



Work programme
2009–2018

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

Work programme 2009-2018

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

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The report can be ordered at:
www.forskningsradet.no/publikasjoner

or green number telefax: +47 800 83 001

English translation: Stultz Språktjenester/Carol B. Eckmann
Design:
Photo/illustration: Shutterstock
Printing: Allkopi
Number of copies: 100

Oslo, August 2010

ISBN 978-82-12-02805-0 (printed version)
ISBN 978-82-12-02806-7 (pdf)

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

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1 Summary

A fundamental challenge in the future will be to maintain and develop the Norwegian welfare society in the face of increasing social and cultural heterogeneity and the globalisation of the economy, politics, and working life and the private sector, along with demographic, social and cultural change. Rapid change gives rise to trends which appear paradoxical in nature and lead to processes that together comprise a complex and conflicting whole.

These challenges must be met with high-quality, action-oriented knowledge about the welfare society's economic, social and normative sustainability based on inclusion and exclusion as key perspectives. The Research Programme on Welfare, Working Life and Migration (VAM) will therefore promote research which views empirically linked areas in the same context and which generates new knowledge and insight: Research under the programme's broad thematic priority areas will describe and analyse the current situation and relevant trends in these areas as well as attempt to identify the mechanisms that drive their development. It is crucial to produce new knowledge as well as synthesise existing knowledge about the welfare society's mechanisms, structures, players and instruments in a "new era" and under new framework conditions.

Research conducted under the VAM programme is to be of high quality, empirically based and theoretically grounded. It is to help build expertise while remaining critical, policy-oriented and relevant to users. The programme seeks analyses that links together areas traditionally separated by institutional and sectoral dividing lines, while at the same time enhancing the basis for action in the various sectors.

2 Background

2.1 Strategic perspectives

Welfare in a broad sense has been identified as one of the priority areas of Norwegian research. The government white paper on research, *Climate for Research*, devotes a separate chapter to this topic:

"The Government seeks to further develop the welfare society. Research-based knowledge about how the welfare society functions is a prerequisite for achieving this." (Translated from the Norwegian found on page 47 of the report.)

The Research Council's strategy for 2009-2012, *In the Vanguard of Research*, states that new knowledge is needed to deal with the challenges facing society in the areas of welfare, working life and migration, such as globalisation, aging and new trends in culture, attitudes, forms of cohabitation and lifestyles.

Until now, research on working life, welfare and migration has been divided among three different programmes under the Research Council: the Programme on Welfare Research (VELFERD), the Programme on Working Life Research (ARBEIDSLIV) and the Research Programme on International Migration and Ethnic Relations (IMER). The Research Council

has now consolidated the research activity of these three programmes under the VAM programme in order to achieve a more cohesive approach to research in areas that are connected in various ways. The objective is to generate relevant knowledge and enhance the knowledge pool. The government white paper on research states that the development of the welfare society and welfare schemes requires knowledge and expertise which is cross-sectoral, broad-based and interdisciplinary, and it points to the VAM programme as an answer to the great need for cooperation and interdisciplinary coordination in the area of welfare research. 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 funding being made available, some NOK 960 million over a ten-year period, will enhance the ability to develop a broad yet targeted project portfolio and corresponding expertise within the research community.

Action-oriented social research encompasses a wide range of issues, and has many users and stakeholders in addition to policymakers within the public administration. Both regional and local public administrators 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 as well as to ensure that the perspectives and results of research also become a part of the public debate.

2.2 Basis for research and previous 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 VAM work programme is based in part on that report as well as on extensive input from stakeholders and the research needs ascertained by the previous programmes.

The VELFERD, ARBEIDSLIV and IMER programmes have resulted in substantial knowledge production, general competence development and scientific development within many research communities. In the period up to 2008, the VELFERD programme focused its research activity on *service provision in the welfare state* and *the relationship between welfare schemes, social institutions, the family and the labour market*. In its final report from 2008, the programme board pointed out that too little research had been conducted on welfare services. The same is said regarding macro-oriented studies, in part because research projects do not take full advantage of the extensive database registers available in Norway. The programme also produced fewer cross-sectoral, connective analyses and international comparative studies than it had sought. Some projects were closely related thematically and empirically to the IMER programme and especially to the ARBEIDSLIV programme, such as research on the relationship between the family and labour market. The VELFERD programme recommends that more large-scale projects be funded and points out the need for more welfare research from political science and economics perspectives. The programme also stresses the need for projects that incorporate a multi- and interdisciplinary approach and cooperation with the health sciences, including research on what is referred to as government-funded absence from work. In addition to continuing to identify problems in this field, welfare

research must also study the population as a whole, for instance, research on affluence and wealth, new social divisions and topics concerning dissatisfaction due to high expectations.

