects, with strong routines for project preparation and processing. The RCN process is exactly the same as “the usual” in Norway, focussing on excellence and high project quality standards.
- Allows very broad institutional networking from all over Norway, and all over the Balkans. If reaching far and wide is an objective, this is clearly a strong point. A project like the elderly care project would not have been started in a more institutionally restricted programme.
- Having RCN, SIU and the PB as third parties to the programmes ensures a governance structure with sound checks and balances.
- The RCN and SIU are formal, national institutions that convey status to participants and projects. This has in several cases eased implementation and allowed research in areas that are otherwise “inaccessible” – the project on corruption being an example.

Main Cons:

- Artificial split between research and education, where a joint project might be more tuned to actual needs in the Balkan institutions. There are less possibilities for designing classic institution building programmes, particularly in the RCN stream of projects that focus purely on research excellence
- More driven by Norwegian partners, with fewer options for interactive project design.
- The competitive process focussed on single project applications contributes to fragmentation of the total portfolio, and less possibilities for planning synergies between linked projects. The current programme includes an extraordinary broad range of topics and institutions.
- The separation of project streams between SIU and RCN means lack of common assessment, processing and monitoring routines. This can potentially lead to a disjointed portfolio, where projects and partners are treated differently and according to different standards.

It cannot be expected that RCN will want to change its routines for this project, and this is both a strength and a weakness for the programme – strong internationally recognised quality procedures, but limited ability to adapt to the particular situation that faces such a programme.

The main difference between the RCN and SIU projects is perhaps that RCN assumes a certain level of ability among the participants at the outset, while SIU is closer to UMB's development angle, working with weaker partners. Thus, in a programme where research excellence and development of quality partnerships are objectives, RCN is a good model. A major benefit is in-built incentives for long term sustainability of partnerships, as both geographic ends of a project have a professional interest in continuing.

While RCN/SIU may have had a less direct relationship with their projects than UMB, several efforts have been made to capitalise on the sheer variety of projects they have in their portfolio. One such arrangement was a large work shop in Belgrade last autumn for all project leaders, to present and to discuss issues and challenges. For RCN and SIU, this was also an opportunity to monitor and supervise the projects, and a well timed occurrence as such.

5.1.3 Administrative Efficiency

Generally, the administrative efficiency of the UMB and the RCN/SIU programme is assessed as good. Most of the administration is done within the project itself, between the involved partners. Substantial autonomy is given each partner, and while emphasising principles like accountability and transparency, each partner deal with the administrative issues according to their own procedures.

The UMB programme has a larger degree of hands-on management than the RCN/SIU through its part time coordinator. However, there is nothing in the project results themselves that indicate any substantial difference between the two programmes. The RCN/SIU programme may have tougher qualification routines choosing good partners, thus necessitating less administration later, while UMB may work with less experienced partners that do require more direct follow up. In sum, both programmes deliver sound results compared to the objectives.

Quotes from the questionnaires illustrate this:

"..... the administrative personnel responsible for the program at SIU deserves only praise. They have shown flexibility good abilities to explain and discuss when needed."

"I find [UMB] model of financing and reporting quite efficient and without unnecessary bureaucracy".

"The overall administration follows the practices of the RCN, and as such, I have no comments to the procedures: they are efficient, and well suited for medium size projects. The requirements on the participants are adequate to the project size, and while comprehensive, do not pose undue burden on the participants (in contrast with other international funding schemes such as the EEA grants)."

The main problem area has – not unexpectedly – been financial management, i.e. the process of budgeting, disbursing, distribution to partners and end payments. Some projects experienced standstill in the transfer of funds due to unplanned changes in the

activities or due to poor budget construction. Small nuisances as delays in updating of bank information from the universities could then for instance delay the process of new transfers seriously.

The key complication is that all universities and partners – including the Norwegian - have different routines and practices, and that it is almost impossible to design one system that fits all. However, our interviews indicate that the better the preparations, the less this proves a problem later, and this is perhaps the key lesson.

5.1.4 Cost of Administration

The direct administrative cost of the two Programmes is 5% of the total for the UMB programme, and 7.5 % for the RCN/SIU. We have not done any particular analysis of real costs, so we cannot say whether this represents the true cost picture. SIU indicated that it was minimum of what they needed, while UMB said it was sufficient.

RCN is partly funded directly over the government budget, and is less dependent on such Programme revenues than what SIU is. The 7.5% for the RCN/SIU is thus not shared equally between the two, and to complicate the issue further, this split also takes into account the activities in the Russia Programme, that follows an almost similar process with the same PB.

Calculating an annual cost per project of the two Programmes show significant differences.

	Annual Adm. Cost	No. Projects	Annual Adm. Cost per project
UMB	250 000 (5% of 5 000 000)	9	27 778
SIU / RCN	1 125 000 (7.5% 15 000 000)	17	66 176

The UMB Programme is very lean, and is run at a very low cost. For the operation in 2008, UMB invoiced only NOK 163 000 (total grant amount that year was NOK 4,800,000), most of it for 5.5 weeks of different administrative tasks. Most likely, UMB spent more time than that as the coordinator seems to have been quite regularly involved. The 5% is thus not necessarily the true cost situation, but other costs are internalized by the institution itself. In theory, this should also lead to greater commitment by the institution.

