



# Work programme 2013–2018

Programme  
Research programme on Welfare, Working Life and Migration – VAM II



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Welfare, Working Life and Migration – VAM II

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The report can be ordered at:  
[www.forskningsradet.no/publikasjoner](http://www.forskningsradet.no/publikasjoner)

or green number telefax: +47 800 83 001

English translation:  
Design cover: Design et cetera  
Printing: 07 Gruppen/The Research Council of Norway  
Number of copies: 100

Oslo, November 2013

ISBN 978-82-12-03256-9 (print)  
ISBN 978-82-12-03257-6 (pdf)

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# 1 Summary

The economic and social sustainability of the Norwegian welfare society will pose a fundamental challenge in the future. Norway has a high level of prosperity, good living conditions, a high level of participation in the labour market, and well-developed welfare schemes. Demographic changes, greater geographic mobility and migration will lead to greater social and cultural *heterogeneity*. A substantial part of the population is reaching old age whereas the youth population is declining. Knowledge about the societal changes related to population ageing will prepare society for better handling of these challenges. The challenges extend from value creation and working life to the family and civil society, and the organisation and quality of welfare schemes and provision of services.

Research under the programme will increase insight into major, complex social challenges. Inclusion and exclusion are key perspectives in this context. Research within the programme's broad thematic areas will describe and analyse the current situation and pertinent trends and seek to understand the mechanisms underlying the areas of relevance. It is crucial to generate new knowledge and synthesise existing knowledge about the mechanisms, structures, actors and instruments of the welfare society under new framework conditions.

Research under the VAM programme is to be of high quality. It will be empirically based and theoretically grounded, and will develop expertise, take a critical approach, and be policy-oriented and relevant to the users. The programme seeks analyses linking areas that traditionally have been separated by institutions and sectors, as well as research that contributes to the basis for action in important areas of society.

The work programme has been revised, with the main features from the version for the 2009–2012 period retained. The thematic scope is the same, but there are now fewer thematic priority areas. The changes have been made in light of the need to update and clarify the objectives, thematic focus and instruments for the new programme period.

## 2 Background

### 2.1 Strategic perspectives

In Meld. St. 18 (2012–2013) *Long-term perspectives – knowledge provides opportunity*, white paper from the Ministry of Education and Research, the Government points to *Welfare* in a broad sense as a continued priority area for Norwegian research. The white paper points out that the consolidation of research on welfare, working life, migration and ethnic relations has improved coordination of the research activity in the field. The VAM programme is the Research Council's largest and most important research initiative in the comprehensive area of welfare, and the programme seeks to generate insight into the conditions underlying a sustainable welfare society. The programme has a budget of approximately NOK 960 million over a ten-year period, which enhances the ability to develop a broad project portfolio and corresponding expertise within the research community. During the first programme period a total of NOK 440 million was allocated through six funding announcements.

The white paper refers to the evaluation of the Research Council (2012), which emphasises the need to enhance quality and generate renewal within the Norwegian research system. It also notes that the research programmes must help to solve major, complex social challenges: *The Research Council of Norway must ensure that the programme organisation does not create obstacles vis-à-vis subject areas, research groups or important research initiatives.* The proposed measures to generate renewal and enhance quality include the following:

- to provide young researcher talents with attractive conditions early in their careers;
- to give younger researchers the opportunity to head research groups;
- to promote interdisciplinarity.

Additionally, the white paper states that Norwegian researchers must not become marginalised from international research activity. This means it is crucial to set higher aspirations for international cooperation in Norwegian research on welfare, working life and migration in order to enhance quality and capacity.

Policy-oriented social research encompasses a wide range of issues and has many users and stakeholders. Public administrators at all levels, as well as various political, professional and special interest organisations, are important stakeholders and users of the research results. In order to achieve the programme's objectives, it will be crucial to strengthen the interest and expertise of the users. At the same time, the Research Council will ensure that research quality is maintained. This is essential if research, trade and industry, and society at large are to further develop and compete in a more globalised world.

## 2.2 Basis for research and experience

A planning committee appointed in 2007 submitted its report entitled *Forskning og framtid – et kunnskapsgrunnlag for forskning om arbeid, velferd og migrasjon* ("Research and the future – a knowledge base for research on working life, welfare and migration") in September 2008. In its report the committee identified *inclusion and exclusion* and *the economic, social and normative sustainability of the welfare society* as core research perspectives. The initial VAM work programme was based in part on that report as well as on extensive input from stakeholders and the research needs ascertained by previous programmes in the areas of welfare, working life and migration. When it was first drawn up in the spring and summer of 2009, the work programme was broad in scope and addressed thematic areas viewed as both relevant and relatively long-term in nature. The second period of the VAM programme will continue to address a wide range of thematic areas.

