

**The Research Council of Norway  
Division for Energy, Resources and the Environment**

## **Midterm Evaluation of the Centres for Social Science-related Energy Research (FME Samfunn) Background and terms of reference**

### **1. About the FME Samfunn scheme**

The overall objective of the FME Samfunn scheme is to establish centres that will make major contributions to developing a fact-based knowledge pool for strategic decision-making in the public and private sectors. Centres under the scheme must give high priority to the dissemination of research results. As participants in the public debate, the centres will also be responsible for dissemination of information to society at large. The FME Samfunn scheme seeks to enhance knowledge transfer, internationalisation and researcher training.

The FME scheme features a higher level of ambition, a longer term perspective and a more intense concentration of efforts than most other instruments in the Research Council of Norway.

For research-performing institutions, the FME scheme offers opportunities for long-term competence development by engaging in research of a high international standard in close collaboration with user partners from industry and public sector.

The scheme is administered by the Research Council of Norway, Division for Energy, Resources and the Environment and is mainly funded by the budgets of the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy. Each of the centres may receive funding for maximum eight years; five years plus a final three year period provided a positive outcome of a midterm evaluation.

### **2. Purpose of the evaluation**

The midterm evaluation is outlined in the document "Requirements and guidelines". Under the auspices of the Research Council, roughly 3 1/2 to 4 years after the centres are established; there will be an evaluation of each centre. The evaluation will be based on a uniform scheme involving the Research Council's governing bodies. The elements to which the evaluation will devote special attention are the Success criteria for 'Centres for Social-Science-related Energy research'.

In particular, the evaluation will assess the scientific results the centres have achieved relative to the original project description, and consider whether the scientific results achieved and the competence accrued are relevant and of benefit to users and the society. Further, the evaluation is to assess the plans for the centre's activities in the potential final three-year period. In addition to this evaluation, the Research Council of Norway will evaluate the administrative conditions at each centre.

The evaluation will form the basis for a decision about whether to continue the individual centre for the rest of the overall eight-year term, or to wind it up after five years. The evaluation will also give advice to the centres on aspects of their activity that should be improved. The Board for the Division for Energy, Resources and the Environment, or a party authorised by the Board, will make the decision based on recommendations made by the administration.

### **3. The organisation of the evaluation**

#### **3.1. The evaluation team**

Each centre will be evaluated by a team of international experts. The evaluation team will consist of up to six persons. The experts in the team will have the competence and the task to evaluate the centres from a scientific point of view. One or two of the experts in the team will have experience from centre schemes or programmes for collaboration between different research institutions and industrial and public partners. These “generalist” experts will look at the centre from a general point of view. Each centre will suggest up to four suitable scientific experts. The Research Council will decide whom to invite.

#### **3.2. The evaluation sessions**

The basic documentation will be distributed by the Research Council to the members of the evaluation team not later than one month prior to the evaluation. The evaluation of the three centres will be carried out during the period February 2015 – April 2015. The evaluation report is due within six weeks after the interview sessions.

During the site visit the evaluation team should meet:

- The Centre Leader
- The Chair of the Centre Board
- Representatives from the user partners
- Representatives from research partners
- Host institution staff incl. representatives from the top management
- Research leaders active within the centre
- Doctoral students.

Staff from the Research Council will be present at the site visits. The staff will act as administrators and should not take active part in the evaluation, but can add information during work sessions.

#### **3.3. Background material for the evaluation**

The following written material will form the background for the evaluation:

- *Present project description*
- *Budget tables from the Research Council's project data base.*
- *Annual reports for 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 (draft if available) from the centres.*
- *Work plan for 2015 including tables for funding and costs.*
- *Reports from the centres and its partners according to a standardised outline:*
  - A. A self-evaluation of the centre
  - B. Fact sheets including CV for the management team, list of publications, PhD candidates, financial data and selected indicators.
  - C. An assessment of the centre from the host institution.
  - D. An assessment of the centre from each of the partners.
  - E. Project description for the final three-year period, including a plan for the winding-up.
- *Documents describing the Centres for Social Science-related Energy Research Scheme. (The Research Council of Norway, Oslo 2010)*
  - Description of the scheme.
  - Requirements and guidelines.
  - Information to applicants.

#### **4. Mandate for the Evaluation Team**

The evaluation team will make the evaluation in the context of the success criteria (Appendix 1). The evaluation team will review progress of scientific efforts, recognising it is early to expect conclusive results. The evaluators will form an opinion concerning the approach and measures taken so far by individual centres to judge the potential for their long-term development towards a successful FME. Evaluators may offer suggestions for remedial action to enhance the prospects for centre success.

The basic reference for the evaluation is provided for by the criteria on which the centres were originally selected:

- Scientific quality
- The relevance and benefit to users,
- Relevance with a view to the call for proposals, including relationship to the host institution's research strategy.

The evaluations of the individual centres are to emphasise the following elements:

##### **A. Research activities**

The centre has a distinct research profile, conducts long-term, thematically relevant research of high international calibre in the area specified in the project description, and demonstrates this through its production of doctorates, scientific publications, papers for presentation at recognised international conferences and other measures of scientific excellence.

- The centre utilises a multidisciplinary approach in its research activities; i.e. it forges close links between various subject areas within the field of social science. The centre also strengthens the links between social science-related energy research and technology-related energy research.
- Researchers from the host institution and research partners participate actively in the centre's research.
- The centre has achieved reciprocal mobility of staff between the centre and partners in the centre.
- The plans for research activities for the centres' final three-year period. The assessment will include the plans for the centres when their FME status and funding expire.

##### **B. Relevance and benefit to users and the society**

- The centre participates visibly in national and international arenas in which energy and climate-related questions are discussed.
- The centre has implemented measures to ensure that the expertise and results achieved by the research activity are effectively transferred to and utilised by the user partners, and actively disseminates research results to broader user groups and the public at large.
- The centre's user partners have increased their research commitments over time through participation in the centre's activities.

##### **C. Internationalisation**

- The centre is successful in international research cooperation, e.g. as a player under the EU framework program.
- The centre engages in active collaboration with international research groups, and has at least one international research partner.
- The centre attracts good foreign senior researchers, postdocs and PhD students.

##### **D. Recruitment**

- The centre has an effective framework for researcher training.

- The centre is actively engaged in education, especially at the master's level, with emphasis on increased recruitment of women.

#### **E. Organisation and Management of the Centre**

- The centre has good visibility and a strong identity.
- The centre is organised in a way that fits well into the host institution's organisation.
- The centre has a Board and management that ensure that the plans are followed up.
- The centre has an administration with high professional and administrative skills.
- The centre cooperate with other centres when relevant.
- The centre works to achieve gender balance.

#### **F. Financial aspects**

- The host institution and partners increase their funding (both cash and in kind)
- The centre has made active efforts to attract new partners (*some centres have from the start a rather complete set of partners, while others might have a greater potential to attract additional partners*)
- The centre has been successful in securing other external funding

#### **G. Impact beyond the centres and their partners**

An important basis for the evaluation is the overall objective of the FME Samfunn scheme, which is to establish centres that will make major contributions to developing a fact-based knowledge pool for strategic decision-making in the public and private sectors. As participants in the public debate, the centres will also be responsible for dissemination of information to society at large.

More specifically, the FME Samfunn scheme aims to establish centres that will:

- expand the knowledge base for shaping national energy policy and Norway's input to the international energy and climate policy debate;
- generate knowledge that is vital to triggering innovation and realising the value creation potential in the areas of renewable energy, energy efficiency and CCS, thus supporting the technology-related activities at the eight established FME centres;
- develop social science and socio-economic methodology and models to facilitate the achievement of the preceding objectives.

The evaluation team will also comment on the self-evaluation reports, partner assessments and the site visit. Although the individual centres will be the main focus, the evaluators should also comment on the organisation of FME scheme and the role of the Research Council of Norway.

To avoid giving a premature indication of the Council's decisions to prolong the individual centres, the Evaluation team is asked not to comment specifically on this issue.

The evaluation team will write an evaluation report for each centre, and also a brief overall report concerning the scheme as a whole. The reports should be written in consensus by the evaluation team and sent to the Research Council of Norway. Each centre will get the opportunity to comment on factual errors in the description of their own centre.

The report will be openly circulated to all Centres, host institutions, relevant ministries and to any other agency or person who have expressed interest in this kind of information.

## Appendix 1

### Success criteria for the Centres for Social Science-related Energy Research (FME Samfunn)

*In addition to fulfilling the formal requirements, a successful FME Samfunn centre will be characterised by the following:*

#### Research activity

- The centre has a distinct research profile, conducts long-term, thematically relevant research of high international calibre in the field specified in the project description, and demonstrates this through its production of doctorates, scientific publications, papers for presentation at recognised international conferences and other measures of scientific excellence.
- The centre utilises a multidisciplinary approach in its research activities; i.e. it forges close links between various subject areas within the field of social science. The centre also strengthens the links between social science-related energy research and technology-related energy research.
- Researchers from the host institution and research partners participate actively in the centre's research.

#### Relevance and benefit to users

- The centre participates visibly in national and international arenas in which energy and climate-related questions are discussed.
- The centre has implemented measures to ensure that the expertise and results achieved by the research activity are effectively transferred to and utilised by the user partners, and actively disseminates research results to broader user groups and the public at large.
- The centre has achieved reciprocal mobility of staff between the centre's partners.
- The centre's user partners have increased their research commitments over time through participation in the centre's activities.

#### Internationalisation

- The centre has been successful in achieving recognition at the international level (e.g. researchers associated with the centre have received awards or been invited to be keynote speakers at international conferences).
- The centre has been successful in international research cooperation, e.g. as a player under the EU's framework programme.
- The centre engages in active and binding collaboration with international research groups and has contributed in other ways to the internationalisation of Norwegian research. The centre has at least one recognised international partner.
- The centre attracts outstanding international researchers, including research fellows and senior staff, as visiting researchers.

#### Researcher training and recruitment

- The centre has an effective framework in place for researcher training, and helps to train highly skilled personnel in the centre's areas of specialisation.
- The centre is actively engaged in education, especially at the master's and doctoral levels, and promotes recruitment to the centre's subject areas, including increased recruitment of women.

**Partners and funding**

- The centre receives long-term funding from the host institution and partners.
- Active efforts are made to attract new partners.
- The centre has been successful in securing other external funding.

**Organisation**

- The centre has a visible profile, a strong identity and a successful collaboration with its partners.
- The centre is organised in a manner that is well adapted to the host institution's organisation.
- The centre has a board and management which ensure that the intentions and plan for the centre are followed up.
- The centre has a common administration with a high degree of scientific and administrative autonomy.