Calculated on a project basis, the RCN/SIU Programme costs more to administer. SIU and RCN are independent institutions that cannot afford to internalize costs as UMB can, and this cost discrepancy is thus mostly a reflection of the key difference between the two Programmes: *The UMB is an institution specific programme, while RCN/SIU is not.* Costs must consequently be seen in relation to what one wants to achieve with a program

– the objectives – and in the case of RCN/SIU, whether these objectives make it necessary to have a public tender process and to involve third party administrators. There can be eminent reasons for doing precisely that, but the figures indicate that this might be more expensive.

5.2 Business Development

The ToR strongly indicates what the prioritised area for a potential next phase will be, namely business development, by asking us to “.... *explore the potential for synergies between Norwegian programmes within education and research, and business development.....*”

One immediate problem is that “business development” is a very wide term, particularly when applied in a development aid context. It can comprise all sorts of activities, that in some way or another touches upon the productive sectors. With regard to higher education and research, there are – at least – three ways of interpreting “business development”:

- ***Indirect business development***, through improving business capacities of involved stakeholders, be it students, researchers or any other participant in a project. This can for instance mean teaching particular business relevant topics, as entrepreneurship or business administration.
- ***Working with business framework conditions***, trying to improve the business conditions for a group of enterprises within a sector or sub-sector. It can for instance be research establishing export standards for producers, it can be research/teaching of new production technologies, it can be training and capacity development of necessary support and/or control agencies within a sector, etc.
- ***Working directly with a selected number of enterprises***, by research and training assistance to develop the capacity and competitiveness of these particular companies.

Within this field of development economics, caution is now expressed towards the third way of working, namely directly with enterprises. The main reason is that a provider of public support should be careful with subsidising particular private enterprises, giving them an unfair competitive advantage in the market. Further, experience with this type of support indicates danger of creating unsustainable enterprises that grow dependent on such external support. Thus, it is not recommended.

The first, indirect method is not what a new program should focus on either, as Norwegians are not likely to have any particular advantage compared to others in this field. (We may in some sectors like energy and marine activities have special knowledge worth sharing, however.)

That leaves the second, namely working with investment and business framework conditions. There are other terms for this like business environment, investment climate

etc, but the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) defines it as the “*complex of policy, legal, institutional and regulatory conditions that govern business activities*”.³ It includes institutional arrangements that influence the way key actors operate. For instance, any project that can contribute to better and more effective regulation of an activity falls under this heading. Thus a project that aims at improving the scientific basis upon which a certain regulation is based, is contributing to better business framework. Also, in every country and in most sectors, business depends on a number of support services – that include for instance laboratories to test produce, and to test efficiency of production. Both research and education projects can be linked to such institutions.

Both Programmes already have projects that can be said to work with the business framework, in particular the UMB. RCN/SIU Programme have several connected to the marine sectors, like the DRIMON, the marine environment protection, and the natural resource management projects. The business development angle can hardly be said to constitute the key justification for the projects however, even though they all play a role in creating a better business environment.

The two UMB projects 1 and 2 are examples of more direct business development, working with practical research within aquaculture. These two projects have business, research and educational characteristics, and a key achievement is the rehabilitation of the research centre at Boracko Lake that was completely destroyed in the war. Aquaculture has substantial potential in the region, and the building of domestic capacity to develop production and marketing will be vital to grow the sector further. Indeed, the two projects combined appear as an excellent example of how business, research and higher education can be linked.

This is a very good example of how the building of institutional capacity at a research institution benefits business development. In essence, business will benefit from the strengthening of any institution that can provide them with market relevant services. Within natural resource sectors (fisheries, aquaculture and forestry) research institutions play vital roles as supporters – and controllers – of business.

Another examples is the UMB 3 that work with a whole group of milk producers, and how they as a group can increase the quality of a particular type of cheese, and thus obtain higher prices in the market. UMB 9 works with vine stock genetics, with continuous cooperation with companies growing vine grape and fruit crops, plus cooperation with the Association of vine grape growers.

In general, the UMB model is well suited to business development because:

- The focus of the institution UMB and its partners is precisely productive sectors.
- The model is quite flexible, allowing for pre-design and tuning of such business cooperation projects, and also better facilitates integration of different projects within a common theme.

³ “*Supporting Business Environment reform*”, DCED, August 2008.

For the RCN/SIU model to become more tuned to business development, a much tighter mandate for the PB is necessary. This is of course perfectly possible, inviting only project proposals with a clear business development angle.

As to characteristics of successful business development projects, the most important is perhaps that they are well planned. The best impacts are achieved when there is a clear structure within which such a project works, i.e. in cooperation with private companies, authorities or other market participants. Research doing isolated projects, hoping that somebody someday will pick up their results and ideas, are much less effective. A key to good business development projects is indeed the constant interaction with “real” market participants that can provide feed back to the researchers about what works and what does not.

The ToR asks about concrete areas where synergies between education, research and business development could be developed. We would list three general areas where Norway also has a solid and sound knowledge base, ***namely marine resources/aquaculture, energy, and natural resource management.***

However, this is a much too complex area to be decided by this rather brief review, and we will ***strongly recommend that a series of studies are made*** to more specifically identify barriers to business development within these sectors – and possibly also others – and then suggest areas which projects and programmes could more explicitly address. This could be done through both types of programme models.

There is a serious need to make these Programmes more demand driven and more tuned to Balkan priorities, and this is especially important within business development. One needs to address important market obstructions as felt and seen by the domestic entrepreneur. At the same time, a future Programme will need to keep a certain amount of flexibility to be attractive to potential participants, and such studies must not become straightjackets.

Not everybody believes that business development should be a focus area, as expressed by one of the respondents to the questionnaire: *“Business development is a long term process with tools somewhat different from higher education and research. I doubt that small and short term programmes like the ones that are subject to evaluation, can support sustainable business development.”*

There is clearly substance in this remark, which needs to be properly considered when new objectives for the next phase are assessed.

