

# Impact Assessment in Norway

Impact Assessment Workshop

Federation of Finnish Learned Societies  
16 March 2023

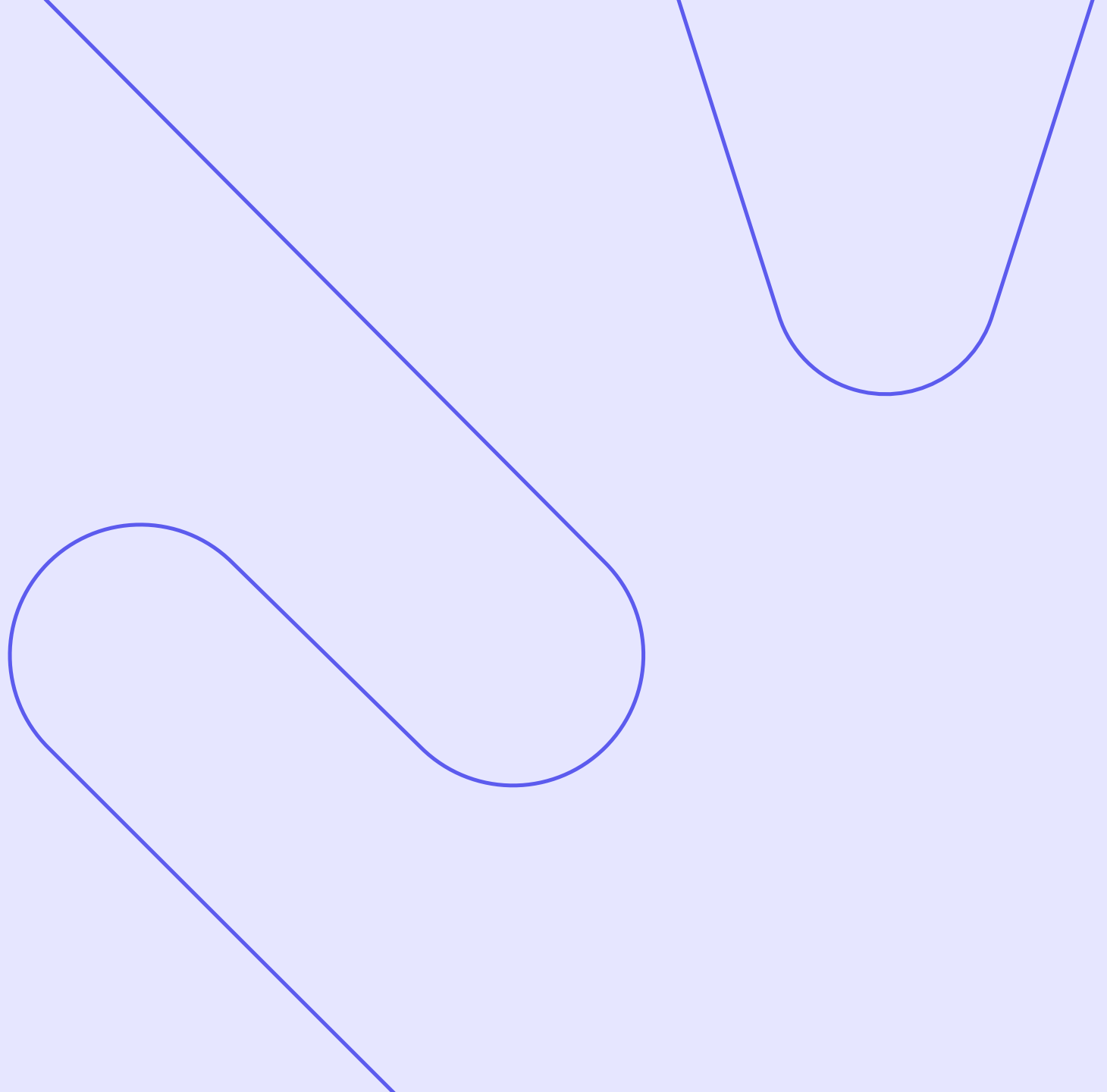
Special adviser Dr Jon Holm





# Agenda

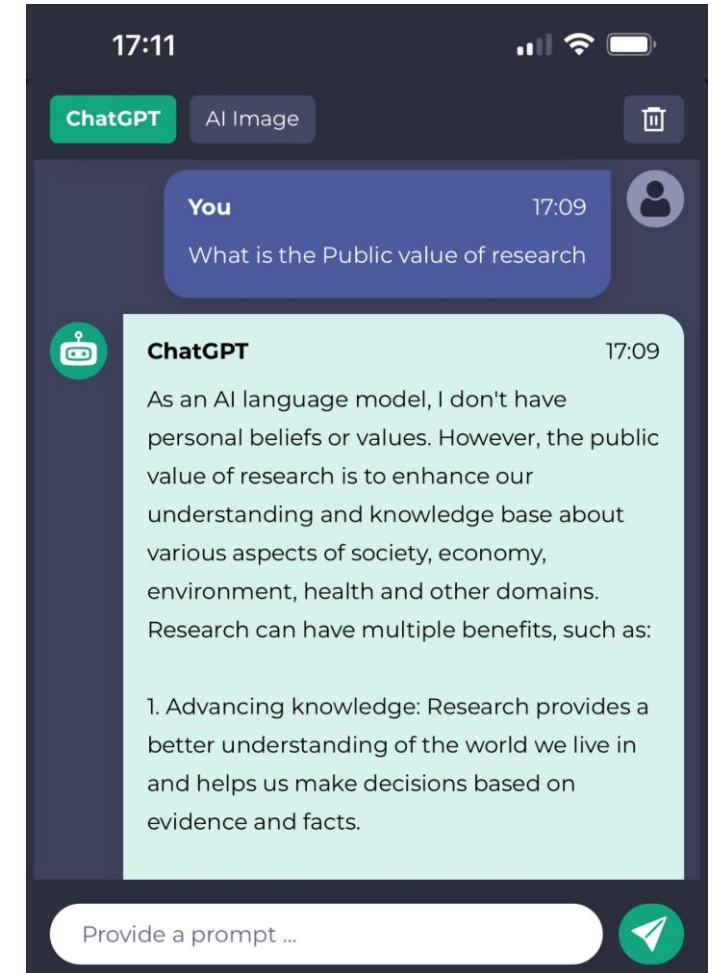
- 1) What is the public value of research?
- 2) Why should governments fund research?
- 3) Evaluation of societal impact in Norway
- 4) What is the impact of impact assessments?





# What is the public value of research?

1. Advancing knowledge: Research provides a better understanding of the world we live in and helps us make decisions based on evidence and facts.
2. Improving services and products: Research leads to the development of new products and services that can improve people's quality of life.
3. Promoting innovation: Research often results in new ideas and technologies that can drive innovation and create new industries.
4. Informing policy: Research can inform policymakers about the effectiveness and impact of policies, leading to more informed decisions.
5. Addressing societal challenges: Research can help address complex societal challenges, such as climate change, poverty, and inequality.





# Why should government fund research?

1. **Economic Development:** Research can lead to the development of new technologies, products, and services, which can generate economic growth and create jobs.
2. **Scientific Advancement:** Research often leads to scientific breakthroughs that can advance knowledge and understanding in specific fields, which can ultimately result in significant improvements in society.
3. **National Security:** Research in areas such as defense, cyber-security, and public health can help protect national security interests.
4. **Social Benefit:** Governments fund research that can benefit society in various ways, such as improving healthcare, education, or the environment.
5. **Encouraging Innovation:** Government funding can incentivize private sector investment in research and development by reducing risks and increasing opportunities for innovation.
6. **Global Competition:** Governments fund research to maintain competitiveness in the global market, especially in areas where other countries are investing heavily in research and development.



