

# **The Next Generation of National R&D Programmes in Norway: Consequences for Action Research and Regional Development**

Jarle Moss Hildrum, Henrik Dons Finsrud,  
Pål Klethagen

This paper examines the impact of a new national R&D programme in Norway, Programme for Regional Innovation and R&D (VRI), which uses action research (AR) to facilitate innovation-oriented collaboration between regional industry, R&D and public institutions. While the VRI programme builds on a sequence of previous AR-oriented regional development programmes, it represents a significant novelty as it democratizes control over research funds from central authorities to regional coalitions of private and public decision makers. Drawing on our own experiences from a long-standing AR project in the Telemark region, we discuss how the commencement of the VRI programme is affecting ongoing development initiatives there and the conditions for conducting AR in regional contexts. We conclude that VRI has led to a situation in which more regional actors are involved in action research activities, and in which there is closer collaboration between researchers and regional decision makers. At the same time, we suggest, there is a risk that the new programme will lead to regional lock-in, and marginalization of national R&D institutions and action research competencies accumulated there during previous R&D programmes.

**Key words:** Large scale action research, regionalization, national programme, Scandinavian model, social partners