5.3 Merging of Programmes

We do not believe the Programmes should be merged. They are structurally different, and are rather two different tools in the toolbox. The objectives will determine which model is preferable. Given the extremely general objectives of the two Programmes in question, both fitted under one rather extensive umbrella. Indeed, in the future one should rather seek greater specialization, allowing each model to concentrate on what it seems better at.

For instance, one can foresee the UMB model to be specifically business development oriented, while the RCN/SIU could either continue to emphasize broad based political

integration, or possibly even split into one educational institutional development arm (SIU) and one top-notch research programme (RCN). These are just a few of the possibilities available, all depending on what the new objectives for a next Programme phase will be.

Merging does not make neither practical nor logical sense. If the UMB programme was to be included in the RCN/SIU, funds would have to be earmarked particularly for UMB but then there would be no reason for a tender or a traditional PB. Of course, one might just take the money from the UMB Programme and use it according to the RCN/SIU procedures, but that would not be merging, that would be shutting UMB down and extending the RCN/SIU.

There is no evidence from this review that one Programme is better than the other in absolute terms. Both have strong and weak points, and both have brought forward a number of projects that have mostly successfully addressed the stated objectives.

6 Future Programme: A Question of Objectives

Both Programmes have by now run in two 4 year phases, recording considerable accomplishments. If actual results are to be of any guidance, there seems to be few reasons for change. However, there are a few issues that need to be taken into consideration when assessing another phase.

6.1 Drivers for Change

The most important factor is that the situation in the area has changed from what it was 8 years ago. Relevant changes are believed to be:

- The political situation in the region has generally improved, and both the willingness and ability to cooperate across borders seem better. Normalization of relations has gone hand in hand with strong currents - also in Serbia - towards closer integration with Europe. The implementation of European professional levels and standards is now the main intention in the region.
- Institutions and universities in Slovenia, Croatia, and partly Serbia and Macedonia have grown stronger, and have relatively less need for external assistance. This is unfortunately not the situation in B&H, where Universities and institutions are still weak, with a difficult regulatory environment.
- There are fewer barriers to regional integration than there used to be. Basic networks are created, and universities do cooperate; some possibly precisely due

to the two Programmes. It does not mean that there are no problems, just that the imperative to get people to talk together is less now than when the Programmes were originally conceived.

This implies that the basic political strategic justification for the Programmes has weakened. Our ToR indirectly reflects this, by now stressing the prospects for business development.

Considering the input we have gotten through this review, the following seems to be important factors to consider for a possible expansion:

- B&H apparently lags behind the other countries, and its institutions face a number of country specific challenges. It is also the country with the most precarious political situation. A new programme should consider **prioritizing B&H** to a greater degree.
- Most universities spoken to want more **broad based institutional development**, consisting of several elements. More efforts should be put into design and planning of such institutional support packages.
- **Top quality research partnerships** are still eagerly sought by most of the WB institutions interviewed – and by several of the Norwegian partners. The question is if this should still be funded under this comparatively soft window.
- Most of the institution involved would dearly like **to continue cooperation** under the programme, expressing worry that the advances that have been made may not be sustainable if the Programmes end. This may not be a legitimate worry for all projects, but as stated above, several of the partnerships leave an “unfinished” impression. When so much has been invested in preparation, the argument goes, it would be silly not to exploit obvious future opportunities.
- The universities in particularly B&H struggle with old managements that are reluctant to reform, and with perhaps somewhat outdated visions of what a university should be. The lack of a satisfactory regulatory framework for the universities has resulted in general fragmentation. This may unfortunately limit any benefit arising from programmes like the Norwegian, as new capacities are not allowed breathing space. A new programme could contemplate **support for developing overall university management and/or strategies**, but it is acknowledged that this is a highly complex issue.
- A linked issue is that the majority of universities in the WB must transform into **integrated universities**, which means that they need to design and implement a completely different university management and a completely different organization. Almost all universities face this situation and need assistance. Norwegian partners can probably make positive contributions in this respect.
- **Accreditation of courses and curriculums** seems to be a common issue in almost all WB countries. At a national level, there may be scope for assistance

from relevant Norwegian institutions in this regard. This may be difficult to fit into the current Programme models, however.

- If programmes should have a **clear political orientation**, it is suggested to move away from the general towards the more specific. A proposal that has come up is to focus on transboundary issues, particularly within the marine sector, where countries need to solve specific border disputes at the same time as they must develop capacities to cooperate.

Regarding *business development*, responses from the current partners are mixed. Not surprisingly, those that work within productive sector are more positive than the others. All acknowledge the importance of economic growth, the question is if these types of programmes are well suited to support business development. Our answer to that is a hesitant yes, but then within the UMB type of framework where more comprehensive projects can be planned, combining different elements, and where the recipient needs drive the design of the project/programme.

How to attract more advanced universities in the region to assist universities in Bosnia.

