



## Research evaluation matters

Barriers and incentives towards responsible research evaluations  
at Danish Universities

**OSLO** **CONFERENCE**  
**4-6 MAY** **2022**

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An investigation of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour toward value-driven research assessment among leaders of Danish universities



**Aim:**

Uncover barriers and incentives to responsible research evaluation practice

# Overview

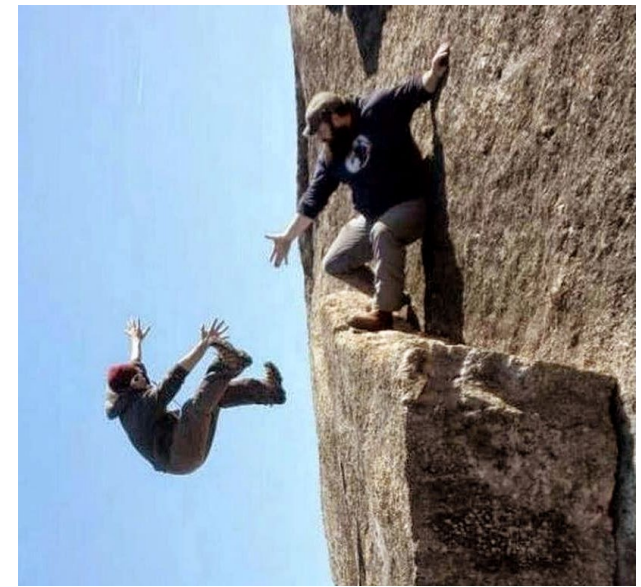
- Background
- Method & Results
- Implications



# Background

Observations we did at Danish institutions:

- Many metrics-based research assessments
- Growing demand for bibliometric reports