The main focus of the ARBEIDSLIV programme has been *an inclusive working life* in a broad sense: What conditions and processes affect the participation, development, presence and absence of the individual in working life, i.e. the various mechanisms that promote inclusion and exclusion at the individual, enterprise and societal level? Several projects have studied immigrants in the labour market and various aspects of the “new” wave of labour migration, based on the assumption that working life plays a key role in value creation and serves as a vital arena for human relationships and broader social integration. The IMER programme has focused primarily on *international migration, which has ramifications and creates opportunities and challenges for all sectors of society*, including political and public administrative arenas, working life and the private sector, family and daily life, and civil society. Considerable scientific scope and broad-based approaches are needed, and research on migration and immigrants cannot be segregated into its own field or be limited thematically to the welfare state. In their report on research needs in the ARBEIDSLIV and IMER programme boards note the need for studies on the workplace and companies as well as on innovation and organisational development and for a more open approach to the area of migration with a focus on relations between immigrants and the majority population and on international and transnational conditions.¹

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 framework 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 and performance targets

The primary objective of the programme will be operationalised through the following secondary objectives and performance targets for the research, dissemination activities and user dialogue conducted under the programme.

¹ More information about the three research programmes is available at: <http://www.forskingsradet.no/vfo>, <http://www.forskingsradet.no/arbeidsliv> and <http://www.forskingsradet.no/imer>

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 theoretical perspectives and which takes a critical as well as developmental approach to these. High scientific merit is both a requirement for research activity and an objective of the programme. Scientific publication, particularly at the international level, is a central quality-related objective. Research conducted under the VAM programme seeks to:

- Strengthen quantitative research by developing empirical methods in general and by further expanding the use of database registers, also including across projects and institutions;
- Promote research based on insight from different types of data in which qualitative and quantitative methods may be linked and complement each other;
- Promote the development of qualitative methods and qualitative longitudinal data sets;
- Play a role in improving the research infrastructure in terms of data, not least with regard to access to, and the standardisation of, registry data and other quantitative data;
- Ensure that the necessary competence building occurs in the areas of welfare, working life and migration through studies of the research field's fundamental questions and assumptions;
- Encourage the development of theoretical perspectives that give new insight into social conditions;
- Improve the understanding of social trends by developing relevant models and theories, and relate prevailing ideas and forms of understanding to empirical analysis.

To generate knowledge that can further the development of the welfare society, the programme will encourage research projects within the entire range of social science disciplines, as well as from the humanities, law, health sciences and social medicine. The programme will seek to achieve an inter- and multidisciplinary project portfolio.

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:

- Encourage research that develops genuine international research cooperation, such as in the form of international partners and project participants, research stays abroad for Norwegian researchers and international visiting researchers hosted by Norwegian institutions;
- Increase the number of Norwegian researchers and research groups in areas under the VAM programme that receive funding from the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development and from other international funders of research;
- Facilitate a greater number of comparative studies at the international and Nordic levels.

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 formulation in its research areas, and contribute to an informed public, democratic debate on welfare, working life, integration, migration and other aspects of the welfare society and its future development. To achieve these objectives, the programme will:

- Ensure that the research is discussed with, disseminated to and used by decision-makers, policymakers and other users of research;
- Consult with and obtain input from relevant users regarding vital strategic processes under the programme;
- Develop a broad knowledge pool in the thematic priority areas under the VAM programme;
- Target the research activity to ensure it is perceived as relevant and useful by the users, media and general public, which includes encouraging more public-oriented dissemination;
- Develop and implement measures to increase learning and expertise among the users;
- Facilitate the synthesis and compilation of summaries of existing national and international research;
- Encourage and provide the framework for more national and international scientific publication from research projects under the programme.

4 Priority research tasks

4.1 Overall perspectives

The economic, social and normative sustainability of the Norwegian welfare society will pose a fundamental challenge in the future. An increasingly globalised economy, political arena, working life and private sector will lead to greater social and cultural *heterogeneity*. Demographic, social and cultural change and an economy based on raw materials are other significant factors. There are issues to be dealt with at many levels and in many areas, 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 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. A particular focus in this context will be 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. Gender perspectives will be crucial in many studies at the individual and group level, as well as in analyses of the current situation, trends and underlying mechanisms of phenomena at the societal level.²

² Please see e.g. the Research Council's *Policy for gender equality and gender perspectives in research* from 2008.

The programme will give priority to research projects that actively incorporate the overall perspectives, as illustrated below in the description of thematic priority areas. Analyses of the formulation and impact of policy, the design of institutions, measures and the provision of services may be linked to these various areas. Although the thematic priority areas below are described separately, it is the programme's expressed intention and objective that VAM research projects analyse these in relation to each other and as a whole. The order in which these areas are listed does not indicate any ranking among them.

4.2 Thematic priority areas

4.2.1 The paradox of wealth: the social, cultural and economic significance of the development of prosperity from a long-term perspective

Norwegian society has become wealthier, partly due to the management of petroleum resources and revenues. Major changes are occurring in the economic base (of industry and commerce) as well as in the qualifications required. Higher education and formal qualifications have become more important than they were in the industrial society. As a result, those who are not successful in the education society risk becoming marginalised from many of society's key arenas for integration and self-expression, such as the ordinary labour market. It has also been claimed that affluence may give rise to new social divisions and dissatisfaction due to unrealistically high expectations regarding the provision of public services, even among the most well-to-do segment of the population. Understanding the economic, social and political dynamics of prosperity in the short and long term is of fundamental importance. It is essential to acquire new knowledge about the various processes and mechanisms of marginalisation along with better insight into the Norwegian welfare society and its population as a whole, as well as the ramifications of wealth for social development. Studies of attitudes and mentalities will generate new knowledge by employing historical and cultural perspectives in combination with other perspectives.

