

## Work programme

In effect from 2019

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Research Programme on Welfare, Working Life and Migration (VAM II)

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# 1 Summary

Norway enjoys relatively high prosperity, good living conditions, high labour force participation, a well-functioning labour market and well-developed welfare schemes. But while many aspects of Norway's working life and welfare society function well, the country faces significant challenges, some of which are the result of globalisation. A strong foundation of research is called for to meet these challenges effectively using a reliable knowledge-base.

The Research Programme on Welfare, Working Life and Migration (VAM) is a long-term programme designed to contribute new knowledge about key challenges facing society. This work programme sets out the objectives and perspectives for the research area as from 2019. The VAM programme has a broad thematic scope and shares interfaces with other areas of focus within the Research Council and internationally. Policy-oriented social research encompasses a wide range of issues and has many users and stakeholders.

The primary objective of the programme is to provide high-quality knowledge that improves society's ability, means and capacity to address and resolve societal challenges pertaining to welfare, working life and migration. To realise the programme's primary objective, the programme board has identified the following secondary objectives in the work programme:

- Provide a knowledge base for societal, sector and policy development.
- Help to broaden understanding of development trends and social changes.
- Contribute to an enlightened and engaged public sphere.
- Help to find solutions to societal challenges.
- Strengthen scientific and methodological quality and range.
- Strengthen the international orientation of research activities and increase international collaboration.
- Build expertise, increase capacity and strengthen strategic research areas.

Research activities will be targeted towards helping to meet the societal challenges within welfare, working life and migration using a reliable knowledge base. The overall purpose of the research is to enhance knowledge in three broad thematic areas:

- welfare, living conditions and inequality;
- achieving an adaptable, inclusive and health-promoting working life;
- active citizenship, migration and the role of institutions.

The societal challenges are all rooted in wicked problems without obvious solutions that can be addressed by individual disciplines on their own. Many challenges are cross-sectoral and international, while the solutions are often national and local. Developing knowledge that advances society's ability to understand and address challenges will require contributions from the social sciences, the health sciences, jurisprudence and the humanities. The programme will build competence and capacity in strategically important areas related to working life and welfare while ensuring continued development of existing knowledge groups.

The programme aims to enhance knowledge, instruments and efforts that strengthen understanding and the ability of relevant sectors and public administrators to solve major societal challenges. In

order to achieve the programme objectives and reinforce the programme's strategic priorities, the programme will apply a broad array of Research Council funding instruments and forms of support.

The programme is an expansion of previous research efforts and core areas in the Research Programme on Welfare, Working Life and Migration, 2008–2018 (VAM), Research Programme on Sickness Absence, Work and Health, 2007–2018 (SYKEFRAVÆR) and the Evaluation of the Pension Reform, 2011–2018 (EVAPEN).

## 2 Background and challenges

### *Societal challenges*

Norway enjoys relatively high prosperity, good living conditions, high labour force participation, a well-functioning labour market and well-developed welfare schemes. But while many aspects of Norway's working life and welfare society function well, the country faces significant challenges. A strong foundation of research is called for to meet these challenges effectively, using a reliable knowledge base.

Increasing globalisation challenges Norwegian society in several ways. The business community competes internationally and must cope with rapid, large-scale processes of technological and economic change. International migration has had an impact on Norwegian working life and on Norwegian society more generally. In some sectors, dependence on immigrant labour is high. Events elsewhere in the world affect Norway quickly and powerfully in the form of migration movements, economic fluctuations and cultural and political influences. Societal challenges in the areas under the VAM programme must be viewed through a global lens, with Norwegian issues understood in the context of developments in other countries. Research can provide insight into the ramifications that global changes and global agreements may have for Norway's social development and the country's ability to carry out national policies.

The population makeup of Norway is changing. An increasing proportion of the Norwegian population has either immigrated to the country or is a descendant of immigrants. The population has become more diverse in terms of religion, culture and values. Some studies show that economic inequality is on the rise. The changes taking place also create tensions and conflicts. Public debate over immigration and the values that should characterise an increasingly heterogeneous Norwegian society have at times been heated and polarised. Questions are being raised as to whether the social and normative sustainability of the welfare society is at stake.