How can closer cooperation between the stronger and the weaker universities in the region be encouraged? This would seem to address several of the above issues, with regional integration as an additional advantage. Ideas for cooperation include:

- Financial incentives in some form are necessary. This can be used to for instance encourage universities like the Zagreb University to assist in *development of quality assurance systems*. This issue is exceptionally pertinent and hardly any other regional university has developed such a system. This system would enable the WB universities to improve the quality of their organisation and operation, primarily the teaching, and would facilitate a speedier implementation of the European quality standards.
- Development of *research projects* from which the teachers at the other universities can publish their own books or papers in reference periodicals in Europe and/or the world. However, it is necessary to clearly define the responsibilities and benefits for every participant in the project, so that advantages also appear at the weaker universities.
- The opportunity to be a *visiting professor or researcher* is very attractive for the majority of the professors at the WB universities. If this can be supported by fees and becomes part of the bilateral cooperation between the universities, then it stands great chances for success. The assessment revealed that the Bosnia universities devote significant funds to engage professors from Croatia and/or Serbia.
- Creation of regional “*Excellence Centers*”, (which would receive international verification) could attract the universities from other countries to take active part in supporting projects in Bosnia.

- Cooperation *with universities in Norway* can also clearly be used as an incentive. Such Projects need to be even more targeted at joint regional collaboration as a prerequisite for Norwegian participation, and in particular for active cooperation with the Bosnia universities

One particular issue that can be supported at a regional level, with potentially very positive effects also for Bosnian Universities is development of compatible study programmes in the first, second and third cycle.

It is especially important to develop compatible programmes in the third cycle (doctoral studies). Given that the doctoral studies essentially favour research (which in all Balkan countries is a kind of an individual adventure) and time spent by the candidate / doctoral student at a university in another country where the research is to be conducted, the cooperation between the universities in the WB is more than necessary. An additional contributing factor is the fact that language barriers do not exist. The problem is financing.

6.2 The Key Recommendations: What should the Objectives be?

New programmes cannot solve all of the issues and challenges listed above. In fact, a key recommendation is **to narrow the scope of the objectives** and to be more specific in what potential new efforts should achieve.

However, as this review is only one of several inputs to the design process of a new programme, a broad palette of possibilities should be presented. Other stakeholders will probably identify additional topics that could be addressed.

Another key recommendation is to now **use some time to thoroughly assess what the purpose of the Programme should be**. Such a process did not take place before the second phase, as everything was more or less copied from the first. There needs to be respect for the process of planning, design and analysis, not only at project level, but also at the programme level. Synergies and particular design features do not create themselves from a vacuum. They are carefully planned for.

One aspect of tidying up the objectives is to clarify priorities. For instance, “project quality” and “extensive networking” are not necessarily compatible. In several of the projects the wish to include as many partners as possible has taken precedence over project quality, spending precious resources on administration and leading to substantial frustration among project coordinators. As the necessity to involve a wide and broad group of partners are now considered less, we would recommend **that this takes less priority in a possible next phase**.

It is difficult to clearly decide on what the Programmes should now emphasize. However, as we have been asked to assess two programmes, we assume that they will be managed under one strategic heading. They will do different “things”, but together contribute to an overall strategic vision. One suggested vision is for instance: “*A stable, democratic and*

European integrated West Balkan region.” There are probably several others that could express the same intention just as well.

Based on such a vision, in our considered opinion, new Programmes should have two strategic goals:

- **Improve the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina**
 - Institutional development of Universities
 - Business development

- **Improve neighborly relations**
 - Transboundary issues
 - Research excellence

Firstly, improving the capacity and the standards of Bosnian higher education and research should be a priority, and tying projects more to business development is worth a try. This does not mean that only B&H institutions should be involved, but that these should be the key players and ultimate beneficiaries. Lifting B&H will be key to stability of the region in the long run.

Secondly, we believe the programmes should continue to have a clear political angle, to emphasize the basic reason for **why** Norway does engage through these Programmes. In essence – and in a somewhat overused term – it is the building of peace. However, there is now a need to be more targeted and specific, addressing trouble spots in more practical terms. Excellent research has been done on several of the so-called transboundary issues during the current phase, and there is clearly scope for more. There may also be other types of disputes between the countries where neutral, quality research can play a positive role. It does not necessarily only involve research, as for instance building of regulatory institutions may be part of the package. Cross-institutional cooperation in Norway and the Balkans should be encouraged.

How do these objectives square with the two administrative set-ups that operated the two Programmes under phase 1 and 2? As already noted, we do not recommend a merger. Rather we believe that the two models could be used as follows:

- **Institution focused model (UMB):** Concentrate in particular on the twin objectives of business development and institution building. There may be other University environments that are as relevant as UMB, like for instance NTNU and SINTEF. The key here is to do an assessment of which areas where Norwegian support could do a difference. Possibly several of these University milieus should be invited to share thoughts, and perhaps even compete for such a Programme.

- **Third party administration (RCN/SIU):** Focus on institutional development of universities with a view to improve education, and on the “political” research. This implies a conscious split of mandates and terms of references for each stream of projects. SIU will have to invite project proposals that are more institutional support encompassing in nature – even including research elements,

while the RCN should narrow its invitation to the topics that are then determined to be the priorities for the coming period. We can not see any reason why the Programme Board should not be able to handle two such streams, and SIU and RCN to administer the combined portfolio as has been done today

Institutional development is a very broad field and we acknowledge that it may be difficult to clearly define what such institutional development aid packages should include. However, the key issue is one of focus, i.e. that the focus of a project is as much on development of the cooperating organisation as it is on a thematic objective – of say improving the curriculum in a given field. Thus projects may include some administrative capacity building, some equipment, some procurement of professional literature, ICT system development, some student/teacher mobility and other input that is not immediately necessary for attaining the thematic objective of the cooperation. The goal is to assist in building stronger institutions.

As part of the preparation for business development *a series of studies should be made* to more specifically identify barriers to business development and then suggest areas which projects and programmes could more explicitly address. This may be difficult to organise before decisions have to be taken for a new phase, but such studies could also be included in the programme itself - with separate budgets – to assist in developing useful projects.