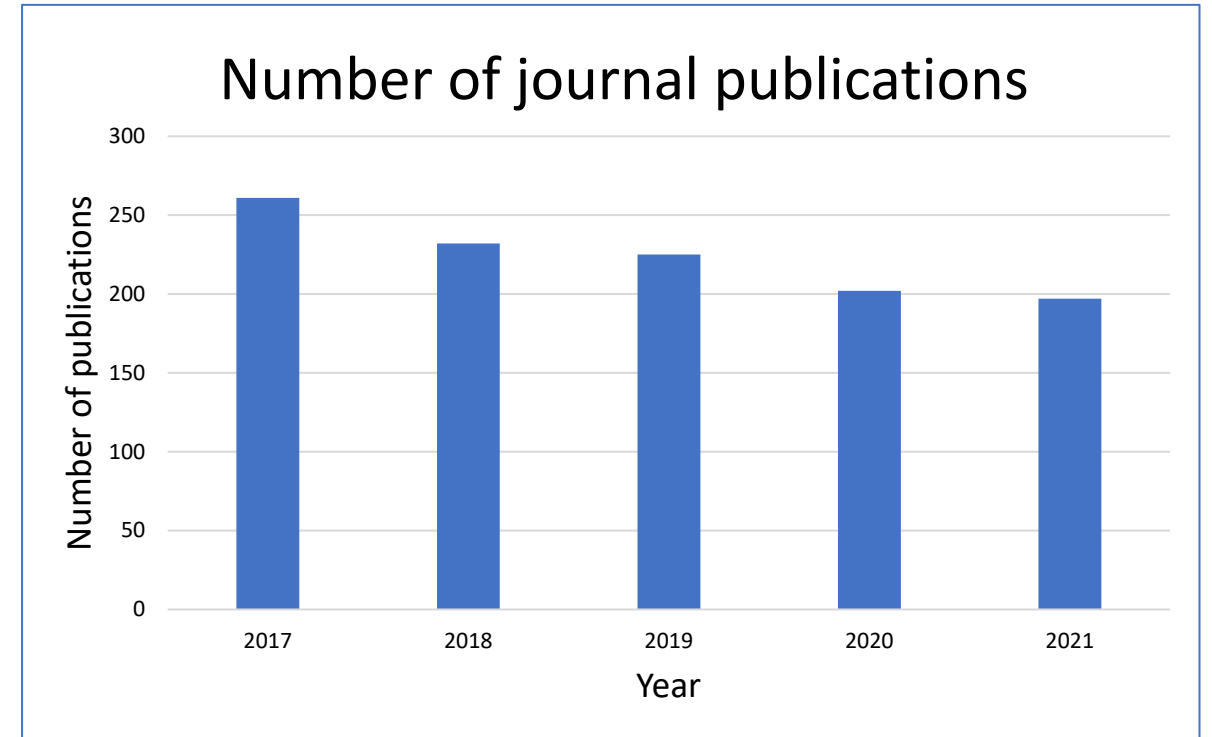
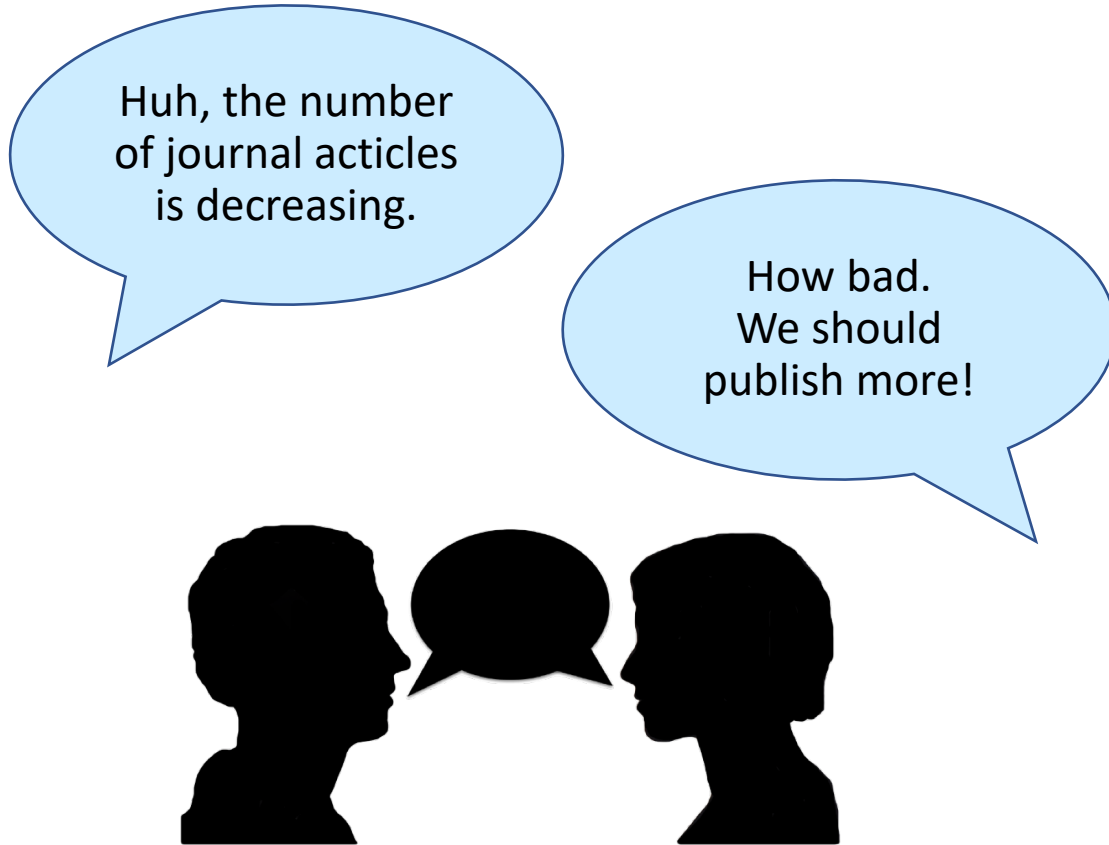


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Rising awareness of need for responsible research evaluation surfacing on international agendas:

- European Commission ‘Towards 2030’ universities vision statement:
  - “*move beyond existing ranking systems*”
  - “*avoid overly-simplistic ways of measuring research performance*”
  - “*adopt alternative mechanisms of research evaluation*”

# What may happen? Metrics become the goal



# What we did

Personal interviews with 10 deans and department heads from among Danish universities

- 30-45 minutes, conducted online
- Stratified recruitment (University size, managerial level, main discipline)
- Inductive coding

Interview in two parts:

- 1) Current evaluation practices at the faculty/department
- 2) Perceptions and opinions towards SCOPE

– *and SCOPE is...*

# The SCOPE framework

Five steps for conducting value-driven research evaluations:

- **S** – **START** with what you value about the entity being evaluated;
- **C** – Consider the **CONTEXT** in which the evaluation takes place;
- **O** – Explore all **OPTIONS** for evaluating, both quantitative and qualitative;
- **P** – **PROBE** your approach for unintended consequences;
- **E** – **EVALUATE** your evaluation.





# Behind SCOPE



The International Network of Research Management Societies:  
Research Evaluation Group (REG)

<https://inorms.net/research-evaluation-group/>



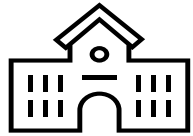
# Results

1. HE leaders are experienced, but research assessments are initiated **reactively and driven by metrics**.
2. There is a **genuine interest** in learning more about responsible research evaluations, and attitudes towards supporting frameworks such as SCOPE are positive.
3. But there are barriers; Barriers to meaningful and responsible evaluations include perceived **external pressure** (stakeholders) and a general **inertia** in established monitoring and evaluation systems.

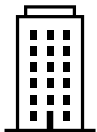
# Background characteristics of interviewees

## University type

Full range university  
(multi/broad):

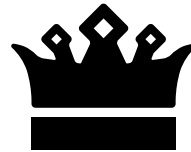


Specialised university  
(mono/single):



## Managerial level

Dean:



Head of department:

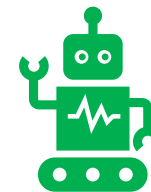


## Main discipline

Humanities & social science:



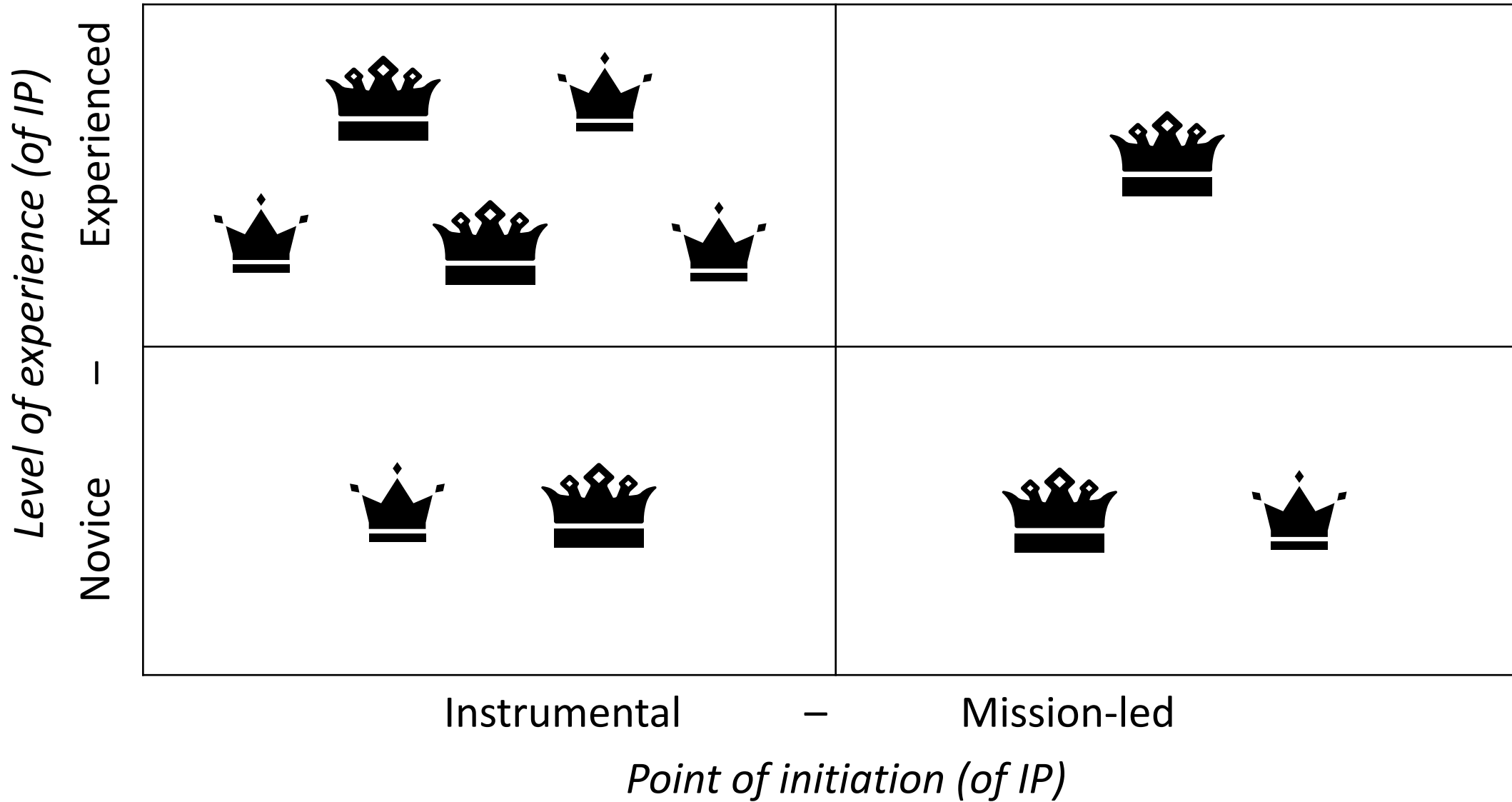
Natural & technical sciences:



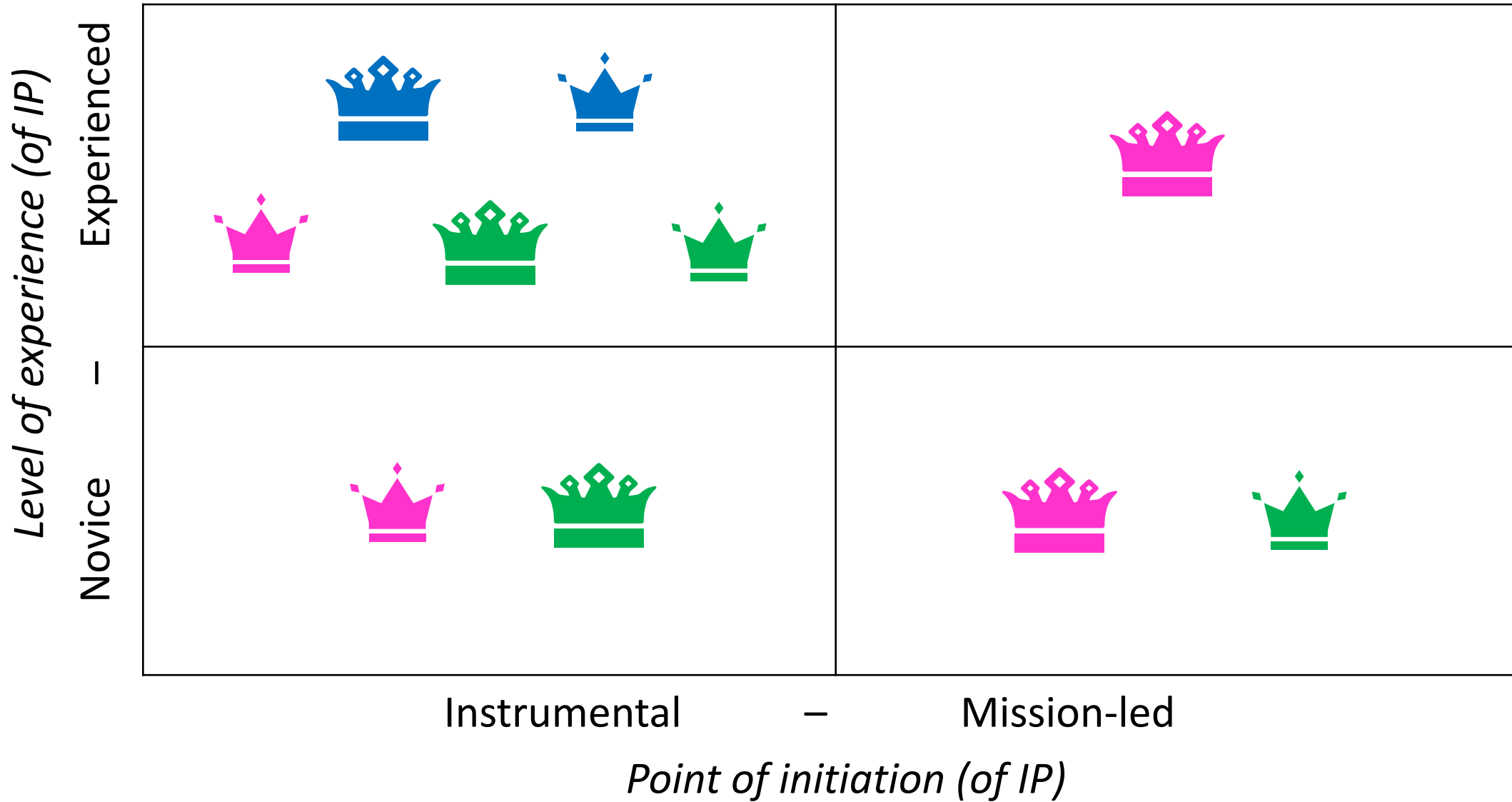
Health sciences:



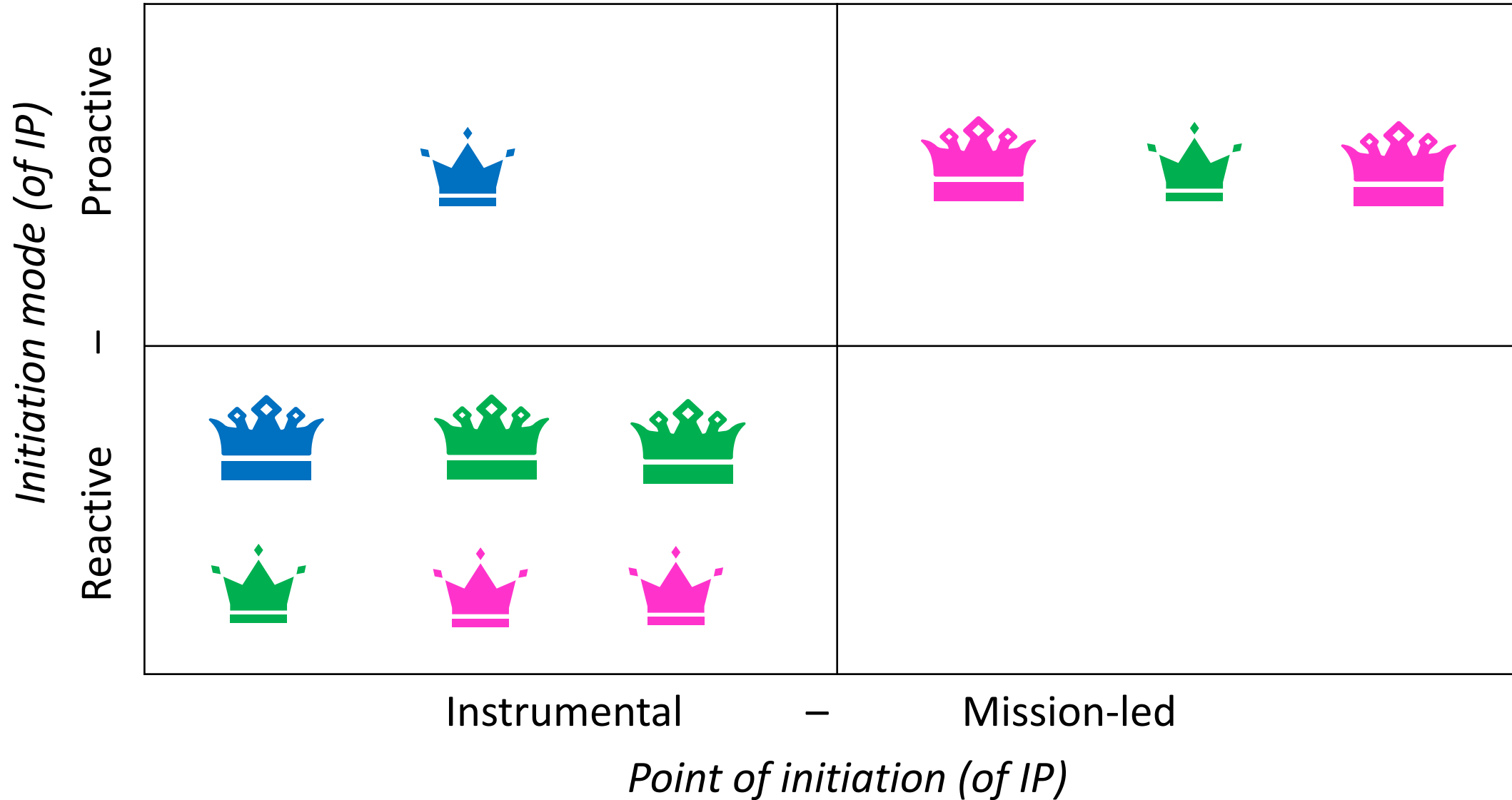
# Starting point for evaluation and experience