More elderly people, fewer young people and increased diversity are also changing the basic assumptions of the welfare state. In a relatively short time, the percentage of older people outside of the labour market has increased considerably. Welfare state schemes are vulnerable to increases in the proportion of the population requiring public welfare support. The share of Norway's population that is not working and receives health-related welfare benefits is high, a phenomenon that cannot be explained by the overall state of health in the country. Explanations may be found in labour market conditions as well as factors related to job skills, motivation, education and other forms of competence building.

The formative conditions for children and adolescents play a critical role in outcomes during the life cycle. Children and adolescents at risk are vulnerable, and are in danger of not completing their

education or obtaining employment as adults. Poor formative conditions can have serious consequences for children and adolescents, including coping problems, mental disorders and marginalisation. Digitalisation is generating new forms of interaction and altering the conditions for growing up, and could give rise to cultural changes and new social divisions.

Digitalisation and automation may provide new opportunities for welfare expansion but could also undermine inclusiveness in working life. The introduction of new technology has radically changed how work is performed, leading to major restructurings of working life and society. This has happened many times throughout history. Such restructuring may entail the loss of some jobs and/or the establishment of new jobs. One question is whether the current IT-driven restructuring is something entirely new in qualitative terms.

A high rate of employment safeguards welfare. An adaptable and productive working life is an important premise for safeguarding the welfare state's economic sustainability. High skill levels have always been important to value creation in both the public and the private sectors. Large-scale restructurings and labour market shifts place new demands on employee skill sets and competencies while also raising barriers for individuals and groups at high risk of exclusion from working life. Groups at risk include people with low levels of education, health problems, disabilities or unsatisfactory housing as well as young people with no affiliation to educational programmes or work, and/or people with an immigrant background. New technology and increased labour immigration have also challenged established organisational models and forms of affiliation in working life. While this may allow new groups to enter into working life, it may also pose challenges to corporate culture and workplace stability, health, environment and safety.

Structural aspects of the labour market have major implications for society and individuals, and it is important to know more about the effects of changes in the degree of organisation and in forms of affiliation in working life.

A departure point for the VAM programme is the desire to understand the conditions, opportunities and limitations that determine how an inclusive working life and a well-functioning welfare state can be maintained and strengthened given the societal challenges Norway faces.

#### *New research effort*

The welfare, working life and migration research area encompasses large and important sectors and directly or indirectly involves members of the population in different phases of life. The programme aims to enhance knowledge, instruments and efforts that strengthen understanding and the ability of relevant sectors and public administrators to solve major societal challenges. Research activities of the highest quality will be essential to enable sectoral actors, society as a whole and working life in particular to develop and function successfully.

Research activities should be designed with the aim of helping to find solutions to the societal challenges described above. The overall purpose of the research is to enhance knowledge in three broad thematic areas:

- welfare, living conditions and inequality;
- achieving an adaptable, inclusive and health-promoting working life;
- active citizenship, migration and the role of institutions.

The societal challenges are all rooted in wicked problems without obvious solutions that can be addressed by individual disciplines on their own. Many challenges are cross-sectoral and international, while the solutions are often national and local. Developing knowledge that advances society's ability to understand and address challenges will require contributions from the social sciences, the health sciences, jurisprudence and the humanities. The programme will build competence and capacity in strategically important areas related to working life and welfare while ensuring continued development of existing knowledge groups.

#### *Previous initiatives*

The Research Programme on Welfare, Working Life and Migration (VAM) was the Research Council's largest and most important research initiative in the broad subject area of social welfare. The programme was intended to generate insight into the conditions underlying a sustainable welfare society. What is new about the VAM II programme is that it incorporates, among other things, research on sickness absence, occupational health, the working environment and the evaluation of the pension system and represents an expansion of previous research efforts and core areas in the Research Programme on Welfare, Working Life and Migration, 2008–2018 (VAM), Research Programme on Sickness Absence, Work and Health, 2007–2018 (SYKEFRAVÆR) and the Evaluation of the Pension Reform, 2011–2018 (EVAPEN). The VAM II programme will be part of the Research Council's targeted initiatives on societal security and social cohesion in a globalised world and on innovation in the public sector (see *Long-term plan for research and higher education 2019–2028*).<sup>1</sup>

## **3 Objectives for the programme**

### **3.1 Primary objective**

The programme is to provide high-quality knowledge that improves society's ability, means and capacity to address and resolve societal challenges pertaining to welfare, working life and migration.