Projects should still network, but to a lesser degree, and concentrate on dedicated partners. Cross-border partnerships should also be encouraged, but with B&H as the main priority. Some – say between 40% – 60% - of the existing projects could probably be constructively continued in a new phase.

6.3 Other Recommendations

We have in addition a number of more general recommendations, regardless of objectives and what type of administrative model is chosen.

1. ***Projects should be favoured that are managed by younger individuals.*** Younger participants from the institutions in the Balkan countries are more efficient, energetic and ready and willing to collaborate in comparison to their older counterparts. A suggestion is thus that in the new call for proposals the local coordinator cannot be older than 45, with older staff to be involved as advisers or team members.
2. ***Assess introducing independent monitoring routines.*** Greater efficiency in project coordination requires perhaps enhanced field presence. It is possible that this may not be easy for the Norwegian coordinator, hence thought should be given to the establishment of an independent monitoring structure that would follow the implementation stages. This would be relevant for both the UMB and the RCN/SIU type of programme. The key is to identify a local “structure” that could do practical monitoring of project progress. One of the goals of such a local monitoring structure would be to ease the communication issues and costs. Such monitoring could consist of field visits two times a year for instance.

3. ***The experience of the university staff from Norway, Croatia and Serbia in the design of project applications could be used to train B&H partners through***
 - the preparation of multi-institutional and multi-regional project applications, or
 - the realization of a Programme aimed at strengthening the competences of the staff from the B&H institutions in Project Planning and Project Management;
4. ***Scientific research should be strengthened.*** This component is one of the strongest in both programmes. Study visits to and scientific research in the institutions in Norway need to be strengthened.
5. ***The results of each project*** should end in affirmation within the professional community and the general public, e.g. in the form of publications, presentations, round-table debates, etc. Better procedures for dissemination of results should be assessed.
6. ***Reduce number of projects,*** allowing more pronounced budgets for greater impact per project. This includes organising a robust local project organisation.
7. ***Reduce number of participants per projects*** to manageable levels with committed partners. Rather than take on full partners, there may in some cases be more efficient to arrange dissemination events and similar networking activities among more free-standing, interested stakeholders.
8. ***Involve counterparts more actively*** in the planning and preparation of activities and budgets. In addition to improving commitment, such reality checks would have reduced some of the frustrations some projects later experienced.
9. ***All agreements, objectives and other analysis*** made with the aim of managing such programmes should be written in English.

Annex A Terms of Reference

Review of Norwegian Programmes within Education and Research in the Western Balkans:

Co-operation in higher education and research with countries in the Western Balkans – Research Council of Norway (RCN) and Norwegian Centre for International Co-operation in Higher Education (SIU) – (2060205, 2070143 and RER-08/022)

and

Institutional collaboration between academic institutions in Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine in Norway and Bosnia & Hercegovina, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro – Noragric / University of Life Sciences – (205303, 2070061 and RER-08/007)

1. Co-operation in higher education and research with countries in the Western Balkans

The first phase of the programme was initiated in 2000. The purpose of the programme was to contribute to competence and capacity development at education and research institutions in the Western Balkans. The programme had a duration of four years with annual allocations of NOK15 million (2000 – 2004). The Research Council of Norway (RCN) and the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions implemented the programme.

Based on the conclusions of the evaluation conducted in 2004, the programme was prolonged by four years with an annual financial frame of NOK 15 million (2006 – 2009). An agreement was entered into between the RCN and Norwegian Centre for International Co-operation in Higher Education (SIU). The purpose of the programme in the second stage was revised. Through co-operation with the countries in the Western Balkans the programme was to contribute to Euro-Atlantic integration and co-operation to foster stability and democratisation in the specific counties and in the region as a whole. The objective of the programme was to initiate, develop and finance co-operation in higher education and research between universities, colleges and research institutions in the Western Balkans and corresponding institutions in Norway, as well as foster regional institutional co-operation. Projects funded through the programme should contribute to improving competence and capacities at higher education and research institutions in the host countries. Moreover, the projects were to contribute to equal partnerships between the participating parties. Bologna process' principles were conceptualised as a central framework for the implementation of the programme.

2. Institutional collaboration between academic institutions in Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine in Norway and Bosnia & Hercegovina, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro.

Noragric piloted in the period 2002 – 2005 the Norwegian South Eastern Europe (SEE) Programme in Agriculture: “*Competence transfer and institutional contact and co-operation between faculties of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine in South Eastern Europe*”, with funding from the Ministry. In 2005 a new programme agreement was signed for another four years (2006 – 2009). The financial frame of the programme was between NOK 4 – 5 million annually. The objectives of the programme remained the same during both phases and were as follows: To improve organising, content and quality of academic education and research in agriculture, veterinary medicine and forestry to meet the needs for qualified people in ongoing rebuilding after wars and to reach the general European level and standards. Furthermore, to create functional and sustainable networks of regional institutions and professionals to support each other and co-operate for optimal use of limited available resources in South Eastern Europe region in a difficult rebuilding situation.

Terms of reference for the review

The present review shall analyse and assess the results of the two programmes in relation to the objectives defined in the programme documents. Furthermore, the analysis will include an assessment of the administrative models of the programmes and recommendations as to whether the programmes should be extended in their current form and technical profile. The review shall consider advantages and disadvantages of a possible merger of the two programmes. Furthermore, the review shall explore the potential for synergies between Norwegian programmes within education and research, and business development and provide practical recommendations on how to integrate the programmes.