4.2.2 Value creation and the organisation of working life

Value creation in working life and the private sector is essential for the development of the welfare society and for ensuring its economic sustainability. The development of an increasingly transnational and international working life in an open economy presents new challenges to society and new needs for knowledge, also in relation to the Norwegian working life model which is characterised by three-party cooperation between the social partners, a high level of participation, collective negotiations and a compressed wage structure. Relevant in this context are studies of trends and changes in the basic structure and functioning of working life given the globalisation of the markets, increased competition, international migration, and the Europeanisation and internationalisation of the regulatory framework for working life, including the consequences for the system of negotiation and three-party cooperation. Of equal importance are analyses at the company and institutional level, in both the private and public sectors, with regard to organisation, working environment, management and company culture, learning and restructuring, regional conditions and mobility, use of technology, and terms and conditions of employment and work. Research in these areas may provide critical insight into the processes and mechanisms that make companies and organisations competitive and innovative, thereby bolstering the foundation of the welfare state.

The global financial crisis appears to have affected Norway much less than other countries, but it is unclear what the impact of major adaptations in other countries will be on the situation in Norway over time. The fact that an open economy and globalisation have

ramifications is not new per se. Of interest to the VAM programme are the consequences that major, rapid adaptations introduced internationally as a result of the financial crisis may have for the development of the Norwegian economy at the micro and macro level.

4.2.3. The international and transnational dimensions

Globalisation stimulates specialisation, increased migration and a greater flow of goods, services and ideas across national borders. The rise in international migration is both a prerequisite for and a result of greater affluence. The population of Norway is becoming increasingly diverse with regard to culture and lifestyle, religion, values and outward appearance. This means that new resources are available for solving societal tasks while at the same time creating new challenges that must be dealt with by the government and society at large as well as by individuals, with or without an immigrant background. Welfare schemes and labour markets are affected when more Norwegian companies establish themselves abroad, more international students and international companies come to Norway, and more employees and pensioners spend shorter or longer periods abroad. Furthermore, the transnationality of lives and relationships and migration to and from Norway affect the labour markets' mode of operation, the welfare sector and daily life in general in various ways. In addition to gender and other variables and characteristics, it is clear that this increasing complexity, e.g. with regard to culture and values, adaptations and practices, challenges the entire society. This is the case across the board, from a meeting between a client and case administrator at a local welfare office, to issues relating to equality between the genders, teaching in upper secondary schools, an employer's qualification requirements or people's participation in activities in their local community.

4.2.4 Human capital and economic, organisational and social regimes

Norway's national wealth consists primarily of human capital, i.e. the individual's work capacity and expertise as well as the organisation and use of this expertise. The country's political, economic, social and organisational systems, including developments in the public and private sectors, lay the foundation for the development of the core national wealth. What trends may be identified in the short and long term? Women and men make long-term choices related to education, career, family and retirement within various geographic, social, cultural, institutional and organisational frameworks. In what way do such decisions at the micro level spawn a constellation of human capital at the macro level that helps to achieve the objectives for social development?

4.2.5 Labour market and working life

People's relationship to the labour market is a fundamental component of social integration and the sustainability of the economy. A primary challenge for Norwegian working life in the future will be to ensure that labour resources are utilised effectively, that women and men of working age are not excluded from or marginalised on the labour market and that vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, are integrated to a greater degree. The large number of working-age people who are partially or wholly outside of working life and the significant increase since 1980 in the payment of sickness-related benefits highlight the need for better knowledge about the connections between the welfare system and how the economy and labour market function, and the interaction between instruments targeted at employers, individuals and the public administration at all levels. Analyses are needed of various groups' relationship to and individuals' movement within the labour market over time with regard to health and capacity to function, recruitment, participation, discrimination, and presence in and absence from working life, including in a national regional perspective. The challenges relating to working life and the private sector and women's and men's education and careers vary greatly among the regions and between urban centres and outlying districts. This type of

knowledge is needed in many countries, and thus an international and comparative focus is important here as well.

A crucial factor in many people's relationship to working life is how family and work influence each other. The programme will emphasise the dynamics and interplay involved in this relationship, as well as the impact of this at the macro level. Patterns related to gender, ethnic and social background, and adaptations during various phases of life are key elements in this interaction. Other elements of interest include how companies and public regulatory mechanisms and schemes help to distribute and balance rights and obligations and facilitate the interplay between work and family, e.g. with regard to flexible, properly tailored working conditions, work hours and conditions for bringing up children and adolescents. In short, the programme board seeks a broad-based approach to research on a complex working life which is under continual development.