### **3.2 Secondary objectives**

The programme is to:

- Provide a knowledge base for societal, sector and policy development.
- Help to broaden understanding of development trends and social changes.
- Contribute to an enlightened and engaged public sphere.
- Help to find solutions to societal challenges.
- Strengthen scientific and methodological quality and range.
- Strengthen the international orientation of research activities and increase international collaboration.
- Build expertise, increase capacity and strengthen strategic research areas.

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<sup>1</sup> The work programme reflects the strategic objectives set out in the *Long-term plan for research and higher education 2019–2028* as well as various Research Council strategies such as Innovation in the Public Sector for the Research Council of Norway (2015–2020); the Research Council's policy for gender balance and gender perspectives in research; the white papers Meld. St. 25 (2016–2017), Meld. St. 24 (2016–2016), Meld. St. 30 (2016–2016), Meld. St. 33 (2015–2016) and Meld. St. 29 (2016–2017); Official Norwegian Report 2017: 2; and other documents.

## 4 Thematic and scientific priority areas

The programme seeks contributions from a variety of disciplines and research traditions concerned with welfare, working life and migration in the broad sense. The three thematic areas below present areas that are relevant and important to develop as fields of research. The VAM programme will promote creativity and innovation in these research fields in order to strengthen society's ability to understand, address and solve societal challenges. The programme provides a particularly targeted response to the new long-term plan's priority areas of societal security and social cohesion in a globalised world and innovation in the public sector and better public services, with the objective of achieving sustainable welfare, an inclusive society and of having more people remain longer in working life. There is a need to strengthen and renew research efforts in all three thematic areas and to gain a deeper understanding of the background and broad context of the challenges. This may be obtained through studies and analyses that extend across the thematic areas.

### 4.1 Welfare, living conditions and inequality

The welfare system is designed to provide the population at large with satisfactory living conditions, good health, a high quality of life and opportunities to participate in various arenas in society. Norway's welfare model is characterised by relatively small economic differences, coordinated wage formation, a high employment rate (with a large share of women and older people active in working life) and an equalising tax system paired with universal welfare designed to allow everyone an opportunity to develop their potential. It is important to have adequate knowledge about the welfare society's foundation, operation and processes as well as the welfare state's economy, organisation, institutions and implementation capacity.

Inequality in Norway is low compared to many other countries. Egalitarian norms have been strong throughout Norway's history. Potential changes to these norms may have ramifications for society and for policy-making. Recent studies show a rise in inequality in OECD countries and indicate that this trend applies to Norway as well. Increasing inequality may affect economic growth and participation in the labour market. It may also threaten to undermine existing social structures. Good social mobility opportunities are part of the social contract in all modern, western democracies. The increasing inequality within OECD countries could limit opportunities to move up the social ladder.

There is a need for broad-based knowledge about what generates inclusion and exclusion in areas such as health, housing, education and work and about the connections between such processes in these areas. Large social and cultural inequalities may lead to "outsiderness" in which individuals lack a sense of belonging to the greater society. It is also important to study values and attitudes related to inequality and diversity, including in the context of immigration.

Living conditions and quality of life are important not only to the individual, but also to society as a whole. Knowledge about generational mobility in the population and about new types of social and cultural segregation must be viewed in the context of processes in the family, the local environment, the housing market, the labour market and the welfare state. It is especially important to understand and know more about which processes are inclusive and which are exclusive in their effects.

Urbanisation and internal migration often create areas with special challenges. Such areas may be characterised by low labour participation, low levels of education, poor living environments, a high proportion of minority language groups and in some cases substance abuse. The connections

between the various welfare areas, including the role that the housing situation plays in employment, education and health, are important to consider. The programme is seeking research that helps to clarify how different forms of vulnerability evolve in interaction with one another and how vulnerability can be prevented and reduced.

