

Responsible internationalisation – equality perspectives

The following text is a complement to the report *Responsible Internationalisation: Guidelines for reflection on international academic collaboration (2020)*. The report presents six different aspects to consider when assessing international collaborations within higher education and research. These aspects are:

1. Why and how does the collaboration take place
2. Which actors are collaborating
3. Political, social and cultural context of the partner country
4. Legal context
5. Institutional autonomy
6. Ethical aspects.

Through internal discussions at SLU it has become clear that it would be useful for researchers and other university staff to complement the report with a section focussing on aspects of equality within international collaborations. An introductory text and additional guiding questions are presented below. Equality aspects are to some extent consolidated in the existing aspects in the STINT report, but given the complexity and challenges when it comes to equality within international collaborations it is beneficial to have a specific section dedicated to it.

2.7 Equality aspects

When carrying out international collaborations, both within higher education and research, there are a number of equality aspects that are important to consider before, during and after a collaboration has been finalised. Equality is a broad concept and can include a number of diverse perspectives, such as equality in relation to gender, age, socio-economic and ethnic belonging, religion or beliefs. Aspects of equality are important to consider in all international initiatives, not the least in collaborations with researchers and universities based in low-income contexts, where differences in access to finances and other resources often are apparent. Ownership and power relations are in this context of high relevance. Experiences show that it is important to consider equality at an early stage, already when the research question or collaboration concept is developed and when applying for funding. Inclusion of partners/actors already in the initiation phase, characterised by co-creation and ownership, will make the collaboration more equal, relevant and feasible. Partners based in the specific context usually have the best capacity to identify relevant challenges, formulate applicable solutions and

translate knowledge to the specific context. Furthermore, it will strengthen national research systems and countries/universities to define their own research agenda.

Against this background, it is crucial to strive for equal partnerships in relation to different parameters. The guiding questions below can be a support when initiating an international collaboration, where the all-encompassing theme is How can equality and ownership be increased at different stages of an international collaboration project, and in what way have co-creation been carried out along the process? This can be specified into the following guiding questions:

- Is there a power asymmetry within the collaboration, e.g. between participants/researchers, disciplines and who has access to funding? How can this be tackled and mitigated?
- Who is involved in designing/planning the initiative and formulating the research questions? • Is there equal participation in data collection and analysis? • Will there be equal possibilities to access the research results, participate in writing the publications and presenting the results? Who will be lead authors?
- Who has access to crucial assets for the collaboration, e.g. library resources and technological equipment?
- In what way are researchers with less experience or fewer publications supported and encouraged by others in the team? • How will local actors and implementers, such as decision-makers or practitioners, be involved in the collaboration?
- How will the collaboration seize the participating researchers' and universities' different capacities and comparative advantages?