4.2.6 Organisation of welfare policy and the framework for governance

Reforms based on new public management have led to the fragmentation of the public sector. Coincident with this, several welfare-related problems are now being solved in the interface between levels and sectors and in cooperation between public, semi-public and private players. Changes in the distribution of tasks between levels of governance and between public and private players are thus one component of the reform picture. Another is new welfare policy instruments, such as the legal right to individual services. In what way do these developments affect the organisation of the welfare state and what are the ramifications? What are the implications for democracy and governance? What significance do these developments have for the welfare state's professions, not least from a gender perspective? And what are the socio-political implications for potential users of welfare benefits, depending on gender, age, ethnicity, education and disability?

The Norwegian welfare state is service intensive, and prognoses show in part a dramatically rising need for services and labour. The care-related needs have many different forms, which emerge from various individual needs, social differences, health, age and phase of life. Research on services must take its point of departure in the systems and institutions providing services, viewed from the perspective of the users as well as the practitioners. Analyses must also be placed within the framework of education, demands for expertise, economic and social frameworks, as well as gender, the family and the labour market. 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, also viewed in light of economic and structural framework conditions and the role of local democracy. The programme seeks research projects that span various age and social groups and attempt to provide a picture of the depth and breadth of developments. However, the programme does not encompass detailed descriptive studies of the individual service areas.

4.2.7 Processes, legitimacy and the normative basis of public policy

Public policy is focused on addressing tensions and conflicts, and this is also true for welfare policy in a broad sense. This is related to various values and ideologies, as well as to the potentially divergent interests of the individual and the collective. It will be relevant to study how welfare policy is formulated 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 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.

Welfare policy is not formulated in a vacuum. The EU, globalisation and migration all exert a measure of influence. This may be of a legal, political and economic as well as a conceptual nature. The demographic trend toward greater ethnic diversity and an aging population also affects the political agenda and political dynamics. It is of interest to study the media's role in this process. Policy in the areas of welfare, working life and migration is shaped through individual proposals targeted towards meeting acute needs or responding to criticism lodged in the current public debate, as well as through large-scale, comprehensive reforms. How do these processes and dynamics affect the formulation of welfare policy in a broad sense, how do these interact and what are the consequences for various population groups?

4.2.8 Consequences of increasing judicialisation

In recent years, *judicialisation* – increasing judicial regulation and legal authority – has become a topic of concern, including in the Norwegian report entitled “Power and Democracy” from 2004. On the one hand, judicialisation is said to have the potential to limit the decision-making authority of democratic bodies, while at the same time regulating and expanding the rights and obligations of citizens in a constitutional state, such as new legislation conferring rights related to the welfare sector and in the area of discrimination. The internationalisation of society also plays an integral role: We are subject to a supranational judicialisation through laws, directives, regulations and conventions such as directives concerning labour law and working environment, the Schengen Agreement and Dublin II Regulation, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, gender equality and the place of basic human rights in relation to exclusively Norwegian legislation. This has a major impact on national policy designation for segments of welfare, child, labour and immigration policy, and this is an area on which the programme board seeks to shed light.

4.2.9 Aging and labour market participation

Norway has a high level of participation in the labour market, and its high participation of women and older workers makes it different from many other OECD countries. Decisions concerning work and retirement comprise a key issue in the sustainability of the welfare society. It is essential that retirement behaviour is studied in connection with family circumstances, the labour market, private pension rights, the array of public services and social inequality. It is also crucial that research incorporates new perspectives which bring together several subject areas and which simultaneously employ an international comparative perspective in light of an aging population and the smaller proportion of working-age adults in many countries. A key question is whether greater prosperity and good health may lead to early departure from working life in spite of political objectives and measures to achieve just the opposite. Another vital issue is the role, influence and instruments that working life and companies have in this context. The programme seeks to develop a better knowledge base about the factors that lead to health problems and withdrawal from working life and those that promote a long, active working life.

4.2.10 International migration

Much less is known about the factors that direct and determine the flow of asylum seekers to Norway than about the motivation and reasons for labour migrants and their families to come here. Norwegian immigration policy is not designed in a national vacuum; it is based on international conventions and commitments as well as on cooperation agreements across national borders, not least within the EU system. There has long been a stated need for more research on the statutory framework and other legal rules relating to asylum and immigration,

and how these are practiced. Greater insight is needed into the factors that drive international migration flows and the characteristics of the flow of asylum seekers to Norway with regard to causes and driving forces, direction and variations in numbers, as well as the Norwegian immigration administration and policies in the field. This is related to conditions in the sending and receiving countries and to the exercise of national asylum policy within the framework of international conventions. The need for internationally oriented and comparative analyses is obvious; at the same time this issue can and should be viewed in connection with other aspects of integration, working life and welfare policy.

In recent years, various branches of industry and the national, regional and local labour markets have been characterised by extensive labour migration from Eastern and Central Europe. Immigration has helped to meet the demand for labour, eliminate bottlenecks and relieve pressure on the economy, while posing new questions and challenges: Will the migrants settle in Norway, possibly with their families? Of what significance is it that they receive the right to welfare benefits in accordance with international agreements and obligations? What about agreements and schemes for wages and working conditions, cf. the discussion on social dumping and the many cases of underpaid or undeclared work and working conditions below the minimum legal requirements? Will there be a large labour migration, primarily of women, to the health and social service sector in the future? Both labour migration in particular and migration in general illustrate major regional differences which give rise to new challenges. Very little is known about the long-term effects of this, both with regard to individual adaptations and the implications for working life in Norway and the general public's attitude towards labour migrants who receive the same rights to welfare benefits as the rest of the population. This issue is at the heart of the driving forces underlying the welfare society, and it is therefore crucial to gain new knowledge in this area.