Demographic conditions have changed, and many older people now have a long work-free period after the end of their working life. The demographic changes, including lower birth rates, affect cohabitation arrangements, family structures, social structures and individual self-understanding in ways which are difficult to gain a full view of, and which we must understand better. An aging population will exert pressure on public spending by increasing the need for a range of social benefits and services. Knowledge about changes in population composition and income assurance schemes can shed light on the effects of work and activity incentives on labour participation and living conditions. It is also important to know more about the long-term effects of Norway's pension reform, including whether it is economically and socially sustainable and what sort of distribution and equality profile it will come to have. A deeper understanding of the links between processes in working life, pensions and the benefits system will help in developing effective measures to increase labour force participation in the older segment of the population.

The majority of children and young people in Norway grow up in good conditions. However, a significant proportion of children and adolescents grow up in low-income families, and many drop out of upper secondary education. Moreover, the number of young people with mental health problems has increased, and more people are receiving disability benefits at a young age. Social and economic problems seem to follow generations in some families, so knowledge of solid parenting skills and of the effort required to break the generational transfer of social status will be useful. The VAM programme will support studies on how to prevent withdrawal and marginalisation in general, and on what specific measures work for people of low socio-economic status.

Technological change can create both opportunities and challenges. An interesting thematic area is therefore whether technological change will help to solve or amplify challenges associated with inclusion in working life and/or society. The IT and welfare field is undergoing rapid development, potentially influencing social relations and public confidence in key social institutions as welfare services become increasingly digital. Key issues involve whether this development leads to a weakening or an improvement in individual user accommodation and flexibility and whether it leads to social equalisation or sharper dividing lines. Research activities – like the actual welfare services – must also take into account the population's increasing cultural, social and economic complexity and diversity. These issues will require approaches from various academic disciplines. Learning more about the relationship between technology and specialised knowledge will require contributions from jurisprudence and ethics, among other fields. Interdisciplinary research can help to ensure that welfare services are forward-looking by developing, critically assessing and trying out a variety of measures, and investigating how they work in other countries.

In all the areas above, legal and other normative research on the content of, and relationship between, individual rights and the welfare sector's political room for manoeuvre could result in valuable contributions to the knowledge base.

## 4.2 An adaptable, inclusive and health-promoting working life

Value creation in working life and the private sector is the basis for the economic sustainability of the welfare society. The Norwegian working life model is characterised by a high level of participation, collective negotiations, tripartite cooperation and a compressed wage structure. The labour market and working life are constantly evolving, with opportunities and challenges related to globalisation, digitalisation, automation and the green transition. Demographic developments have an impact on employment and productivity, and the aim is to increase both. Labour market changes related to structural conditions, mobility, contractual and other forms of affiliation, wage formation, and labour supply and demand all generate a new need for knowledge. A knowledge base that is continually renewed to keep up with evolving labour markets and company practices is also called for. In this area and others, there are large regional variations. Labour participation by women in Norway is very high. Yet Norway has a gendered working life, and women are strongly over-represented among part-time workers. It is important to analyse the potential impact of this on productivity, value creation and distribution.

Norwegian working life has a high degree of efficiency. An important question is how organised labour and working life affect the processes and mechanisms that make companies and entities competitive and innovative. Highly autonomous employees and a high degree of trust between management and employees have been regarded as competitive advantages. Cooperation and trust in working life relationships change in different ways in different sectors and industries, and this can affect results. Digitalisation through standardisation, automation and robotisation generates new working conditions, cultures and values. It would be useful to compare today's challenges and today's understanding of problems with large-scale and technology-based restructurings in the working and business life of the past, in part to examine what is fundamentally new now. This could affect the need for manpower and the ways we work – providing insight, for example, into whether prolonged labour-market restructuring increases dynamism or reduces efficiency. The VAM programme will also help to promote research highlighting changes in the labour market and how such changes relate to and influence other factors, such as working conditions, temporary hiring and independent contracting, social dumping, changing skill requirements and degree of organisation. The effects of various types of immigration on the labour market and employment, as well as on the economy and wage developments, are also key research areas under the VAM programme. Such trends must be studied at both macro and micro levels using a variety of theoretical and empirical approaches.