A portfolio analysis and midterm report were prepared halfway through the programme period.<sup>1</sup> The portfolio analysis shows that many projects incorporate several research areas. Key areas addressed by the research projects include working life and value creation, inclusion and exclusion, and family life and working life. These will be important areas of research in the future as well, and may be studied in various ways.

The portfolio analysis shows that many of the projects are multidisciplinary, incorporate recruitment positions, and plan to use a wide variety of data. This indicates that the programme has encouraged a number of projects to use registry data and to link various types of data. The VAM programme is on the way to successfully achieving the objectives set out in

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<sup>1</sup> Both reports are available in Norwegian at [www.forskningsradet.no/vam](http://www.forskningsradet.no/vam).



the first work programme regarding greater interdisciplinarity and cooperation among many institutions and subject areas.

Furthermore, many of the projects plan to engage in international cooperation, but the form of this cooperation varies widely among the individual projects. A survey of all the welfare research conducted in Norway shows that only three per cent of the research funding comes from international sources.<sup>2</sup> The VAM programme must take on the task of coordinating the programme's activities with international activities and encouraging research groups in the field to be more active, e.g. with regard to the upcoming EU framework programme Horizon 2020.

### 3. Programme objectives

#### 3.1 Primary objective

**The VAM programme seeks to generate new knowledge of high scientific merit on the foundation, operation and processes of the welfare society.**

Research activity under the programme will promote the further development of the welfare society by fostering and developing:

- Research that is empirically based, theoretically grounded and methodologically sound;
- Research that develops new perspectives with regard to inter- and multidisciplinary, theoretical frameworks and empirical methods;
- Research that is internationally oriented and comparative;
- Research that promotes long-term knowledge development for use in policy formulation and public administration.

#### 3.2 Secondary objectives

The primary objective of the programme will be operationalised through the secondary objectives described in the items below.

##### 3.2.1 Theoretical and methodological diversity

The VAM programme will work to provide funding to research of high scientific merit which incorporates a broad range of scientific and theoretical perspectives and which takes a critical as well as developmental approach to these. To achieve this, the programme will:

- Provide funding to research that uses different types of data;
- Strengthen research that links qualitative and quantitative methods;
- Strengthen research that uses registry data;
- Promote research that contributes to the development of models and new theoretical perspectives;
- Provide funding to inter- and multidisciplinary research.

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<sup>2</sup> Sundnes, Blystad, Aksnes and Solberg (2013): *Velferdsforskning i Norge 2011* ("Welfare research in Norway 2011"), NIFU report15/13.

### **3.2.2 Internationalisation**

To achieve quality and relevance in the research projects, the VAM programme will strengthen international research cooperation and promote a general internationalisation of the research agenda in the programme's thematic priority areas by:

- Encouraging research that develops genuine international research cooperation;
- Facilitating a greater number of comparative studies at the international and Nordic levels;
- Increasing the number of Norwegian researchers and research groups in areas under the VAM programme that receive funding from international funders of research.

### **3.2.3 Use of research results: Dissemination to and dialogue with users and the general public**

The VAM programme seeks to build expertise in the long-term for policy development in its research areas. Scientific publication, particularly at the international level, is a means of ensuring quality. The programme will contribute to an informed public, democratic debate on welfare, working life, integration, migration and other aspects of the development of the welfare society. To realise this, the programme will:

- Provide the framework for more national and international scientific publication;
- Promote dissemination to users and the general public, and ensure that research results are debated, communicated and utilised;
- Obtain input from relevant actors in society regarding vital strategic processes under the programme;
- Facilitate the synthesis and compilation of summaries of existing national and international research.

## **4 Priority research areas**

### **4.1 General perspectives**

The economic and social sustainability of the Norwegian welfare society will pose a fundamental challenge in the future. Norway has a high level of prosperity, good living conditions, a high level of participation in the labour market, and well-developed welfare schemes. In coming years, however, the burdens will shift as a smaller number of people must support a larger proportion of the population. Demographic changes, high geographic mobility and migration across national borders will lead to greater social and cultural *heterogeneity*. The challenges extend across various levels and areas, from value creation, participation in the labour market and working life to the family and civil society, and the instruments, organisation and quality of welfare schemes and provision of services. It is essential to acquire new knowledge about the relationship between policy, instruments and results.

Research conducted under the programme must be designed to enhance understanding of the field as a whole and to generate new knowledge and insight into empirically-related areas. The programme therefore seeks projects that describe and analyse:

- The current situation in the areas of relevance;

- Pertinent trends in the areas of relevance;
- The mechanisms underlying development.