# Three generations of research policy

- 1945-1980      R&D for economic growth  
=> linear model
  
- 1980-2015      National systems of innovation  
=> building links, clusters and networks
  
- 2015-            Social and environmental challenges  
=> stimulating transformative change

J Schot & WE Steinmueller:  
Three frames for innovation policy: R&D, systems of innovation and transformative change  
Research Policy 2018



Vannavar Bush  
 Foto: [Library of Congress](#)



## Example: Long-term plan for research and higher education in Norway

- **World-leading research communities** have global impact:
  - i.They achieve research results that provide completely new insight
  - ii.They train candidates who are sought-after worldwide
  - iii.They create innovations that achieve broad application
- convince politicians to organise economic communities in new ways
- change how we understand the world around us and our presence in it
- develop new technologies that they change the lives of billions of people





# Impact assessment in Norway

- Evaluation of research institutes (2014 – 2018)
- National subject-specific evaluations (every 10 years)

Humanities 2017

Social sciences 2018

Natural sciences 2023 - 2024

Life sciences 2023 – 2024

- Centres of Excellence (CoEs 2020)

⇒ Aimed at learning and improvement

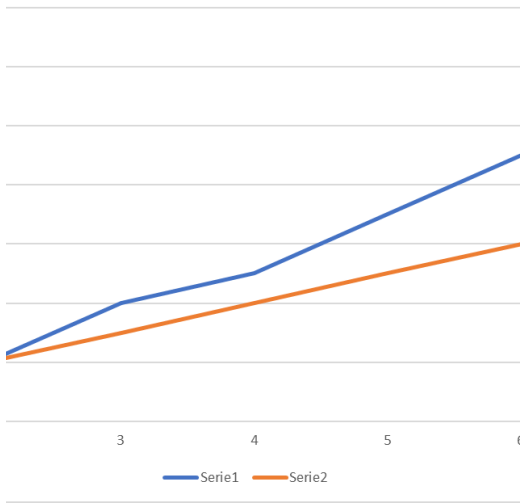
⇒ Not used for redistribution of funding

## Evaluation of the Norwegian Centres of Excellence (SFF) Funding Scheme

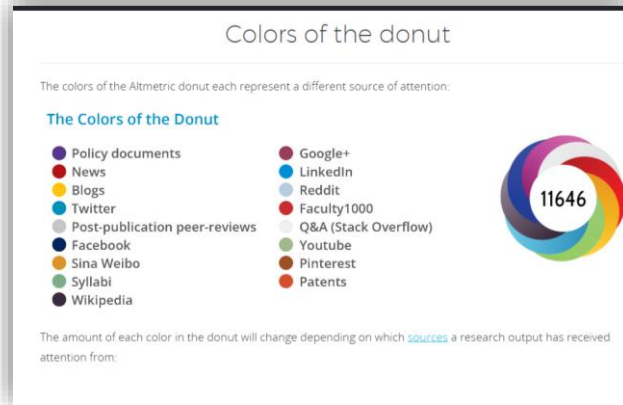
Report from the evaluation committee (2020)



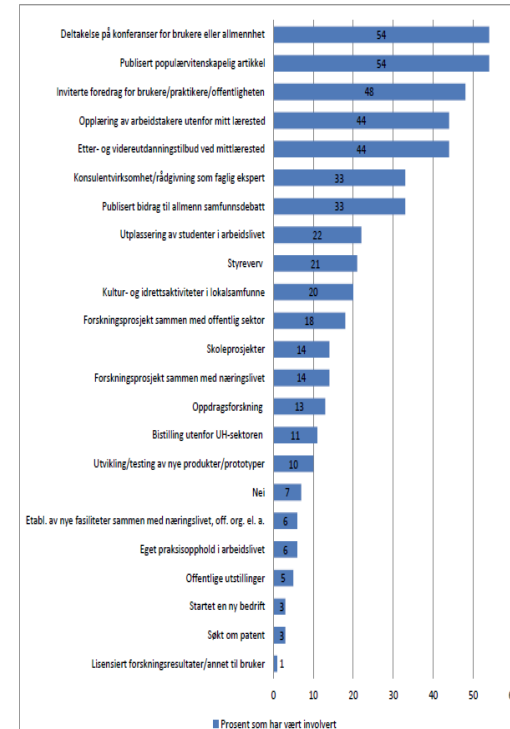
# Methods for documenting societal impact