The review will contribute to the decision making process concerning possible extension or conclusion of the programmes.

2 Issues to be covered

The review shall cover the period of the second phases of the programmes. An overall review shall be undertaken in terms of the criteria below. In addition, the review shall look into whether the recommendations of the evaluation from 2004 have been taken into consideration in the implementation of the RCN / SIU managed programme.

2.1 Relevance and effectiveness

The review shall consider the relevance and effectiveness of a number of representative programme activities in view of the defined objectives.

2.2 Sustainability

The review shall assess the extent to which the programmes have contributed to the sustainability of local institutions by building competence and capacity, as well as regional networks resulting from the programmes.

2.3 Efficiency

The review shall assess the management models, including financial management, organisation, administration effectiveness and co-ordination of the programmes.

The reviewers shall in particular assess the role of RCN / SIU on the one hand, and Noragric on the other hand in the initiation, co-ordination and management of the overall programme as well as the individual projects. A comparison of the two models shall be presented and discussed, in particular the relevance of the models to achieve the stated objectives.

3 Methodology and scope

In undertaking the tasks listed above, the reviews shall employ the following methodology, to which they are invited to add complementary elements that might be of interest:

- Desk studies of relevant background documents;
- Field visits to a selection of co-operating education and research institutions in the Western Balkans active in the programmes;
- Interviews with key personnel.

The desk studies requires familiarisation with relevant agreements and correspondence between the RCN / SIU on the one hand and Noragric on the other hand, and participating education and research institutions in Norway and the Western Balkans. Annual Reports, minutes from meetings, proceedings, guidelines, rules of procedure and relevant documentation of the secretariat. The essential documentation required to carry out the review shall be provided by RCN, SIU and Noragric.

The field visits shall include in-depth interviews with the leadership and administrators at selected education and research institutions, the co-ordinators and organisers of projects, researchers/educationalists in Norway and the Western Balkans. In addition the reviewers shall conduct interviews with relevant personnel at RCN, SIU, Noragric and the Section for the Western Balkan at the Ministry.

4 Conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations

The conclusions shall be practical in nature. They shall indicate the major strengths and weaknesses of the programmes and assess their contribution to the stated purposes and objectives. The conclusions shall seek to explain major problems and obstacles to the progress of the programmes and in light thereof discuss the realism of the purpose and objectives of the programmes defined in the Programme Documents. The relevance and appropriateness of continuing project activities within the current administrative structures should be assessed and reported on very concretely. The review will outline concretely potential areas where synergies between education, research and business development could be developed.

The lessons learned should present the reviewers' impressions of the major achievements and successes together with the principle failings and reasons for the latter.

The recommendations should draw implications from the conclusions and suggest practical adjustments/improvement to the following aspects in particular:

- The relative importance of thematic areas of the programmes;
- The selection of projects and the implication of a sound and valuable balance between the continuation of old projects and the provision of support to new initiatives;
- The management and co-ordination of the programmes, considering a potential merger of the two programmes and synergies with business development;
- Areas of potential synergies between education, research and business development.

5 Organisation of the review

5.1 The review team

The team of the review shall consist of two persons, one Norway based and one from the Western Balkans. The Norwegian consultant will be the team leader for the assignment.

The consultants should both preferably be experts in higher education and research with excellent knowledge of higher education and research in the Western Balkans. The Norwegian should have expertise in the principles of Norwegian development policies and the Norwegian higher education and research sector. The local team member should have intimate knowledge of the institutions forming part of the programme.

5.2 Budget and responsibilities

The cost of the review will be carried by the Ministry.

The time frame for the total assignment will be as follows:

- Maximum 25 days, including travel, for the Norwegian consultant
- A total of 10 working days for the local consultant, including preparations for field visits and report writing.

The local consultant will be contracted by the Norwegian team leader. SIU / RCN and Noragric will be responsible for support to the review team with regards to appointments / meetings. The relevant embassies will facilitate transportation.

5.3 Timelines, reporting and outputs

The review shall include the presentation and discussion of an inception report and a final report with an executive summary.

A total of 39 days is allocated to the review:

a) A Norwegian team leader

Preparations	4 working days
Travel	2 working days
Field work	14 working days (in Norway and the Western Balkans)
Finalisation	5 working days

Total 25 working days

b) A local team member:

Preparations	2 working days
Field work	10 working days (in the Western Balkans)
Finalisation	2 days
Total	14 working days

The field work shall take place within the months of May and June 2009.

The final report shall cover all issues identified in the ToR and be oriented towards providing practical knowledge useful to the implementation of the programmes. Adjustments that the review team finds necessary and appropriate shall be communicated to and discussed with the Ministry. The report shall be written in English and include an executive summary, conclusions and recommendations. The final report shall not exceed 30 pages, including the summary. The inception report shall be submitted within **XX 2009**. The draft report shall be submitted to the Ministry before June 15, 2009. The final report must be finalised within two weeks of receiving comments on the draft submitted.

The review team will e-mail the final report to the Ministry that will forward the document to RCN, SIU and Noragric.