This may involve, for instance, the scope and features of a phenomenon at the macro level and mechanisms that induce action at the institutional and individual level. Analyses of the *inclusion and exclusion* of groups and individuals in and from various social arenas and at different levels, as well as the relationship between the *majority population and minority groups* are crucial for understanding the current situation, trends and underlying mechanisms. *Gender perspectives*, especially the implications of changes in gender roles for the overall functionality of the family, the labour market and society, are critical research perspectives.

## 4.2 Thematic priority areas

The programme will give priority to research projects that actively incorporate the overall perspectives. These are illustrated below in the description of thematic priority areas.

Although the thematic priority areas below are described separately, it is the programme's intention that VAM research projects analyse these in relation to each other and as a whole. It is crucial to involve several disciplines in order to shed light on complex social relationships, including perspectives from culture-oriented subjects and the humanities. The order in which these areas are listed does not indicate any ranking among them.

### 4.2.1 Support for and sustainability of the welfare state

The Nordic countries are characterised by a high level of trust, meaning that citizens of the Nordic countries have trust in their fellow citizens, in the country's authorities, and in the benefits and services provided. These are indications of integration and social cohesiveness.<sup>3</sup> Analyses of the significance of such features of a society in general, and especially in Norway, where welfare state-related values and a high level of trust exist side by side with a strong, traditional feeling of nationalism, can provide new insight into the welfare state in light of cultural variation. One issue is how a more diverse population in terms of lifestyle, culture, ethnicity and religion may affect support for prevailing values in society in general and the welfare state in particular.

Norway has a high level of prosperity. The question is whether affluence and wealth bring about changes in social values and self-understanding, and influence support for welfare schemes. A better understanding of the paradox of wealth and the expectations that drive the Nordic welfare model may increase insight into the mechanisms underlying support for or opposition to the welfare state.

Universal welfare schemes may also be challenged in the interplay between transnational lifestyles and changes in economic and demographic framework conditions. Targeted welfare schemes are more cost-efficient in the short term, but are more susceptible to negative effects in the long term, trapping people in poverty with associated social stigmatisation. It is therefore crucial to study the attitudes that create pressure to change universal schemes and rights. This also applies to the results and effects of welfare policy that such changes may lead to, as well as to the impact of greater freedom of choice on the role of the collective institutions.

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<sup>3</sup> Social cohesion – a concept that may explain social trust and social capital.

#### **4.2.2 Processes, legitimacy and the normative basis of public policy**

Policy is based on values and ideologies, and must address tensions and conflicts. In many cases individuals and groups may have divergent interests. It is relevant to study how policy on welfare, working life and migration is shaped to address such conflicts. This is especially interesting because the substance of core values in Norwegian society such as fairness, solidarity, equal status and social equality may be undergoing change. Analyses of legislation and public documents, the media, literature and other written works in which values and interests are expressed, imparted, shaped and reproduced may yield greater insight into these changes over time. It is of interest to learn more about which considerations and motives are most important when the population formulates its views on welfare policy issues. Values and norms are also manifested in practice, e.g. through practice within the public administration and court system and through the way in which positions, income and other social benefits are distributed.

More knowledge is also needed about the delineation of boundaries and the dynamics between private and public responsibility and between democracy, the law and governance. A normative perspective may help to clarify value frameworks, dilemmas and challenges related to issues such as fair distribution, equality and universalism in the welfare state, the government policy known as *arbeidslinja* which expressly aims to have as many people as possible in the work force and which links some benefits and rights to participation in paid work, and various measures legitimised by this. What types of obligations and ideals about citizenship emerge as topics of discussion in connection with the adaptation of the welfare state to globalisation, cultural pluralism and economic pressure?

National legislation and policy are not formulated in a vacuum, but are also subject to a supranational judicialisation through laws, directives, agreements and conventions. The programme seeks to shed light on the ramifications of such international obligations for national policy development in the field.

The demographic trend towards greater cultural and religious diversity and an aging population also affects the political agenda and political dynamics. It is of interest to study the role of the media as an actor as well as the media's portrayal of the political sphere. This also applies to how the media influences political communication, democracy and legitimisation. How do these processes and dynamics affect the formulation of welfare policy in a broad sense and what are the consequences for various population groups? Studies of the part that the media plays in people's attitudes towards the welfare state and key policy objectives are of particular interest.

#### **4.2.3 Value creation, the labour market and the organisation of working life**

Value creation in working life and the private sector is the basis for the economic sustainability of the welfare society. Norway's integration in the global market for labour and goods may make the country vulnerable to international financial crises, especially in Europe. The economic situation in Europe affects the demand for Norwegian goods and services, and the supply of and demand for labour. The Norwegian working life model is characterised by a high level of participation, collective negotiations, three-party cooperation and a compressed wage structure. More knowledge is needed about trends in the labour market and in working life, including at the company level. This may entail insight into how increased competition and migration affect the regulation of working life and whether this has an impact on the degree of organisation, working conditions, trends and differences in wages, and insurance schemes.