4.2.11 The family and society

The family institution is undergoing change, be it with regard to various forms of mobility and new forms of cohabitation and lifestyles or issues related to socialisation and upbringing, fertility, the relationship between the generations and quality of life. The public debate on biology and gender, parents, children and marriage – on the family – has been given a boost in connection with the introduction of a gender-neutral marriage law and the right to artificial insemination for homosexuals. Some of this debate gives the impression that a certain socio-cultural stability exists with regard to the family as a basal institution, and in this context there seem to be some interesting differences related to religion and culture, socio-economic status and geography. Nonetheless, the family institution cannot be analysed only as a private care-giving arena or as an institution and concept that is at once hard to change and highly adaptable. The family also serves a vital function as an arena for economic support and a central economic unit in Norwegian society. The relationship between e.g. unpaid housework and paid work outside the home, in which the gender dimension plays a critical role, is an important topic for research under the VAM programme. Fertility, the decision to start a family and categorisation according to socio-economic background, and family-based care of children, the sick and the elderly may affect the composition of the labour pool with regard to both women and men.

Many immigrant groups, especially from developing countries, come from societies in which kinship and collectivism are more important than what is usual in Norway. In particular, this may apply to conditions for bringing up children and adolescents, gender equality and gender roles, and the role of family and religion in personal life and society. What is the significance of this when immigrants come in contact with Norwegian society in general and welfare

schemes in particular? The various immigrant groups have completely different levels of education, are integrated in the housing and labour markets to varying degrees, and use the welfare state's services and measures in different ways. The age composition of these groups, their reasons for residing in Norway and their length of stay, as well as the manner in which immigrants are received by Norwegian society, play into this. This area is one of many where research activities on welfare, working life and migration intersect and complement each other and where more knowledge is needed. The programme therefore seeks research projects that take a broad-based approach to the relationship between family and society.

4.2.12 Conditions for children and adolescents – mechanisms of marginalisation

Knowledge about the welfare conditions for children and adolescents is crucial for shedding light on the future development of the welfare society. Those who are marginalised during their younger years may drop out of primary or secondary school or develop behavioural, social or health-related problems. Vulnerability and social exclusion have their roots in an individual's life phases and the interplay between these and structural conditions. Gender and social background, as well as geographic, ethnic and minority group affiliation, are integral to how this is manifested. The programme seeks knowledge about the interaction between institutional, individual, family and community factors related to children's and adolescents' upbringing with a focus on the problem of marginalisation. Trends within society and the family suggest that inequality among various families related to conditions for upbringing and socialisation is a factor of growing importance. Studies of various types of preventive measures and child protection should be viewed from an interactive, developmental perspective. Emphasis will be placed on gaining an understanding of the causal and developmental conditions and on studies of effective interventions.

4.2.13 Marginalisation and criminality

Crime affects the quality of life and welfare of many more people than those directly involved. Rising insecurity creates a poor basis for trust and the development of social capital between people and groups, and as such may also threaten the support for and legitimacy of the state and society. The programme seeks new, action-oriented knowledge produced by new studies of the interaction between poverty and exclusion from education, leisure activities and the labour and housing markets on the one hand and substance abuse, violence and crime for profit on the other. Are the most effective crime prevention measures based on a high degree of inclusion in social arenas? The growth of organised and transnational crime creates new criminal careers and forms. Violence in intimate relationships is the focus of much attention, but very little is known about the problem. It is important that research in this area takes an historical and comparative perspective in addition to studies that combine perspectives from the social sciences, social psychology and law.

4.2.14 Social inequality and poverty

Social disparity and poverty are not compatible with the concept of the Norwegian welfare society. Research has shown that school drop-out is connected to future social inequality. Single parents are a group that scores low on economic indexes. Members of immigrant groups comprise a growing proportion of those who fall outside of working life and the universal social insurance schemes. This may be caused by objective factors, such as education and Norwegian-language skills, but discrimination and racist attitudes may play a role as well. There is a need for studies that investigate in greater depth the individual and social implications of this development. In general, the programme will give priority to research that links poverty more closely with processes that generate inequality as well as to research on the consequences of major social change and trends on the distribution of wealth. This applies to employment trends and economic cycles, immigration and labour migration,

the distribution of education and cognitive skills among the population, differences in health and how social problems are categorised and treated as an illness – in order to gain the right to benefits. It is also of interest to gain more knowledge about the impact of policy on the development of social inequality and poverty, not least 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.