Changes in the organisation and development of working life can spawn new forms of inequality and vulnerability. Today's working life model may need to evolve to accommodate new challenges, for instance relating to migration and rising productivity pressure. For companies and individuals, restructuring may involve changes in the types of skills and expertise required. A good skill set, including basic, cognitive, social and emotional skills, is closely linked to positive outcomes in the labour market and society in general. How companies obtain the expertise they need in times of restructuring and what that restructuring entails for labour demand are key issues to learn more about. A relatively large proportion of the working-age population does not participate in working life due to health problems. There are documented differences between men and women with



regard to sickness absence. A deeper understanding of the large diagnosis groups comprising muscle and skeletal disorders and mental health disorders may make it possible to give individuals suffering from such conditions a long and rewarding working life, which helps to achieve the objective of a population that remains longer in the labour force.

Inclusion in working life is important to prevent social inequality and keep families from ending up in a prolonged low-income situation. There is some knowledge about risk factors influencing who falls outside the labour market or fails to enter it. The VAM programme seeks research on measures that are effective in promoting inclusion of vulnerable groups throughout working life, and on what is needed for people to remain longer in the labour force. What factors promote and what factors hinder participation in working life over the long-term, and how can the former be strengthened in society and in the workplace?

Technological and organisational developments are changing established industries. Today's working life exhibits new forms of business structure and exposure to new factors as well as a wider array of forms of workplace affiliation than before. Change, however, has been a constant in modern working life and business operations; the introduction of new technologies and forms of production created opportunities and challenges for people, companies and society in earlier times as well – with different ramifications for different groups. What consequences does this have for the various interests of social partners, for the working environment and for working conditions, occupational health, safety, inequality, absenteeism and withdrawal from working life? In this context there is a need to know more about chemical, biological and physical exposure as well as the organisation of the workplace, competence and learning issues, working hours, and the psychosocial working environment. The workplace is a key arena for preventing health problems, and it will be important under the VAM programme to promote research on the characteristics of health-promoting entities, workplaces and working environments as well as measures that prevent health problems, illness, exclusion and absenteeism. This entails both how entities can prevent injuries and withdrawal from working life, and how working life and entities can be organised as arenas for rehabilitation and inclusion for vulnerable groups. Health factors and competence factors are both relevant in this context. Such efforts will be useful for entities themselves and for the development of work-inclusive services and measures.

Just as technological and digital innovation will change society, social innovation and co-creation have great potential, including research on new ways of tackling problems and on how various forms of collaboration between the business, public and voluntary sectors can lead to effective solutions and innovation for areas involving societal challenges. It is also important to gain knowledge about the results and consequences of public-sector tasks being outsourced to the business and voluntary sectors.

### **4.3 Active citizenship, migration and the role of institutions**

The Nordic welfare states strive for an even distribution of wealth and equal rights for the population. The countries are characterised by a high degree of trust between citizens as well as a high degree of confidence in public institutions, the authorities and the benefits and services provided. This has been referred to as positive social cohesiveness. The question is how inequality and a more diverse population in terms of living conditions, lifestyle, culture and religion may affect

support for societal institutions and common values in society in general and for the welfare state in particular, as well as what actions can counter social, cultural and economic segregation.

An inclusive society with a high level of participation in the labour force and society at large is central to meeting key challenges. Increased diversity and a more heterogeneous population can lead to societal and cultural changes which we as a society, and as individuals, must understand and address. It is important to shed light on the impact of increased diversity for Norwegian society, which generally strives for an even distribution of wealth and equal rights. It is also important to gain knowledge of ways to prevent discrimination and promote equality in the areas of gender, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity and world view.

While international migration provides the only opportunity many people have for a safer life, it also poses major challenges to individual countries and regions. The large migration flows must be dealt with in ways that secure Norway's need for immigration control procedures, protect the migrants' security and welfare needs and safeguard the recipient society's capacity to integrate new citizens. Migration as a research challenge involves the entire migration chain, from emigration country to immigration country and from immigration to integration, and all elements must be viewed in an integrated perspective. The VAM programme will also support research to provide new knowledge about opportunities for sound economic, cultural and social integration.

Policy is based on values and ideologies and must address tensions and contradictions in society. In many cases individuals and groups have divergent interests. It is relevant to study how welfare, working life and migration policies are shaped to address such tensions and contradictions. This is especially the case because what many see as important values in Norwegian society, such as fairness, solidarity, equal status and social equality, may be undergoing change. Of central importance are how such values are expressed, what is included and excluded, how they become stronger over time, and what societal trends could put the values under pressure. Research questions of interest will include how the welfare state and welfare society are changing and adapting to globalisation, cultural pluralism and economic development, as well as the role of civil society, idealistic organisations and voluntarism.

