



The Research Council
of Norway

Ensuring quality – the process of evaluating research fields/disciplines in Norway

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ESF workshop III, Vienna 6-7 October 2008





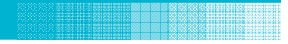
The Norwegian context

- No formal evaluating body
- Many evaluations are ad hoc tasks commissioned by ministries
- The statutes of the Research Council of Norway:
 - "...ensure the evaluation of Norwegian research activities..."

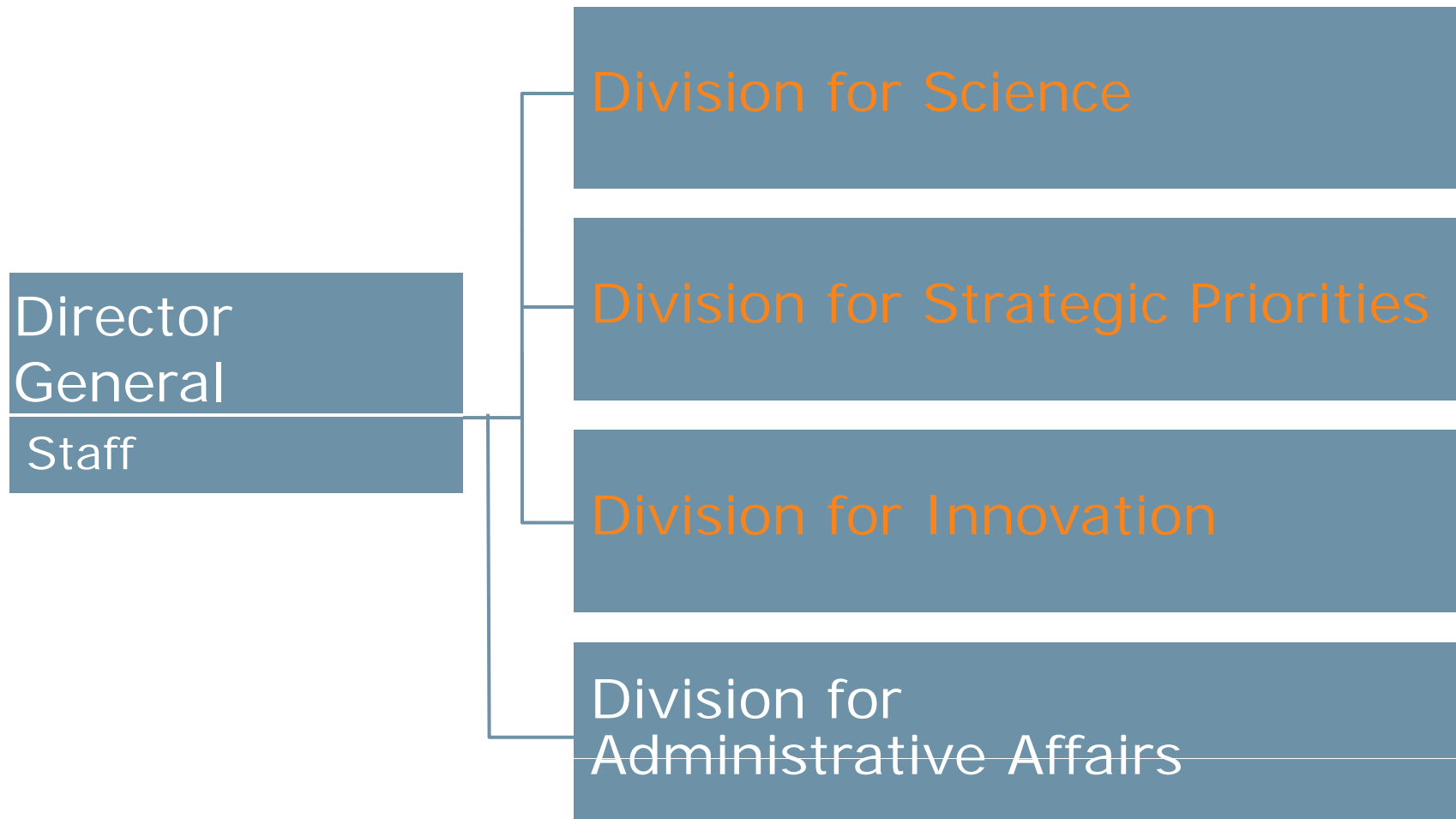
Major tasks of the Research Council of Norway

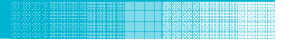
- Advisor to the Government
- Research funding
 - Support basic research
 - Implement national thematic priorities
 - Support private R&D
- Networking and dissemination
- Internationalisation





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Types of evaluations

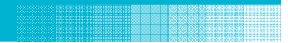
- The quality of research
 - Projects
 - **Scientific research fields/disciplines**
 - Programmes
 - Institutions
- The quality of policies
 - Instruments and schemes
 - Economic impact

Evaluating research fields/disciplines

- financed by the Government or Research Council**

- As basis for policy advice
- As basis for Research Council strategy
- Measures to improve quality
- Research institutions' own development

"a gift to the research system"



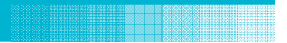
Evaluation of research fields/disciplines – assessing “the health” of Norwegian research

- Chemistry (1997)
- Earth sciences (1998)
- Biology, basic incl
biomedicine (2000)
- Physics (2000)
- Mathematics (2002)
- ICT (2002)
- Linguistics (2002)
- Political Science (2002)
- Medicine and Health (2004)
- Pedagogics (2004)
- Technology and engineering
sciences (2004)
- Nordic languages and
literature (2005)
- Pharmaceutical research
(2006)
- Development research
(2007)
- Economic Research (2007)
- Historical Research (2008)



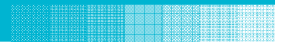
Plan of action – 5 year plan

- Administrative organisation
- Information/dialogue with research institutions
- Appointing committees/panels
- Commissioning analyses/bibliometry
- Fact sheets
- Self evaluations
- Hearings
- Evaluation reports (including quality control)
- Summary report
- Public presentation



The challenge of ensuring quality (I)

- Concentrate on "important" evaluations
 - Concentrate resources
 - Meta-evaluations: increase comparability
- Take control of the organisation and planning process
 - Ensure improvements in the process
 - Develop a systematic approach
 - Develop measurements
- Involve the evaluatees
 - Strive for maximum openness
 - Get advice on "problem areas"

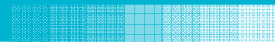


The challenge of ensuring quality (II)

- Allow enough time for planning/process
 - Secure the best peers/experts – legitimacy
 - Put energy into the composition of the evaluation team
 - Allow less time for writing report
- Interact with the committee/tenders
 - Explain goals
 - Present expectations concerning advice from evaluation
 - Be open for advice
 - Be a receptive host - open for complaints

Experiences in ensuring quality (III)

- Contact between committee and evaluatees
 - Allow room to correct misunderstandings (dialogue)
- Report
 - Prepare a list of contents
 - Ensure correct facts
 - Allow/invite comments also on final version (confidence)
- Follow-up
 - Describe "carrots" – show possible consequences



Robert M Pirsig: Zen and the art of Motorcycle Maintenance – an inquiry into values

Quality:

...You know what it is, yet you don't know what it is..... But some things are better than others, that is, they have more quality. But when you try to say what the quality is, it all goes poof!....

...How do you know, or how do you know that it even exists?....

...But for all practical purposes it really does exist. What else are the grades based on? Why else would people pay fortunes for some things and throw others in the trash pile? Obviously some things are better than others – but what's the "betterness"? ...

...What the hell is Quality? What is it?