Demographic trends are also significant for employment and productivity. Given the larger number of elderly people, fewer young people and an increasingly diverse, growing population, there is a need for research on the mechanisms that underlie social development and create the conditions for a sustainable welfare society. Increasing age and better health enables more people to remain longer in the labour force. At the same time, some groups in working life retire early due to various forms of exclusion and poor health. The question is whether greater prosperity and good health may lead to early departure from working life. What will help to keep people employed longer? How and in what way do factors in the workplace play into this and how does working life policy affect the participation of the elderly in working life?

Expertise is essential for the ability to restructure and contribute to value creation. What must be done to take care of and invest in *human capital*? A primary challenge for Norwegian working life in the future will be to ensure that labour resources are utilised effectively and to prevent exclusion and marginalisation. This applies especially to ensuring that vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, are integrated to a greater degree. Analyses at the company and organisation levels are vital for understanding such mechanisms, including how these are regulated through legislation and the latitude for action this provides.

Working life in Norway is highly segregated compared with other European countries, and women are strongly overrepresented among part-time workers. This has an impact on productivity, value creation and distribution. The VAM programme seeks comparative research and analyses of the gender-segregated labour market in both the public and private sectors.

The effects of immigration on the labour market and employment, as well as on the economy and wage developments on the micro, meso and macro levels are key areas of research under the VAM programme. One question is how labour migration affects wages and employment. Another is how planning for housing needs and other infrastructure can better accommodate fluctuating immigration. There is a need for knowledge about the interaction between local and regional labour markets, conditions in the public and private sectors, individuals' motivation and latitude for action, and the use of welfare benefits.

Based on the organisation of working life, insight is needed into the processes and mechanisms that make companies and organisations competitive and innovative. Analyses of the organisation of working life and whether this is significant for competitiveness and the relocation of enterprises to other countries are of interest. Issues of power and powerlessness may be relevant topics of research here, e.g. with regard to the development of the relationship between employers and employees. Analyses of major trends in the organisation of working life are critical, including the development of the relationship between employers and employees, and the number of forms of employment and workplace affiliation.

#### **4.2.4 Production, quality and impact of welfare services**

The welfare model encompasses a large public service sector which, among other things, includes care and monitoring schemes for children and the elderly, labour market services, child protection services, central and municipal government welfare services, and various forms of financial assistance. Welfare schemes provide economic insurance for those who cannot take part in ordinary paid work or who are seeking employment. The demographic trend will present new challenges for public, non-governmental and private providers of

welfare benefits in coming years. There is a need for analyses of policy related to welfare schemes, the drivers behind the development of various schemes, and changes and adaptations over time. International comparative studies are also needed, as these make it possible to look at individual adaptations and effects under various welfare regimes. Relevant areas of research are the role of legitimacy and trust in the ability of policymakers to take action and the public administration's implementation of welfare policy reforms. There is a need for analyses of the decision-making processes underlying welfare schemes and how various public benefits and services are viewed in relation to each other. It is also essential to learn more about the quality of the services and whether they have the intended effect at the individual and societal levels.

New knowledge of how services are organised in light of the objective to reduce inequality is relevant. A key principle is that welfare services are to be adapted to local conditions, while at the same time geographic location is not to be a deciding factor in the services that are accessible. Research can shed light on this and other challenges and dilemmas that may arise when municipalities, which play a key role in the development and provision of services, are given responsibility for more tasks in the health and welfare sector, viewed in light of economic and structural framework conditions and the role of local democracy.

It is also relevant to conduct more in-depth studies of legislation in the welfare sector and the rights of citizens, and how laws are followed up by the public administration and the regulation of the statutory framework between administrative levels. The reforms of welfare services have led to changes in the distribution of tasks between levels of governance and between public and private actors. Relevant areas of research are the relationship between the volunteer sector, municipalities and the central government, and how this affects the development of the organisation of the welfare state. This applies, for example, to the interaction between public responsibility and control, market competition and quality-related norms. This may also apply to service capacity, in which contributions from civil society, families and volunteers could be made a more important component of policy instruments. There is also a question of how such conditions affect governance and democracy.

#### **4.2.5 Social inequality and inclusion**

Social inequality and powerlessness with regard to a person's own life situation leads to low participation in many social arenas. The interaction between the policies implemented in the various sectors of society such as upbringing, the labour market, education, health and housing, and how these function as a whole in the prevention of poverty or creation of social inequality, are important areas of research under the VAM programme.