Trust in and support for society's institutions are critical for democratic social development. A high level of trust gives the authorities a solid governance mandate and low transaction costs in the interaction between citizens and institutions. There is a need to understand how trust in the authorities and society's institutions develops over time, and how trust is distributed among different social groups.

Technological development, not least digitalisation, raises many questions about the opportunities it generates for new forms of participation in society and about possible repercussions in other areas. Key public media have been weakened and opinion formation is in danger of being split up in social media and other influences. The use of new media technologies will affect participation and engagement in various social arenas and will be a factor in qualifying for jobs. There is a need to shed light on the role played by the media and public debate in strengthening or weakening trust between social groups and in society's key institutions.

Some societal trends can be interpreted as a shift towards a more loosely organised working life. An economy in which fewer people hold permanent positions and increasing numbers of people operate as independent contractors who buy and sell services will raise questions about how to adapt

working life, welfare and family policies to these changes. It is important to examine whether the policies can manage to promote equality and a safe and secure working life within the framework of such trends. Potentially, the changes will also have an impact on Norway's working life model, which implies that several thematic priority areas can and should be viewed in relation to one another.

Globalisation and digitalisation are trends in modern society that in all probability will be reinforced over time. It is therefore important to identify effective ways to address the associated challenges. There are interesting and important issues related to understanding the links between these challenges and increased support for populist parties, anti-democratic forces, distrust between population groups and fragmentation and polarisation in national public spheres.

## **5 Priorities for structuring the research effort**

### **5.1 Research under the VAM programme**

The VAM programme is a long-term research initiative with a broad thematic scope and ambitious strategic objectives. The programme will mainly support research which is intended to be relevant and applicable to research users at different levels and in different sectors. Research on outcomes and measures, comparative studies and research based on existing registry data is sought, while multiple perspectives and studies of fundamental problems will also provide new and relevant knowledge. It is the research question and thematic area that should determine the choice of methodological approach. Contributions from multiple disciplines and perspectives and the use of multiple methodologies will often be necessary for understanding and helping to address and solve societal challenges.

### **5.2 Types of support**

In order to achieve the programme's objectives and support its strategic priorities, the programme will apply a broad range of Research Council funding instruments and forms of support. The programme aims to strengthen and expand strong national research groups and to encourage interdisciplinary collaborative projects both nationally and internationally. Providing project support will be the programme's most important activity. More details will be provided in the calls for proposals.

### **5.3 Use of research**

High-quality knowledge development requires the involvement of knowledge users at relevant levels and in various stages of the research process when this is appropriate. Active involvement will help to ensure that the research is utilised in the sectors about which, and for which, the VAM programme generates knowledge.

### **5.4 Social dialogue and dissemination**

Research conducted under the programme will form the basis of new knowledge development relevant to social trends in the subject area. Dissemination of findings takes place primarily via the research projects and is the responsibility of the research-performing institutions. It is carried out through presentations at conferences and courses and via publication in journals and books. User-

oriented dissemination takes place both through the projects and under the auspices of the Research Council. There is great interest in welfare, working life and migration issues among the general public. Public-oriented dissemination will be an important way of getting research onto the public agenda and contributing to public debate. The programme will support communication and dissemination activities under the projects and facilitate the creation of knowledge summaries.

## **5.5 International cooperation**

National project funding helps to enhance the quality of Norwegian research groups and plays a role in qualifying them to participate in the international research arena. There is potential to view Norwegian circumstances in the context of developments in other countries to a greater extent. International research collaboration can increase Norwegian research capacity and quality while providing access to new research findings, expertise and methodological approaches.

In keeping with the Research Council's Strategy on International Cooperation (2010–2020), the VAM programme has established specific objectives and plans for international cooperation. The strategy states that national activities under the Research Council are to complement the activities of the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and the European Research Area. The framework programme funds social research on topics relevant to the VAM programme's thematic focus. Participation in international bilateral, Nordic or European calls for proposals is another key instrument for promoting international cooperation.