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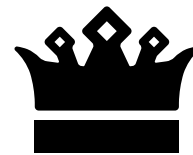
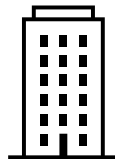
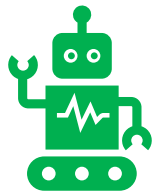
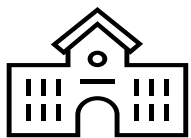


# Starting point for evaluation and mode of initiation



# In more depth: Knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour

- Interview persons' evaluation experience
- Definition of values
- Evaluation types

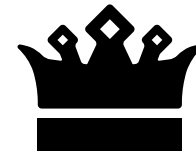
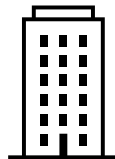
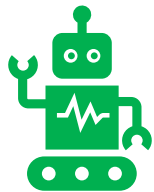
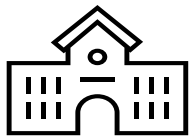


# Interview persons' evaluation experience

Repeat design  
from previous  
evaluations

Experience from  
serving on  
international  
expert panels  
abroad

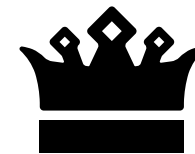
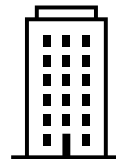
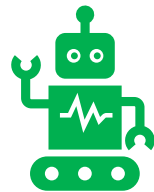
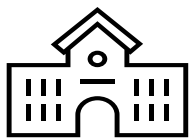
Learning by  
doing





# Interview persons' evaluation experience

- Have not heard of SCOPE and do not mention other frameworks, guides etc., for example DORA.
- Do not refer to training or use of evaluation experts.
- Do not mention the international discussion about responsible research evaluation.

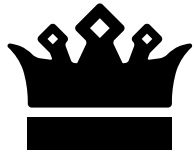
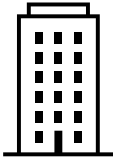
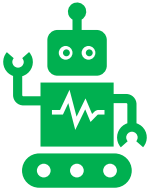


# Definition of values

Adopt external stakeholders' and funders' values.

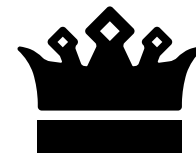
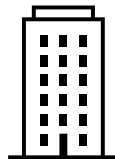
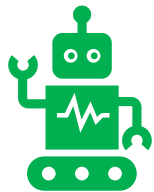
Let traditional metrics define values, i.e., example with decreasing number of publications.

Define own values.



# Definition of values

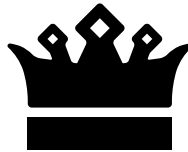
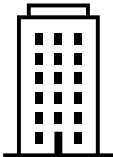
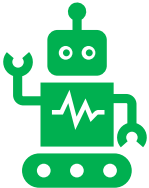
- External actors' values and traditional metrics may not comply with the strategy and missions of the institution.
- External actors' values and traditional metrics may be used without considering the consequences.
- Carefully prepared values should be the starting point of responsible research evaluation.



# Evaluation types

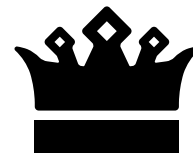
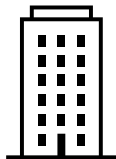
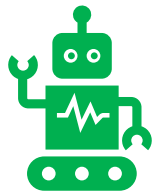
Qualitative evaluation of department every fifth year, incl. self-assessment, site visit from international expert panel, etc.

Quantitative management information, for example, dashboards with current data and metrics.



# Evaluation types

- Qualitative evaluation of department is perceived by the interview persons as gold standard.
- Quantitative management information is used for micro decisions in everyday work.
- SCOPE or other frameworks are not used. Nor is training or use of evaluation experts.



# Results – once again:

1. HE leaders are experienced, but research assessments are initiated reactively and are driven by metrics.
2. There is a genuine interest in learning more about responsible research evaluations, and attitudes towards supporting frameworks such as SCOPE are positive.
3. But there are barriers; Barriers to meaningful and responsible evaluations include perceived external pressure (stakeholders) and a general inertia in established monitoring and evaluation systems.

# Implications

- Supporting frameworks such as SCOPE should be promoted more actively.
- Knowledge of frameworks such as SCOPE will enable changes in current evaluations practices and will, eventually, also lift the quality of HE research evaluations.
- As in the implementation of gender equality plans and open science, YOU as research managers and administrators (EARMA members) can play a key role in advancing more responsible research evaluations.

# Supporting tools



- SCOPE guide
- 5 arguments to persuade HE leaders to evaluate responsibly
- Case studies

<https://inorms.net/research-evaluation-group/>

Online workshops coming up where participants can use SCOPE in their own research assessments. Will be announced at:

<https://inorms.net/research-evaluation-group/>

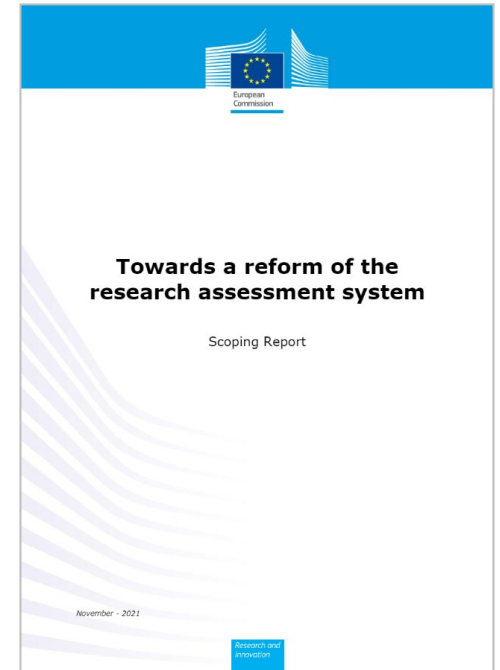


# Concluding remarks

- We talked to 10 Danish HE leaders... How do HE leaders in other countries approach research evaluation?

At European level:

- Scoping report by the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (European Commission)  
<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/707440>





**THANK YOU**