Research is needed on mobility between generations within the population and the new forms of social segregation this may potentially lead to. It is crucial to acquire knowledge about processes within the family, local community, housing market, labour market and the welfare state that affect inclusion and exclusion. Knowledge about this is important for identifying more effective measures that also respect the individual's right of self-determination. Connection to working life, income distribution and studies of income inequality may be relevant in this context.

In Norway it is usual and expected to own one's own home, and this is an important building block for personal wealth. Facilitation of home ownership has been a key aspect of Norwegian housing policy. Owning one's own home brings quality and stability to people's lives and promotes integration in various areas of society. Increasing urbanisation and

relocation creates areas with special challenges. Geographic separation of specific population groups appears to be increasing in larger cities. Areas may be at risk from an economic and social perspective, characterised by low work participation, many recipients of welfare benefits, low level of education, limited participation in society and widespread substance abuse. There will be a need for research that generates knowledge about the development of different forms of vulnerability. There is a need for greater understanding of the impact of measures and instruments designed to counteract exclusion.

#### **4.2.6 Migration, integration and transnational relations**

Every seventh person in the world is considered to be a migrant, whether by moving to another country or relocating within one's own country. Many people live transnational lives and have various connections to different parts of the world. International, transnational and comparative perspectives are critical in analyses of migration.

A distinctive feature of migration to Norway in recent years is the extensive immigration from the EU/EEA area in the form of labour migration, service migration, and education and family migration. Knowledge is needed about the supply of and demand for migrant labour and how this affects the role of migrants in the labour market.

European labour migrants often have a less permanent connection to Norway. However, a very large share of immigration to Norway takes place through family immigration from countries outside the EU and EEA via marriage or family reunification. It is essential to analyse various forms of immigration in an integration perspective. Irregular migrants consist of many different groups with a variety of migration stories. Irregular migration represents significant and increasing international inequality, and it puts the welfare state's systems and people's values and attitudes to the test.

There is a general need for a better understanding of integration, both as a process and a policy, preferably in a comparative perspective. Integration is a two-way process between immigrants and society at large. The objectives and instruments of integration policy is a field of study in itself. The immigrant population is heterogeneous, and individuals have different prerequisites for becoming integrated into society. It is relevant to investigate the contexts and conditions under which being an immigrant is an issue and whether the immigrant perspective should be linked to other background factors. There is a need to study causal factors.

In the past 15–20 years, the integration policy of countries in northwestern Europe has shifted towards requiring immigrants to participate actively in working and community life. There is a need for systematic, comparative and longitudinal studies of which forms of integration policy vis-à-vis newly arrived immigrants work well, which do not work and why. It will be beneficial to explore the impact of the framework conditions for integration established by the welfare state, and the relationship between national and municipal levels.

#### **4.2.7 Family life – relationship to the welfare society and working life**

Families, or private households, provide caregiving, childrearing and financial support to their members. Studies of the impact of policy on gender equality and the situation for children and adolescents are relevant. This also applies to the relationship and the mutual influence between working life and family life.

To understand the ongoing social development, it is essential to take into account how the Norwegian welfare society deals with the various ways of organising the family. Demographic changes influence this over time. The significance of the family in various

phases of life is a crucial aspect, such as the family's role and function vis-à-vis the elderly in society. Likewise, migration and transnational relations create some new forms of the family which may have implications for participation and belonging.

Good leave of absence schemes and widespread availability of day-care programmes enable both genders to combine family and working life. Studies on the impact of family policy on gender equality in a variety of social arenas throughout the various phases of life will be of relevance. Knowledge about what motivates the choices of various groups of women and men, why difference motivation patterns arise, develop and change, and how this affects adaptations to work, education, government welfare schemes, and family life are interesting topics of research. Studies of the significance of socioeconomic status for the use of different welfare schemes will also shed light on the impact of policy in the area. Knowledge about how private affluence affects the distribution of tasks in the home, the use of welfare schemes, and whether women choose part-time or full-time work will be of interest in a distribution perspective.

Families also play a vital role in socialising those raised in a way that fosters participation in important social arenas. Factors believed to affect the coming generation's lives and chances of success include family resources such as inheritance and cultural, financial and social capital. The family may also be studied as an aspect of civil society that is significant for the development of trust-based relationships.

#### **4.2.8 Conditions for bringing up children and adolescents**

Knowledge about the welfare conditions for, and socialisation of, children and adolescents is important for how people cope later in life. From an early age children take part in various institutional arenas such as pre-school, school and different types of leisure activities. It is also common for children to use and participate in social media. What is the significance of participation in social media for skills development?