4.2.15 Health and functional ability: Implications for social inequality and the development of welfare policy

Health in a broad sense is an integral part of the interaction between processes that create social and economic marginalisation. The programme is not seeking analyses of social inequality in health per se, but rather studies that focus on how health-related factors can add to our understanding of participation in working life. Health and participation are developed in close interaction throughout the various life phases, and there is also a need for knowledge about the impact of variations in participation in working life on inequalities in health. Women and men with disabilities face great challenges with regard to gaining access to education and working life, as well as participation in daily life and civil society, despite the objectives for integration and equal opportunity for all which are laid down in legislation on discrimination and accessibility. One issue is the individual's right to and opportunity for empowerment and self-determination; another is that major social resources may be wasted when those with disabilities and other groups with a high unemployment rate and high risk of exclusion do not participate in working life.

Issues of discrimination in the housing and labour markets as well as to other critical social arenas are included here, although they have other sources as well. Such issues may apply to both persons with disabilities and others such as those from an immigrant background and the elderly.

4.2.16 Aging, generation and demographics

More knowledge about the aging population is needed under most of the thematic priority areas under the VAM programme. Demographic changes raise new issues for broadly oriented welfare research. More people are living longer and need support, assistance and care from others in their daily lives. Segments of the labour force are relatively older, and it is a stated political objective to keep these workers in working life for a longer period of time, while others seek genuine opportunities for an economically sound early retirement, or to combine this with work. A new challenge is the growing number of elderly immigrants whose demands and desires are different from those of the majority population. Many are better off financially than previous generations of elderly, while others experience financial hardship after they retire. What do these trends indicate about the sustainability of the welfare state with regard to the economy of public benefits and pensions and the availability of labour in the service and care sector, demands and desires for other family-based forms of care for the elderly, health-related measures and services, measures targeted at the elderly in working life, politics and civil society?

4.2.17 Support for and sustainability of the welfare state

Popular support for the welfare state, its instruments and norms in connection with work and family will be an important focus of research under the programme. 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. For instance, will the increasing socio-economic differences between certain groups and the majority population

affect the solidarity between the various groups in society and the legitimacy and sustainability of the welfare schemes? Integration and social cohesiveness are also involved here, or put another way: are there any values that must be shared among the members of a society to avoid the dissolution of key institutions, and if so, which ones? In general, more knowledge about language, culture, history, religion and identity will be required to cope with the wide range of challenges – from globalisation and a more complex, diverse society to the sustainability of the welfare society and patterns of inclusion and exclusion.

4.3. Strategic priorities

4.3.1 General

The VAM programme is an action-oriented research programme with thematic priority areas based on a defined set of strategic priorities: *The programme seeks to generate 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 on relevant public policy may lead to the development and modification of this policy, as well as to the introduction and implementation of social reforms and policy initiatives. *Equally important, research conducted under the programme must take a long-term perspective, expand the knowledge base and address issues of a fundamental nature.* There is no conflict between this long-term focus and prioritising research of high scientific merit with a critical focus on and development of methods and theory, on the one hand, and the objective to conduct research that is relevant to and useful for decision-makers, policymakers and other users as well as for the public debate and the implementation of measures on the other. This is viewed as a complement to and support for high quality in research under the programme.

- As a general rule, the programme will give priority to high-quality projects that develop and strengthen competent research groups, thereby building broad, sound knowledge bases in the areas covered by the VAM programme. To ensure the quality of research, international referees will be used to assess the scientific merit of the projects while the programme board will assess the projects' relevance relative to the call for proposals and ensure cohesiveness in the application assessment process.
- The programme seeks projects which view research areas across as well as in connection with each other and which 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 seeks projects that investigate issues of significance for policymakers, the public administration and other key players, and in so doing contribute to the formulation of policy. However, it is important to make room for research on issues which are not the focus of current public debate. Researchers must ask new, insightful questions in order to encourage new directions in research.
- 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 and knowledge production. This applies to gender, ethnicity, age and generation, economic class and social stratification, disabilities, sexual orientation – all depending on the material and nature of the project concerned. The gender dimension and other variables may function together and have an augmenting effect or they may counteract each other depending on the context and circumstances.

- The programme encourages more extensive use of the many database registers in Norway, and seeks to improve access to and increase the use of such data in research as well as to promote the development of international standards in this area.
- The programme will give priority to research projects that incorporate relevant, realistic and genuine international cooperation, which may heighten the potential for high-quality international comparative studies.
- The programme seeks to develop expertise in the social sciences and other disciplines within the areas covered under the VAM programme as a means of ensuring adequate recruitment to these areas when the generational shift occurs in Norwegian social research. The programme will therefore attach importance to the inclusion of doctoral and post-doctoral research fellowships in Researcher Projects.
- Within the thematic priority areas laid down in this work programme, the programme board may stipulate more specific priorities in the calls for proposals for research funding. Consequently, the programme board will leave open the possibility of actively reaching out to particular professional and research environments at a later point in time to ensure the best possible coverage of the work programme's objectives and priorities.

4.3.2 Project requirements, specific and general

Funding under the VAM programme will be allocated primarily to Researcher Projects, which call for the inclusion of, new and junior researchers as well as international cooperation. Funding for Personal Post-doctoral Research Fellowships may also be announced. If necessary, funding may also be announced for support for events and for dissemination and publication activities. This and other strategic guiding principles will be specified in the programme's calls for proposals and annual action plans.