Econometrics



Altmetrics



Surveys

*Evaluation of research in the humanities in Norway*

### Impact case study

Institution:

Period number:

Case number or short name (max 10 characters):

Name of impact case:

Summary of the impact (maximum 100 words):

Description of the research underpinning the impact (maximum 400 words) (include names of key researchers and, if relevant, research groups. A time frame for when the research was carried out should also be included):

Details of the impact (maximum 400 words) (include a description of how the research has contributed to the impact on society):

References to the research (scientific publications):

References to sources to corroborate the claims made about the impact (publications, reports, media news, policy papers, etc):

If relevant: External references (external users or others who have witnessed the impact and could be contacted to corroborate the claims made in the reported research cases):

Case studies



# RCN has adopted the impact definition of the UK REF

## **an effect on, change or benefit to**

the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life,

## **beyond academia**

- Broad and open definition of impact  
=> adapts to all scientific fields
- No steering towards specific societal impacts  
=> but documenting when they occur
  
- Evidence produced by research unit based on impact case template
- Impact can be regional, national and/or international

*Evaluation of research in the humanities in Norway*

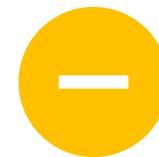
## Impact case study

Institution:  
Panel number:  
Case number or short name (max 10 characters):

Name of impact case:
Summary of the impact (maximum 100 words)
Description of the research underpinning the impact: (maximum 400 words.) (include names of key researchers and, if relevant, research groups. A time frame for when the research was carried out should also be included).
Details of the impact (maximum 400 words) (include a description of how the research has contributed to the impact on society).
References to the research (scientific publications)
References to sources to corroborate the claims made about the impact (publications, reports, media items, policy papers, etc.)
If relevant: External references (external users or others who have witnessed the impact and could be contacted to corroborate the claims made in the reported research cases).

# Pros and cons of REF impact case method

- Illustrating a great **diversity** of social impact resulting from research
  - Providing insight in the **pathways** through which impacts occur
  - Documenting the reach and significance of research activities for **different users and sectors** – nationally and internationally
  - Providing **useful knowledge** for Ministries, funding bodies, research communities and institutions
- A linear understanding of societal impact
  - Attribution problem: Impact depends on factors external to the research system
  - Not reflecting the full breadth of exchanges between academia and society
  - Embracing "exceptional" impact instead of normal day to day impact  
Sivertsen, G. & Meijer, I. (2019). Normal versus extraordinary societal impact: how to understand, evaluate, and improve research activities in their relations to society? Research Evaluation, 1-5.





# What is the impact of impact assessments?

- Sustained public funding (also for basic research)
- New knowlegde
- Societal engagement included in research process
- Societal engagement as institutional strategy



## Sustained public funding

Norwegian centres of excellence have societal impact through...

- commercialisation
- patents
- spin-offs
- involvement in product development
- new methods and services
- translational research with improved clinical practice
- **influenced policy** through consultancy and advisory work

### ***Evaluation committee's CREDO***

*The SFF programme has consistently adhered to the principle of funding excellent, groundbreaking basic research for a period of 10 years per project. **The consistent adherence to this principle has produced real societal impact***

## Evaluation of the Norwegian Centres of Excellence (SFF) Funding Scheme

Report from the evaluation committee (2020)



# New knowlegde «Long traces» of welfare research

## 4.1 “Impact case” som kilde og metode

Som nevnt i kapittel 1 har det vært en økende tendens for «narrativer» for å beskrive forskningens effekt. Samspillet mellom forskning og samfunn er vanskelig å fange opp med etablerte indikatorer. Ikke minst har det vist seg vanskelig å fange opp samfunnseffektene av humanistisk og samfunnsvitenskapelig forskning gjennom kvantitative metoder (Muhonen et. al, 2019). Slik forskning er for eksempel lite orientert mot aktiviteter som gir seg utslag i patenter, lisenser og bedriftsetableringer. Dessuten er samfunnsvitenskap og humaniora dårligere dekket i internasjonale databaser for vitenskapelig publisering og sitering (se nærmere omtale av dette i kapittel 6).