Participation in various arenas may explain why children are happy or cope differently in the long term. Studies of welfare conditions for children and adolescents may increase insight into what can prevent a negative development later in life, e.g. drop-out from upper secondary school, a lack of connection to working life and an inability to support themselves. What are the conditions for participation by children and adolescents in various arenas? What factors increase children's risk of falling outside of key arenas for integration such as schools and education, volunteer organisations and, later, working life? What is the significance of new social meeting places for integration?

Social background and gender are highly significant for participation and integration, as is connection to a geographic area or belonging to an ethnic or minority group. Some children are also cared for partly or entirely by adults other than their biological parents. Social problems tend to be passed down from one generation to the next, even though welfare schemes aim to decrease inequality. There is therefore a need for life course studies and knowledge about the factors that create social inheritance, how various factors are manifested through the course of a lifetime, and who is especially vulnerable. Similarly, it is also critical to acquire knowledge about why some children cope well in spite of poor odds.

More research-based knowledge is needed about children and adolescents with an immigrant background. It is well documented that in many countries the offspring of immigrants do less well than other children, while at the same time there is wide variation among groups, and



particularly between girls and boys. Why do young men – in general, but especially those with an immigrant background – do noticeably poorer than young women, especially with regard to school and education? What factors create and counteract alienation, cultural withdrawal or political radicalisation? Are the effects of certain political disagreements on individuals and groups apparent?

The programme seeks knowledge about the interaction between institutional, individual, family and community factors related to the upbringing of children and adolescents. Studies of what can prevent behavioural, social and health-related problems later in life may enhance understanding of causal and development factors. Such factors may also be viewed in connection with the public and private services that collectively serve as the support system for at-risk children. Studies that analyse the significance of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child for children's rights, especially for the most vulnerable groups, are relevant topics of research. It will be important to gain greater insight into how children's rights are exercised and whether this is in the best interest of the child.

### **4.3. Strategic priorities**

The VAM programme is a policy-oriented research programme with thematic priority areas based on a defined set of strategic priorities: The programme seeks to generate high-quality knowledge that forms the basis for research-based policy in the areas covered by the programme. At the same time, the policy itself is a core object of study. Critical research may lead to the development and modification of this policy, as well as to the introduction and implementation of social reforms.

Equally important, research conducted under the programme must take a long-term perspective, seek to generate new knowledge and address issues of a fundamental nature. There is no contradiction between, on the one hand, a long-term approach that involves critical research of high scientific merit and entails the development of methods and theory and, on the other, the objective to conduct research that is relevant to and useful for decision-makers and other users as well as for the public debate and the implementation of measures.

As a general rule, the programme will give priority to high-quality projects that develop and strengthen competent research groups, thereby building knowledge bases in the areas covered by the VAM programme. In addition to the primary and secondary objectives and thematic priority areas, the programme will emphasise the following:

- Research under the VAM programme must address issues of significance for policy and public administration, as well as for other key actors in society.
- Innovation and renewal are critical aspects of research under the VAM programme, cf. the Government's research policy and the evaluation of the Research Council. It is essential to ask new, relevant questions that will help to build a solid knowledge base for policy formulation and public administration.
- The programme will give priority to projects that view research areas across as well as in connection with each other and that involve cooperation among several research institutions. In many cases, inter- and multidisciplinary studies will provide an effective means of shedding light on themes and research questions, and the programme encourages this.

- The programme will give priority to research that is more analytical and less descriptive and that focuses on causal connections and patterns.
- The programme will give priority to research that employs an active and well-deliberated view of the special characteristics of individuals and groups, and the significance of these for analyses. This applies to gender, ethnicity, age and generation, economic class and social stratification, disabilities, sexual orientation – all depending on the themes and research questions of the project concerned.
- The programme will give priority to projects with clear research management and administrative support from the institutions. It is essential that projects are well integrated organisationally, thematically, methodologically, empirically and/or theoretically.
- The programme will promote the development of research groups and competency within the areas covered under the VAM programme. Under calls for proposals for research funding, priority may therefore be given to projects that incorporate recruitment in the form of doctoral and/or post-doctoral research fellowships, primarily as a part of Researcher Projects.
- Many projects will find it beneficial to have contact with users in various ways, such as through the use of reference groups. The programme will encourage dialogue with informants and users – before, during and after the research project. Studies of disadvantaged groups may lead to challenges of an ethical and methodological nature. This is not unique to the VAM programme, but vigilance and consideration are required here as well.
- The programme board may stipulate more specific priorities in the calls for proposals for research funding, with regard to both thematic area and type of project.