Annex B Field Work Meeting Schedule

Review of Norwegian Programmes within Education and Research in the Western Balkans:

**Co-operation in higher education and research with countries in the Western Balkans – Research Council of Norway (RCN) and Norwegian Centre for International Co-operation in Higher Education (SIU) –
(260205 and RER-08/022)**

and

**Institutional collaboration between academic institutions in Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine in Norway and Bosnia & Hercegovina, Croatia and Serbia – Noragric / University of Life Sciences
(205303, 2070061 and RER-08/007)**

Visit and work in the SOUTH EAST EUROPE 15 - 24.06.09. By Erlend Sigvaldsen, Zoran Velkovski

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Tentative travel & visiting schedule: 15 - 24.06.2009

Week 25, 2009 Meeting Plan/ Schedule	Visiting Institution	Project	Contact person	E-mail	Mobil	Phone
Monday, 15.06.09 08.00 -10.00	Faculty of Forestry, University of Sarajevo	UMB, Project 8 SIU/WB Project 6	<i>Faruk Mekic, Dean</i> <i>Ahmet Lojo</i> <i>Izet Cengic</i>	mekicf@bih.net.ba ahmetlojo@yahoo.com izoc@lsinter.net	+387 61 139 676	+387 33 61 40 03
					+387 61 214 851	+387 33 61 40 03
					+387 61 219 664	+387 33 61 40 03
10.30 -13.00	Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Sarajevo	UMB, Project 3 UMB, Project 5 SIU/WB Project 2	<i>Almedina Zuko, Dean</i> <i>Aida Hodzic</i> <i>Lejla Saracevic</i> <i>Aida Hodzic</i>	vetfaksa@vfs.unsa.ba hodzicaida30@hotmail.com leilas@vfs.unsa.ba hodzicaida30@hotmail.com	+387 61 216 858	+387 33 61 09 08
					+387 61 467 969	+387 33 65 22 08
					+387 61 228 308	+387 33 65 83 01
13.30 -17.00	Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences, University of Sarajevo	UMB, Project 3 UMB, Project 5 UMB, Project 8 UMB, Project 9 SIU/WB Project 6	<i>Mirsad Kurtovic, Dean</i> <i>Zlatan Saric</i> <i>Salko Muratovic</i> <i>Hamid Custovic</i> <i>Amela Peljto</i> <i>Senija Grbic</i>	kazra@bih.net.ba zsaric@bih.net.ba Msalko@bih.net.ba custovic.hamid@gmail.com aida@lunacom.ba senija@lsinter.net	+387 61 188 804	+387 33 63 30 33
					+387 61 252 867	+387 33 63 30 33
					+387 61 274 445	+387 33 63 30 33
					-	+387 33 63 30 33
					-	+387 33 63 30 33
Tuesday, 16.6.09 08.00 -10.00	Royal Norwegian Embassy in Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina, <i>Ferhadija 20, Sarajevo</i>	All projects in B&H	<i>Jan Braathu</i> <i>(Ambassador of</i> <i>Norway)</i>	jbr@mfa.no	-	+387 33 25 40 05

10.30 -12.00	University of Sarajevo Head office of University	All projects at University of Sarajevo	Faruk Caklovica (Vice Cancellor) Zoran Seleskovic, (Secretary General)	rektoratms@unsa.ba zseleskovic@unsa.ba	- -	+387 33 66 84 54 +387 33 66 82 50
13.30 -15.00	Mediacentar	NFR Project 174860	Tarik Jusic Amer Dhziana	tarik@media.ba amer@media.ba		
17.00 -19.30	Travel from Sarajevo to Tuzla, Bosna & Herzegovina					

Wednesday, 17.6.9 08.00 -12.00	University of Tuzla	SIU/WB Project 3	Dean of Medical Faculty, University of Tuzla, Dr. Prof. Farid Ljuca	farid.ljuca@untz.ba safijakalajlic@hotmail.com nijazt@yahoo.com		
13.30 -17.00	Travel from Tuzla to Banja Luka, Bosna & Herzegovina		Safija Kaljlic, Nijaz Tihic			
Week 25, 2009 Meeting Plan/	Visiting Institution	Project ⁴	Contact person	E-mail	Mobil	Phone

⁴ Full name of the each project is in enclosed list

Schedule						
Thursday, 18.6.9						
08.00 -10.00	Faculty of Forestry, University of Banja Luka	UMB, Project 8 SIU/WB Project 6	Zoran Govedar, Dean Predrag Miletic	jbgovedar@blic.net p.miletic@blic.net milankadrinic@blic.net	- +387 65 562 475	+387 51 46 46 28 +387 51 46 05 50
10.30 -14.00	Faculty of Agriculture, Univer. of Banja Luka	UMB, Project 3 UMB, Project 5 UMB, Project 8 SIU/WB Project 6	Milanka Drinic, Dean Bozo Vazic Milanka Drinic Dimitrije Markovic Djordje Gataric	drinic@rsapcu.org vazicb@yahoo.com dimi3jem@yahoo.com gataricdj@blic.net	+387 65 668 168 +387 65 683 213 +387 65 634 141 +387 65 817 137	+387 51 32 11 72 +387 51 32 11 72 +387 51 32 11 72 +387 51 32 11 72
14.30 -16.00	Faculty of Technology, Univer. of Banja Luka	UMB, Project 3 SIU/WB Project 6	Milos Sorak, Dean	sorakmilos@yahoo.com		+387 51 46 50 32
16.30 -22.00	Travel from Banja Luka to Mostar, B&H		Goran Vucic Radosav Grujic	vgoran@blic.net grujicr@blic.net	+387 65 610 000	+387 51 46 50 32 +387 51 468 646
Friday, 19.6.9						
08.00 -09.30	University of "Dz.B."Mostar	UMB, Project 9	Ahmed Dzibur, Dean Semina Hadziabulic	semina_mo@yahoo.com	+387 61 194 575 +387 63 346 188	+387 36 57 13 88 +387 36 57 13 88
10.00 -14.00	University of Mostar	UMB, Project 3 UMB, Project 8 UMB, Project 9	Stanko Ivankovic, Dean Radica Coric Jure Beljo	agronomski.fakultet@tel.net.ba radica.coric@tel.net.ba jure.beljo@zg.t-com.hr	+387 63 368 627 +387 63 318 537 +385 12 352 696	+387 36 32 02 33 +387 36 32 02 33 +387 36 32 02 33
15.00 -16.30	Norfish, Norwegian	UMB, Project 1	Sanel Saric, director		+387 61 198 274	+ 387 36 500 813

