



(Immediate) thoughts - Evaluation of biosciences in Norway

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My perspective

- Member of Life science portfolio board 2020-2023
- Member of Ground-breaking research board 2024-
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- Head of Computational Biology Unit, UiB, 2003-2021
- Head of Department of Informatics, UiB, 2021-





Findings

- Diverse and decentralised, small groups
- Generous base funding (~60% at univ, ~30% for institutes)
- Excellent research infrastructures
 - Uncertain financially
 - Important collections
- General lack of strategy – at all levels across the system





Findings (continued)

- Insufficient sense of urgency wrt climate and biodiversity crises
- Few interdisciplinary cross-faculty research centers
- Low visibility internationally
- Ageing research staff, mostly Norwegian, gender imbalance, few PhD students compared to professors





Bordering activities

- Bordering activities included in the EVALMEDHELSE assessment
- Some relevant groups (within for example bioinformatics) have signed up for the EVALMIT assessment





Recommendations – to whom?

- Mainly towards institutions and government/research council level
 - To little extent linked with current funding instruments etc
 - Little consideration of roles beyond research
- Relevant also for administrative units and research groups
- All levels should be involved in follow-up discussions





Recommendations

- Develop a national strategy for biosciences
- Work to obtain direction and critical mass
- Incentivise use of core funding to win competitive funding
- Foster collaboration – nationally and internationally
- Continue supporting research infrastructures
- Strengthen talent pipeline and recruit more internationally – English as working language
- Increase use of advisory boards





What government/RCN could do

- Initiate a national strategy on biosciences (ministry level)
- Set up well-funded interdisciplinary research centers with stringent excellence criteria (ministry/RCN)
 - Directed toward societal challenges
 - Link with AI centers – and other centers





What government/RCN could do (2)

- Increase economic and societal impact
 - Improve support for start-ups
 - «..it should be ensured that the voice from science to politics is institutionalized»





Some suggestions

- Carefully consider all the recommendations – important also for legitimacy of the process
- Consider use of «missions» – to increase collaboration (within and across sectors) and maximize impact. Strict excellence criteria.
- Increase use of EMBL and engagement in international networks and infrastructures
- Consider adjustments of FRIPRO / other instruments
- Some research infrastructures can play role beyond research
- Science advisory board(s) towards policy/government
- Balance focus on national and international collaboration

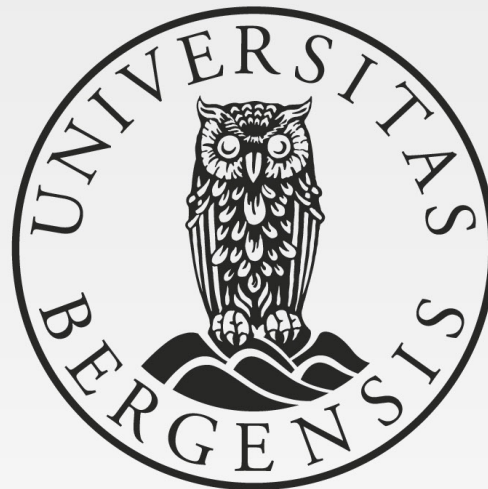




Followup

- Many findings are known – but valuable to get outside perspective
- Valuable & challenging recommendations
- Should feed into discussions and follow-up actions
 - In the sector – and on the political level
- Developing government-owned strategy – with actions to achieve goals





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