As a general rule, user participation in the Researcher Projects will not be required, although many projects will find it beneficial to have contact with users in various ways, such as through the use of reference groups. The programme nonetheless encourages 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 VAM programme board would like to see several large-scale projects as part of its portfolio. This will ensure a long-term perspective and thematic breadth and depth of the individual projects, and thus promote the development of expertise and research groups at the institutions. This requires clear research management and administrative support from the institutions. Large-scale projects are an instrument, not a goal in itself – and *it is essential that projects are well integrated* organisationally, thematically, methodologically, empirically and/or theoretically. Not all VAM projects will be required to be on a large scale. The individual project, what is to be done, why and how, must determine the staff, time frame and budget needed.

5 International cooperation

The Research Council's strategy for 2009-2012 cites better conditions for internationalisation as a means of increasing the capacity and enhancing the quality of Norwegian research. To develop the welfare society, Norway is highly dependent on knowledge obtained from outside its national borders. The government white paper *Climate for Research* states that Norwegian research policy is to promote a high degree of internationalisation in research. The international research system is in flux, which affects international research cooperation in Norway. 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 mutual learning. The programme will also encourage researchers to participate in the European Research Area (ERA) and the EU Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development as well as bilateral research cooperation with countries with which Norway has signed research agreements. 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 international research cooperation that makes 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);
- Facilitate contact and project cooperation with international researchers and research groups of relevance for research conducted under the VAM programme as well as for research in connection with Norway's bilateral research agreements;
- 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 research-performing institutions are responsible for ensuring scientific publication and the dissemination of research results from research projects. The programme's role is to 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 board will draw up a separate communication plan which outlines specific measures directed at the various target groups throughout the entire programme period, including funding for the programme's own and researcher-initiated networking and dissemination measures.

The programme's webpages (<http://www.forskningradet.no/vam>) serve as the hub for the programme's information and dissemination activity. The webpages are updated on a regular basis with news briefs, information about the programme's objectives and areas of responsibility, contact persons, projects, policy documents and calls for proposals.

6.1 Scientific publication

Articles in scientific journals constitute the most important form of scientific publication. It safeguards and enhances scientific merit and puts Norwegian researchers in contact with their peers in other locations, although the scope of and channels for scientific publication vary among academic traditions. As such, the programme welcomes the publication of books as well as articles, within the various scientific genres, and in both Norwegian and English.

From the researcher's point of view, the requirement to disseminate research results to users and the general public and to popularise the findings may sometimes be in conflict with the rules in place for scientific publication. A high-quality scientific manuscript can also be comprehensible to readers other than the author's closest peers. The programme will seek to ensure that researchers are able to actively participate in research dissemination *and* publish in appropriate scientific fora and channels.

6.2 User dissemination

The programme's webpages are a key dissemination channel for users. The programme will establish a framework to ensure that the projects target their dissemination of research results to relevant users. Guidelines for this will be elaborated on in a separate communication plan and in the calls for proposals.

Just as important as disseminating research results in the concluding phase of the projects is a dialogue and interaction with users during the programme and project periods:

- Provide input to the content of the calls for proposals – what should be studied?
- Discussion of findings to date, dissemination measures, organisation of meeting places;
- Dialogue with users during and in the concluding phase of the projects is in itself an arena for dissemination.

In addition to the funding ministries, which have a clear interest in the knowledge about areas covered by the VAM programme, the municipalities will be key users of the results via the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) and the sector-based directorates. The social partners also represent important users and dialogue partners. In the areas of welfare, working life and migration, there are many political, professional and special interest organisations which are interested in research activity and the application of research findings. The programme will seek out contact and dialogue with, for example, immigrant and immigration policy organisations, various contact groups and organisations for disabled persons.

A crucial component of the dialogue with key users is enhancing the users' expertise with regard to research. As mentioned above, researchers have a responsibility to disseminate and adapt research findings so that the knowledge reaches those who can use it, but much can also be done among the users who convert and translate the research-based knowledge into policies and measures.

In addition to contact through the programme board, dialogue with several of the most important users may also take place through user representation in the advisory group(s) to be established by the programme board. The advisory group(s) will provide the programme board with a wider array of viewpoints and ideas from users and researchers, 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.

6.3 Public-oriented dissemination

A general obligation of all programmes under the Research Council is to produce research-based knowledge about important social conditions for the public debate and the general public, which is a diffuse albeit vital user. Of course, the media and the public airwaves are chief users of research conducted under the VAM programme in the sense that they may also shed a critical light on the research itself. 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.³

7 Budget

The budget for the programme period 2009-2018 is estimated to be roughly NOK 960 million, provided that the final budget framework is approved in connection with the Research Council’s annual budget process. The programme receives funding from the ministries responsible for policy formulation in the areas described in the work programme. In 2009, these are primarily the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion and the Ministry of Children and Equality, but the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Health and Care Services, the Ministry of Justice and the Police and the Ministry of Education and Research provide funding as well, as do the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) and the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO). The financial framework for the programme determines which activities can be implemented. Plans call for a large-scale call for proposals for research funding at the start-up of the programme. Later in the period, the programme board will assess the need for funding announcements based on the project portfolio’s ability to meet the objectives of the programme.