## 5 International cooperation

To further enhance the quality of Norwegian research on welfare, working life and migration, the programme wishes to encourage the closer integration of international cooperation into the daily lives of Norwegian researchers. It is essential that researchers enter into binding research cooperation with researchers and research groups in countries that conduct high-quality research of relevance for the issues addressed under the VAM programme with a view to knowledge exchange and reciprocal learning. The programme will increase its focus on international cooperation and mobility in the application assessment process (cf. the Research Council's Strategy for International Cooperation 2010–2020).

In keeping with the white paper on research, *Long-term perspectives – knowledge provides opportunity*, the programme will also encourage researchers to participate in the European Research Area (ERA) and the EU framework programmes for research as well as bilateral research cooperation with countries with which Norway has signed research agreements. Greater participation by Norwegian researchers in e.g. the EU framework programmes will enhance competitiveness and strengthen access to the international knowledge base. The

following instruments and measures will be used to achieve the objective of strengthening international research cooperation:

- Provide funding for research cooperation between individuals, such as research stays abroad for Norwegian researchers and international visiting researchers hosted by Norwegian institutions;
- Encourage genuine international research cooperation;
- Encourage the use of the shared European infrastructure;
- Stipulate that research projects must aim to publish in international journals;
- Encourage Norwegian researchers to apply for funding from NordForsk, the EU and the European Science Foundation (ESF), including initiatives under the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST), e.g. through funding for strategic processes;
- Facilitate contact and project cooperation with international researchers and research groups of relevance for research conducted under the VAM programme, e.g. through funding for networking;
- Inform those involved with bilateral research cooperation and project establishment about the various funding initiatives administered by the Research Council with a view to encouraging the development and submission of applications for funding from the EU framework programmes for research;
- Ensure that information about the programme and projects is available in English;
- Actively assess the various types of international cooperation at the programme level.

## 6 Communication: Publication and dissemination

The programme will facilitate researchers' efforts to carry out more extensive, better dissemination and publishing activity targeted towards other researchers, users, the media and the public at large. The programme's webpages (<http://www.forskningsradet.no/vam>) are updated on a regular basis with news briefs about research results, activities and planned calls for proposals. Measures to be implemented under the programme are specified in the annual communication plan. The programme emphasises that research is disseminated in three different forms:

- Scientific dissemination;
- User-oriented dissemination;
- Public-oriented dissemination.

The research-performing institutions are responsible for ensuring *scientific publication* and the dissemination of research results from research projects. The programme requires that all research projects have specific plans for dissemination that state where the results will be published. The research projects must establish their own websites. Scientific publication is crucial for ensuring quality and promoting the internationalisation of research. There are many paths to international publication, but one of the most effective is for a researcher to work at a general level of abstraction that allows international comparisons. The programme

emphasises the importance of increasing scientific publication, both nationally and internationally.

The programme will establish a framework to ensure that the projects target their dissemination of research results to relevant *users*. This is achieved through various types of events such as conferences and seminars. The programme will also facilitate the synthesis and compilation of summaries of existing national and international research. A user forum will be established to provide the programme board with a wider array of viewpoints and ideas from users, both in connection with strategic measures and activities related to dissemination and the use of research findings. In addition, dialogue during and in the final dissemination phase will naturally take place at various meeting places under the auspices of the programme, the projects and the users themselves.

The researchers and research institutions have the primary responsibility for disseminating research results to the general public. The media will be an important channel for public-oriented dissemination under the VAM programme. Various media channels may also be used to focus a critical light on research conducted under the VAM programme. Components of both the user- and public-oriented dissemination activity include webpages updated by the programme and projects; thoughts about target groups for projects (“who will make use of the research findings and why?”); state-of-the-art reviews, syntheses and summaries of new and existing research; adaptations of projects for profiling in the media and as popular scientific works in the form of books and articles, opinion pieces and participation in public debates.

## **7 Budget**

The budget for the 2009–2018 programme period is estimated to be roughly NOK 960 million, provided that the final budget framework is approved by the Storting. During the programme period up to 2018, the programme board will determine the focus of the calls for proposals on the basis of the project portfolio’s ability to meet the objectives of the programme. In 2013, the programme is being funded by the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

## **8 Coordination with other related programmes and instruments at the Research Council**

The VAM programme represents a major boost to Norwegian social research and covers a very broad thematic range as well as many disciplines and social sectors. The programme shares an interface with many other programmes and initiatives administered by the Research Council, which means that cooperation and distribution of responsibility are important tasks.

The VAM programme falls under the Research Council’s high-priority area “Healthy and active for many years”. This area of activity was established in response to the increasing number of elderly in society, and it is vital to acquire knowledge about the factors that result in high participation in working life for all age groups.