The VAM programme will contribute to internationalisation by:

- requiring that projects are oriented towards the international research front;
- emphasising international cooperation in projects;
- encouraging comparative studies;
- considering Norwegian participation in bilateral, Nordic and European calls for proposals;
- encouraging participation in the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, including by informing and guiding Norwegian research groups and considering the use of incentive funding.

## **5.6 Gender balance and gender perspectives in research**

The gender perspective is of great importance for many of the programme's thematic areas. In keeping with the Research Council's policy for gender balance and gender perspectives, the programme will seek to ensure that gender perspectives are incorporated as an integral part of the research funded by the programme. The VAM programme will strengthen recruitment of members of the underrepresented gender as project managers to improve gender balance in permanent scientific positions.

## **5.7 Research ethics**

Projects funded by the Research Council are to maintain high ethical standards and uphold fundamental principles for good practice, integrity and ethics in research. The research institutions have the primary responsibility for ensuring that research is conducted in compliance with recognised norms for good research practice and ethics. Applicants for funding under the VAM programme must clarify any ethical issues related to the implementation of the project and describe how such issues will be dealt with in the project description submitted with the grant application.

The information provided will form part of the basis for application review. For all projects that are awarded funding from the Research Council, the project owner (institution) must assess the need for – and quality of – any data management plan.

## 6 Cooperation with related instruments

Research under the VAM programme is of relevance to, and will be important for, many sectors of society and entities, and the programme shares an interface with other priority areas in the Research Council and internationally. The VAM programme will collaborate with related programmes and activities as appropriate. Such collaboration is to provide added value and seek to avoid research overlap.

The VAM programme shares an interface in particular with research on working life and welfare services conducted in the Programme on Health, Care and Welfare Services (HELSEVEL). Among the HELSEVEL programme's priorities are practice-oriented services research and coordination research in – and with – the welfare and health services. The practice-oriented welfare services research that is part of the HELSEVEL programme will not be given priority under the VAM programme.

The most relevant programmes and initiatives are:

- Public Sector Ph.D. scheme (OFFPHD);
- Research Programme on Health, Care and Welfare Services (HELSEVEL);
- Research Programme on Cultural Conditions Underlying Social Change (SAMKUL);
- Research Programme on Research and Innovation in the Educational Sector (FINNUT);
- Research Programme on Democratic and Effective Governance, Planning and Public Administration (DEMOS);

### 6.1 Anticipated results, impacts and societal outcomes

The VAM programme seeks to generate knowledge that addresses important societal challenges. The objectives developed for the programme have their starting point in challenges facing the working life and welfare sectors, which are broadly described in key public sector and research policy documents.

Continual follow-up and monitoring are necessary to ensure that the programme is developing in the right direction. Follow-up measures will be set out in the programme's action plans, and in the calls for proposals and further development of the programme. The programme will be monitored mainly through portfolio analyses, project reports and summaries from the programme's various focus areas during the programme period.

After a few years, the need for an evaluation and status review will be considered. An evaluation may look at the programme's scientific content, achievement of objectives, results, impacts and societal outcomes, or assess whether the programme is organised in a manner that is conducive to achieving the programme's objectives.

The VAM programme seeks to generate relevant research with high utility value, and views it as essential to incorporate user involvement in the research process. Research activities under the programme will be of particular relevance for two of the priority areas in the Government's *Long-term Plan for Research and Higher Education 2019–2028* (white paper Meld. St. 4): societal security and social cohesion in a globalised world and innovation in the public sector and better public

services. The long-term plan points to humanities and social sciences as important contributors to understanding human actions and what it will take for behavioural patterns to change.

The humanities perspective has been strengthened in the new long-term plan, through the stated expectation that the perspective will be an integral part of all priority research topics.

## **6.2 Results**

Through its activities and priorities, the programme is to contribute to a wide range of results.

### **6.2.1 Scientific results and publications**

Projects funded under the programme are expected to produce results of high scientific quality in the areas of the programme relevant to government, public administration, working life, other stakeholders and the public debate.

Indicators for measuring knowledge production and competence development:

- number of high-quality scholarly publications;
- number of interdisciplinary publications.