³ Please refer to the Research Council’s policy on research dissemination for the period 2008-2012. (Available in Norwegian only.)

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. Because the programme shares an interface with many other programmes and initiatives administered by the Research Council, cooperation and distribution of responsibility will be important tasks.

Among all the related programmes, educational research, especially the *Programme on Educational Research towards 2020 (UTDANNING2020)*, and the *Programme on Sickness Absence and Exclusion from Working Life (SYKEFRAVÆR)* are critically 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, *Funding 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. Closely related to research on welfare and sickness absence are the *Research Programme on Public Health (FOLKEHELSE)* and the *Research Programme on Health and Care Services (HELSEOMSORG)*. The regional perspectives in the *Research Programme on Democracy and Governance in a Regional Context (DEMOSREG)* are relevant for the VAM programme, such as those related to the management and organisation of the local production of welfare services and value creation in the districts.

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 as from 2011 and the evaluation of the reform of the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV). These areas are closely linked and must be given consideration when knowledge about the welfare service and administration is further developed. The VAM programme could also share an interface with some of the development research conducted under the *Research Programme on Norway – A Global Partner (NORGLOBAL)*, such as through studies of large-scale migration flows.

The Programme for Gender Research studies cultural and social conditions that are important for understanding the Norwegian welfare society and thus also for the VAM programme. Also, some of the research on *cultural prerequisites underlying social development*, which the Research Council emphasises in its new strategy, will generate vital knowledge about the cultural foundation and prerequisites of the welfare society, cf. 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 Research Council's Focus on the Northern Areas initiative, *forskning.nord*, points especially to the research challenges related to indigenous peoples and studies of living conditions in the northern areas. Although the situation in the northern areas is not a specific area of research under the VAM programme, it may be included in the broad thematic priority areas described in Section 4.2 above.

In addition to the Research Council's various initiatives, it will be both important and useful to cooperate with leading Norwegian, Nordic and international research centres in this area.

In addition to cooperation with specific research institutions which conduct projects funded by the VAM programme, the programme board will explore the possibility of cooperating with Statistics Norway and the Norwegian Social Science Data Services and others on enhancing the use and access to database registers and other data, cf. the need for research to better exploit the potential found in such data.

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.⁴

9 Organisation

9.1. Programme board

The overall responsibility for the programme lies with the Division for Strategic Priorities, 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 research division 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 is appointed to serve from 1 February 2009 to 31 December 2012, and consists of the following persons:

- Alf Erling Risa, Professor, Department of Economics, University of Bergen, *chair*
- Anne Lise Fimreite, Professor, Department of Administration and Organisation Theory, University of Bergen
- Ivar Frønes, Professor, Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo
- Oddbjørn Raaum, Senior Research Fellow, Ragnar Frisch Centre for Economic Research
- Tom Rådahl, Deputy Secretary General, Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion
- Garbi Schmidt, Senior Researcher, Danish National Centre for Social Research (SFI)
- Åsa Steinsvik, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Children and Equality

⁴ Please refer to the following webpages for more information about the respective programmes: <http://www.forskingsradet.no/utdanning>, <http://www.forskingsradet.no/sykefravaer/>, <http://www.forskingsradet.no/folkehelse>, <http://www.forskingsradet.no/helseomsorg>, <http://www.forskingsradet.no/kjonnsforskning>, <http://www.forskingsradet.no/eva-nav>, <http://www.forskingsradet.no/demosreg>, <http://www.forskingsradet.no/fripro>, <http://www.forskingsradet.no/norglobal>, <http://www.forskingsradet.no/no/Publikasjon/forskningnord/1156181576037>

Deputy members:

- Gudrun H. Grindaker, Director, Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS)
- Jon Kvist, Professor, Centre for Welfare State Research, University of Southern Denmark

9.2 Advisory group(s)

In accordance with the programme board's mandate, the programme board will appoint one or more advisory groups. These are needed because the VAM programme is extremely wide-ranging, and the programme board on its own cannot represent all the research areas, subject areas and user interests encompassed by the programme. The main task of the advisory groups is to serve as scientific advisers to the programme board and provide thematic and strategic input, especially related to dissemination, action plans and funding announcements. The programme board will draw up a mandate for the advisory groups, including their number, composition and participation in meetings of the programme board.

9.3 Programme administration

- Rita Bergersen, Senior Adviser, *Programme Coordinator*
- Soili Aintila, Senior Adviser
- Steinar Kristiansen, Senior Adviser
- Tor Lunde Larsen, Senior Adviser
- Yngvill Rådmannsøy Tømmerberg, Senior Adviser
- Mette Nygård Smith, Adviser
- Kari Agnete Fantoft Strand, Senior Executive Officer

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This publication may be downloaded
from www.forskningsradet.no/VAM

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Published by:

© The Research Council of Norway

Welfare, Working Life and Migration (VAM)

www.rcn.no/vam

Cover design: Design et cetera AS

Printing: Allkopi

Copies: 100

Oslo, August 2010

ISBN 978-82-12-02805-0 (printed version)

ISBN 978-82-12-02806-7 (pdf)