Among all the related programmes, educational research, especially the *Programme for Research and Innovation in the Educational Sector (FINNUT)*, and the *Programme on Sickness Absence, Work and Health (SYKEFRVÆR)* are especially important. Both encompass research areas that play an integral role in the development of the modern Norwegian state and the sustainability of the welfare society. In this regard, these two programmes are part of the research in the priority area of welfare and social challenges. Similarly, the *FRIPRO funding scheme for independent projects* in the social sciences is related to the VAM programme as it is an instrument for quality enhancement and thus a contribution to scientific renewal in the area. The *Research Programme on Public Health (FOLKEHELSE)* and the *Research Programme on Health and Care Services (HELSEOMSORG)* share an interface with regard to research on welfare and sickness absence. Research on the management and organisation of the local production of welfare services and value creation in the districts under the *Research Programme on Democracy and Governance in a Regional Context (DEMOSREG)* is relevant for the VAM programme as well.

Research under the VAM programme on social insurance benefits, pensions and welfare economics must be viewed in connection with the *Evaluation of the Pension Reform (EVAPEN)* and the *Evaluation of the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration Reform (EVANAV)*, the latter of which will be concluding in 2014. These areas are closely linked and must be given consideration when further developing knowledge about the welfare service and administration. The VAM programme could also share an interface with some of the development research conducted under the research programme *Norway – Global Partner (NORGLOBAL)*, such as through studies of large-scale migration flows.

Some of the research conducted under the *Programme on the Cultural Conditions Underlying Social Change (SAMKUL)* will generate important knowledge about the cultural foundation and prerequisites of the welfare society, i.e. its normative sustainability. This may apply to research on e.g. the multicultural society, gender equality, and culture and values in Norwegian working life.

The delimitations of and cooperation with other programmes and initiatives will be specified in upcoming action plans, funding announcements and meeting place activities. The VAM programme's many linkages to other R&D efforts within and outside the Research Council show just how wide-ranging and crucial this area of research is.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Please refer to the following webpages for more information about the respective programmes:

<http://www.forskningssradet.no/utdanning>, <http://www.forskningssradet.no/sykefravaer/>,  
<http://www.forskningssradet.no/folkehelse>, <http://www.forskningssradet.no/helseomsorg>,  
<http://www.forskningssradet.no/evapen>, <http://www.forskningssradet.no/eva-nav>,  
<http://www.forskningssradet.no/demosreg>, <http://www.forskningssradet.no/fripro>,  
<http://www.forskningssradet.no/norglobal>, [www.forskningssradet.no/samkul](http://www.forskningssradet.no/samkul),  
<http://www.forskningssradet.no/no/Publikasjon/forskningnord/1156181576037>

## 9 Organisation

### 9.1. Programme board

The overall responsibility for the programme lies with the Division for Society and Health, which has also appointed the VAM programme board. The programme is administered by the programme board acting on behalf of the Research Council. The programme board is responsible for ensuring that the programme achieves the stipulated objectives and is implemented in the most effective manner possible with regard to the plans that are drawn up and within the framework adopted by the division research board. The tasks of the programme board are mainly strategic in nature. The programme board is administered under the auspices of, and reports to, the division research board via the division executive director and the director of the relevant department. The Research Council's administration is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the programme.

#### Members of the programme board

The programme board has been appointed to serve from 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2016, and consists of the following persons:


- Alf Erling Risa, Professor, University of Bergen, *chair*
- Per Mouritsen, Professor, Aarhus University, Denmark
- Mai Heide Ottosen, Programme Director, Danish National Centre for Social Research (SFI), Denmark
- Cathrine Holst, Researcher, University of Oslo
- Per Johansson, Professor, Uppsala University, Sweden
- Tone Westlie, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Labour
- Barbro Bakken, Director General, Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion
- Stein Reegård, Head of Department, Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO)
- Toril Lødemel, Head of Department, Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO)

Deputy member:

- Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS)

### 9.2 User forum

A broad-based **user forum** involving ministries, directorates and key user groups will be established. Meetings will be held prior to important milestones, such as revisions of the work programme and calls for proposals. The user forum enables users to submit input and will ensure the beneficial exchange of information between users and the programme board. Separate meetings with the funding ministries not represented on the programme board will be held as well.



This publication may be downloaded  
from [www.forskningsradet.no/VAM](http://www.forskningsradet.no/VAM)

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Published by:

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Welfare, Working Life and Migration (VAM)

[www.rcn.no/vam](http://www.rcn.no/vam)

Cover design: Design et cetera AS

Printing: 07 Gruppen/The Research Council  
of Norway

Copies: 100

Oslo, October 2013

ISBN 978-82-12-03256-9 (printed version)

ISBN 978-82-12-03257-6 (pdf)