It has been proven difficult to capture the societal impact of SSH research through quantitative methods



Total impact cases from national evaluations of SSH in Norway

470

Total cases related to welfare

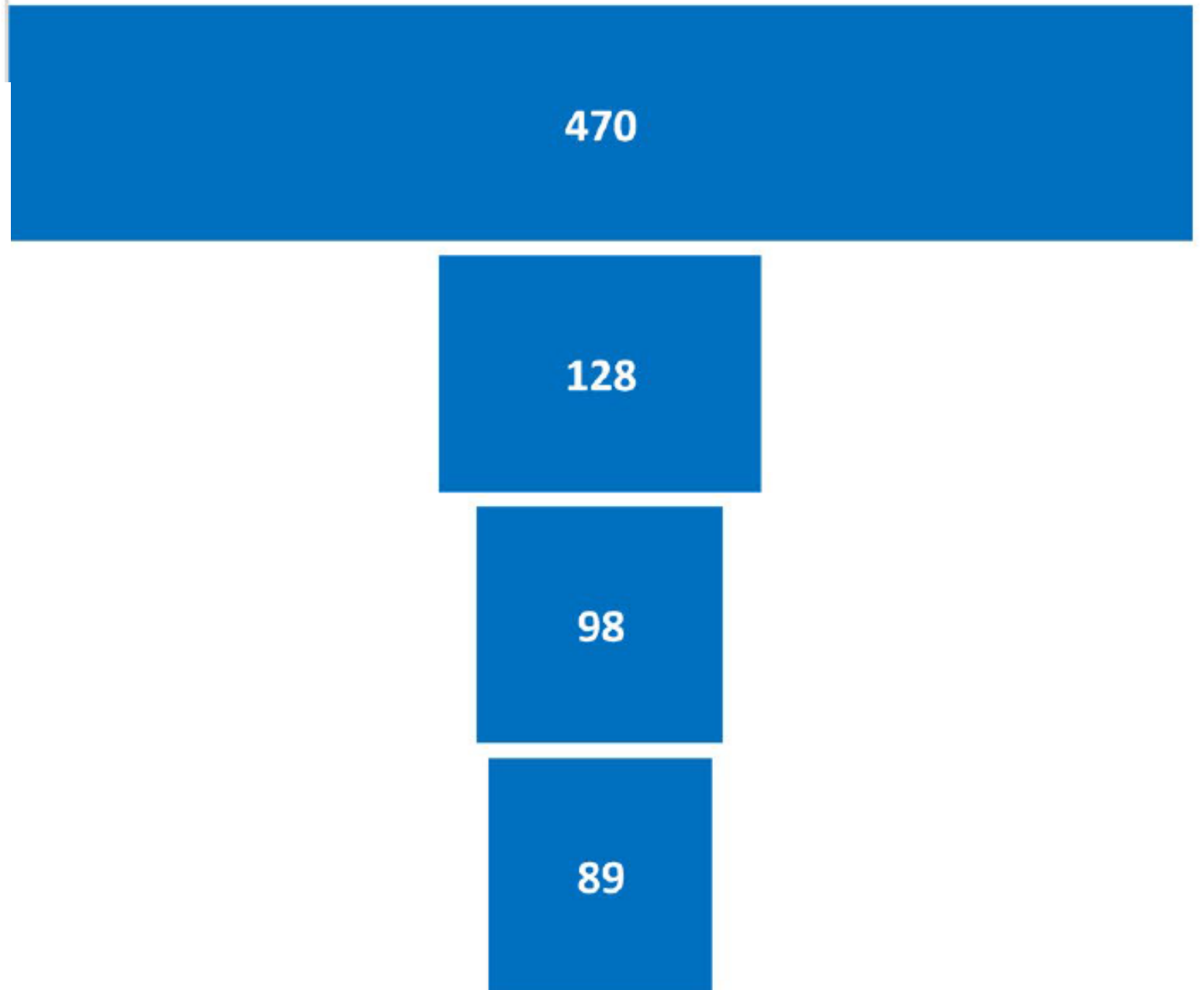
128

Cases related to welfare in Norway

98

Cases falling within the definition of welfare in the study

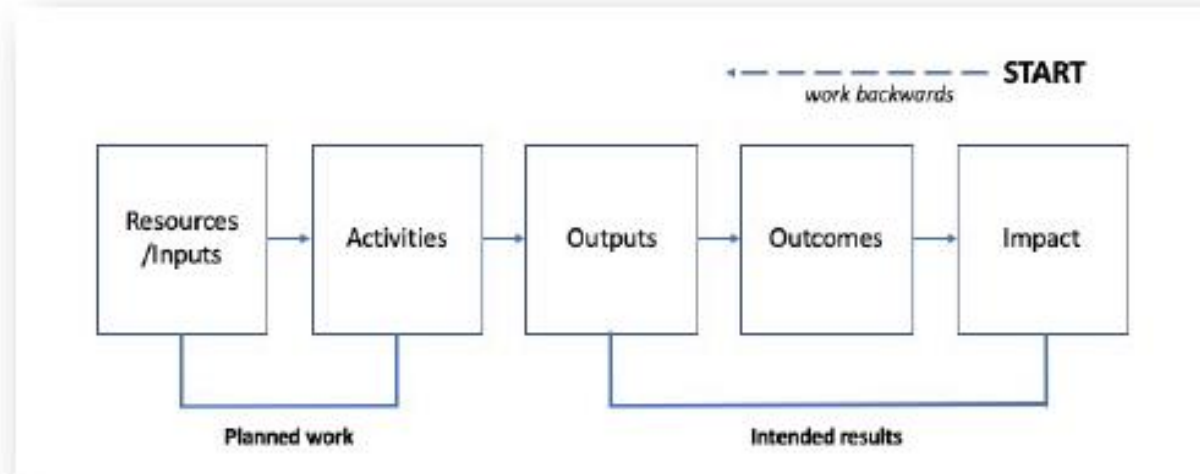
89



# Societal engagement in the research process

- Assessment of research proposals at RCN

i. Research programmes defined by intervention logic



- ii. Open Science is assessed as part of research excellence
- iii. Societal impact assessed where relevant

GUIDELINES FOR THE PEER  
REVIEW OF EX-ANTE  
IMPACT EVALUATION

**Dr Gemma Derrick**  
Centre for Higher Education Research & Evaluation  
Lancaster University  
United Kingdom

**Prof Paul Benneworth<sup>1</sup>**  
Western Norway University of Applied Sciences  
Norway

*This research was commissioned as part of a Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) funded by the Eu-COST Action ENRESSH (European Network for Research Evaluation in the Social Sciences and Humanities, CA15137). Acknowledgements are also extended to the Research Council of Norway (Forskningsrådet) for their support in hosting this STSM. The authors would also like to acknowledge the ongoing support and guidance of Dr Jon Holm in the development of this report.*

## Societal engagement as institutional strategy

*Our inspiration =>*

- The main goal of the SEP is to maintain and improve the quality and societal relevance of research as well as to facilitate continuous dialogue about research quality, societal relevance and viability in the context of research quality assurance.
- This goal is accomplished by assessing a research unit in light of its own aims and strategy.





## Next generation research assessment in Norway

- **Strategic goals** of research institutions included in Terms of reference
- Focus on **framework conditions** for research quality and societal impact
- Take into consideration **local contexts** of the research and its **relations to education and society**
- Collect a broad set of **evaluation data**
  - i. Sample research publications
  - ii. Quantitative data on funding, personnel and publications
  - iii. Data on student satisfaction
  - iv. Data on cooperation with society
  - v. Impact cases



Foto: Wikipedia / Ryan Hodnett (CC BY-SA)

# Idékraft verden trenger