### **6.2.2 Public-oriented dissemination and impact**

- number of popular science publications and high-quality dissemination in influential, relevant channels;
- number of publications with users as co-authors;
- quality of publications as measured by citation frequency and the journal's impact factor.

### **6.2.3 Recruitment, research group building and cooperation**

The programme aims to build strong, sustainable, competent and innovative research groups in strategically important areas of welfare, working life and migration. Activities are to encourage interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research within and between sectors.

Indicators for measuring the development of competent, innovative research groups:

- number of doctoral degrees and postdoctoral fellows;
- number of young researchers who gain project management experience from leading VAM programme projects;
- number of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary projects;
- proportion of humanistic research in the VAM portfolio, which is to rise to 10 per cent in 2022 according to the Research Council's escalation plan to utilise the humanities in challenge-driven research.

### **6.2.4 Internationalisation**

The programme is to promote international cooperation, both to increase national quality and to ensure an effective distribution of research tasks. The programme is expected to help to increase the participation of Norwegian researchers and users in competitive international arenas, especially as participants in EU framework programme projects.

Indicators for measuring the degree of international research collaboration and international knowledge sharing:

- number of international partners in projects;
- increase in the number of project managers and VAM-affiliated researchers participating in the competition for international research funding, especially in Horizon 2020;
- increase in the number of co-publications in respected international journals;

- number of funded projects whose perspective is genuinely comparative.

## 6.3 Impacts

Results generated from programme activities are expected to be of significance for development in the public and private sectors. It is further expected that project results are to be visible and applicable as a knowledge base for policy-making and public administration, in services development, for the stakeholders in working life and other research users, and for use in general public debate.

The programme is also expected to help to further consolidate and strengthen Norwegian research environments and to increase internationalisation of research in this field. Additionally, the programme is expected to enhance user participation in research and collaboration between researchers and stakeholders.

Measuring and determining the effects of research presents challenges. It is therefore important to develop effective indicators that with a high degree of certainty can tell us something about the different impacts of research funded under the VAM programme:

- number of innovative and sustainable research groups with a focus on welfare, working life and migration;
- development with regard to scholarly publication;
- number of researchers under the programme who participate in government-appointed committees and other public-sector advisory groups and bodies;
- new legislation, regulations, guidelines, procedures and policies that apply insight gained from the research, and that are more research- and innovation-oriented as a result;
- increased number of projects with user participation;
- number of reported dissemination measures aimed at users/special target groups and/or at the general public;
- utilisation of research in the working life and welfare sectors.

## 6.4 Societal outcomes

The overall outcome of activities under the programme is expected to promote a sustainable future working life and welfare sector, in which knowledge-based public administration helps to ensure:

1. good living conditions and safe childhood environments;
2. an adaptable, effective and inclusive working life;
3. active citizenship and confidence in societal institutions.

# 7 Resources and budget

From 2019, the VAM programme will have an annual budget of approximately NOK 150 million, subject to changes in ministry allocations. Every year the programme draws up a three-year action plan with a schedule for calls for proposals and activities. The action plan will take into account other national and international calls for proposals that overlap with or share an interface with subject areas, research capacity, research needs and the sector's potential and ability to participate in the projects.

The VAM programme is funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Children and Equality, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, the Ministry of Local Government and

Modernisation and the Ministry of Education and Research. The programme will have greater impact if all the ministries contribute financially to the programme. Each ministry may focus on its own main areas of responsibility, but it will also be possible and necessary to address the interfaces between ministries. This will enable the ministries to receive research results pertaining not only to their own sector responsibilities and spheres of responsibility areas, but also beyond each individual ministry area.

The programme will report annually on its activities to demonstrate that these are consistent with the guidelines issued in the ministries' allocation letters and in conformity with the ministries' sector responsibilities.

## **8 Governance and organisation**

The programme is administered by a board acting on behalf of the Research Council. The board is responsible for ensuring that the programme achieves the stipulated objectives and is implemented in the most effective manner possible with regard to plans for programme operation and within the frameworks adopted by the division research board. The tasks of the board are primarily of a strategic nature. The board is administered under the auspices of, and reports to, the Board of the Research Council, via the division executive director and department director. The Research Council is responsible for the operation of the programme.



A schematic presentation of the VAM programme logic model is provided below:

