

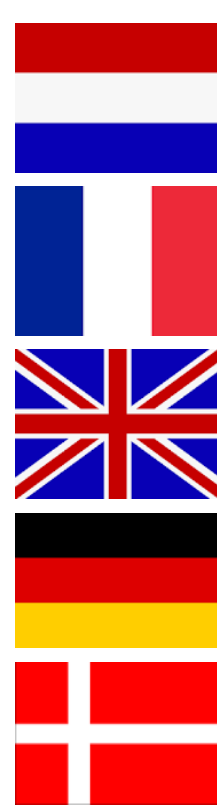
Research evaluations at and for universities

A comparison of governance instruments in five European countries

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Project Setting

“Governance and performance of research - an international comparison of scientific systems and their organizations”



Macro-level of 5 national research systems:

- National research policy
- Acts, laws
- Literature report
- Document analysis
- 11 Expert interviews



Meso-level of research organizations; case studies at 13 universities:

- Focussing on natural sciences/ engineering
- High performer (THE, scimago)
- Document analysis
- 60 Expert interviews: presidents, deans, directors etc.



Micro-level of the scientific practices of individual scientists:

- International survey on research conditions in Europe (online)

Which role do national evaluations play at and for universities?

Description along governance modes (Crouch 2011; Whitley 2012)

→ No national evaluation systems for public research organisations in Germany and Denmark

France: HCERES	Netherlands: Standard Evaluation Protocol	Great Britain: Research Excellence Framework
Implementation via state since 2005 AERES, HCERES	Since 1992, implementation via cooperative policy	Since 1986 REF, implemented via state
Exogenous coordination independent agency	Exogenous-endogenous coordination: VNSU	Exogenous via state HEFCE
Exit possibility	No exit possible	No exit possible
Organised in 5 year waves, based on self-eval. Reports → substantial & procedural control	Organised in 6 year waves, based on self-eval. Reports → substantial & procedural control	Organised in around 6 year waves → substantive state control
formalised & systematised, no bibliometric indicators	formalised & systematised, bibliometric indicators taken into account	Highly formalised & systematised, bibliometric indicators usually not taken into account
Public organisational report	Public organisational report on demand	public national report, comparison via indicators → national and organisational rankings possible

“the evaluation system has just for recommendations, for organisation (...), to know where you are strong? What you have to do to be strong so (...) this is good, this is no that good, you may change that way, and I think it’s appropriate. (...) And helpful (...) So, that you can use it on your home to change the organization of some labs . They may be too gentle.” (F, University Dean)

“we have developed, not only focus on individual output indicators, not only focus on research, not only focus on quantity but also on quality. Not only focus on- also emphasising the importance of narratives, instead of only empirical analysis, also stimulating scholars to participate in societal dialogue et cetera. So, we are trying to use the indicators in a much broader way.” (NL, University Dean)

“we’ve all now grown used to it, it has become very important. So it governs really or it structures (...) everything we do on the research side. So when we appoint people (...), when we promote people we look at what contribution they’ll make to the REF (...) Departments in constructing their strategy will be thinking about how to get the most out of the REF.” (GB, University Faculty board)

Results: Effects on organizational governance?

Two types of using Evaluation as an inner organizational governance instrument:

Strong effects on organisational governance: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Opens up an inner organisational dialogue▪ Scope for action of steering persons and decision-making▪ Internal organizational negotiation of the results▪ Place for singularity and particularities▪ More discussion about criteria for excellence▪ More informal processes▪ Higher involvement of scientists in self-government	Low effects on organisational governance: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Coordination on organisational level is much more external oriented (panoptical regime of performance)▪ Primary adaptation to criteria of REF: focussing on publication strategies; common sense for excellence▪ Evaluation as an instrument of competition on micro-level▪ Installs a dominant value orientation on publications
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Explanations for the different effects?

(1) implication of evaluation-output: numbers (GB) versus textual description (NL & F)? (Star & Browker 1999)

(2) instructor of Evaluation: state (GB) versus independed agency (F & NL) implication for “power” of actors and acceptance

(3) Connection of Evaluation-results to other governance-instruments like state or third-party funding (indirect (NL & F) versus direct (GB))

(4) “power” of evaluation-reports: more in GB than in NL & F (Boltanski & Thévenot 1991; Lampland & Star 2009)



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