18.00 -19.30	/Bosnian Fish Farm, Salakovac, B&H	UMB, Project 2		saric@norfish-blagaj.com		
	Bosnian /Norwegian Aqua center-Fish Farm, Boracko, B&H	UMB, Project 1	Samir Muhamedagic, PhD, UMB		+387 61 207 941	+ 387 33 653 033
21:00	Back to Sarajevo	UMB, Project 2	Emir Bubalo, major Konjic municipality	muhamedagic@bih.net.ba	+387 61 154 003	

Saturday, 20.06.09. Erlend Sigvaldsen travelling to Zagreb, Croatia

Sunday, 21.06.09. Zoran Velkovski travelling to Osijek, Croatia

Week 26, 2009 Meeting Plan/ Schedule	Visiting Institution	Project	Contact person	E-mail	Mobil	Phone
Monday, 22.06.09 Erlend Sigvaldsen 08.00 -10.00	Royal Norwegian Embassy in Zagreb, Croatia	Projects				
10.30 -12.00	Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Zagreb	SIU/WB Project 2	Velimir Susic, Dean	velimir.susic@vef.hr	-	-
12.30 -13.30	University of Zagreb, Department of Geophysics,	NFR Project 175183	Branko Grisogono Dept. of Geophysics, Faculty of Science	bgrisog@gfz.hr		+385 (0)146 059 27
14.00 – 15.30	Meteorological and			vidic@cirus.dhz.hr		+385 1 4565 719

Afternoon	hydrological Service of Croatia and Energy Research and Environmental Protection institute		Sonja Vidic Amela Jericevic Luksa Kraljevic	jericevic@cirus.dhz.hr kraljevic@cirus.dhz.hr		+385 (0)1 4565 787 385 1 4565 666
Zoran Velkovski 08.00 -11.00	Faculty of Agriculture, J.J.S. University, Osijek	SIU/WB Project 6 UMB, Project 5		gkralik@pfos.hr mstjep@pfos.hr zsteiner@pfos.hr zantunovic@pfos.hr	+385 91 224 1001	+ 385 31 224 202 + 385 31 224 100 + 385 31 224 214 + 385 31 224 220
Afternoon	Travel from Zagreb to Belgrade, Serbia		Gordana Kralik, Rector Mirko Stjepanovic Zdenko Steiner Zvonko Antunovic			
	Travel from Osijek to Belgrade, Serbia					

Week 26, 2009 Meeting Plan/ Schedule	Visiting Institution	Project	Contact person	E-mail	Mobil	Phone
Tuesday, 23.06.09 08.00 -10.00	Argument, Serbia	NFR Project 174856	Zdenka Milivojevic, Argument	zdenka_milivojevic@v ektor.net	+381 63 284 187	
10.30 -12.00	Faculty of Veterinary	SIU/WB Project 6	Mila Savic	mij@beotel.net	+381 64 1946 152	+381 112 68 58 42

	Medicine, University of Belgrade	SIU/WB Project 2	Miodrag Lazarevic	stocarstvo@vet.bg.yu misha@vet.bg.ac.yu		
12.30 -14.00	University of Belgrade, Institute of philosophy and social theory	NFR Project 174860	Gordana Djeric Jelena Vasiljevic	gordanadj@sezampro.yu jelena_vasiljevic@yahoo.com		
15.30 -17.00	Faculty of Agriculture, University of Belgrade	SIU/WB Project 6	Slaven Prodanovic Svo Vuckovic	slavenp@agrifaculty.bg.ac.yu savovuck@agrifaculty.bg.ac.yu	+381 64 3450 470 +381 64 2030 746	+381 112 61 53 15 +381 112 61 53 15
Evening	Erlend traveling back to Norway					
Evening	Zoran traveling to Novi Sad					
Week 26, 2009 Meeting Plan/	Visiting Institution	Project ⁵	Contact person	E-mail	Mobil	Phone

⁵ Full name of the each project is in enclosed list

Schedule						
Wednesday, 24.6.9 08.00 -14.00	Faculty of Agriculture, University of Novi sad	SIU/WB Project 6 UMB, Project 5 UMB, Project 8	Milan Krainovic, Dean Maja Manojlovic Maja Manojlovic Zorica Srdjevic Mr. Pavel Benka	majacuv@polj.ns.ac.yu srdjevicz@polj.ns.ac.yu <u>u</u> paja@polj.ns.ac.yu	+381 63 590 283 +381 64 3710 473	+381 21 63 50 366 +381 21 63 50 366 +381 21 63 50 366
Afternoon	Zoran traveling to Belgrade if possible also to Skopje, if not					
Thursday, 25.6.9	Zoran traveling back to Skopje					

Week 26, 2009 Meeting Plan/ Schedule	Visiting Institution	Project	Contact person	E-mail	Mobil	Phone
Friday, 26.6.9 09.00 -11.00	Zoran University of Skopje Faculty of Agriculture???	SIU/WB Project 6				
11.30 -14.00	Zoran Pro Media	NFR Project 174856				