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VEDTAKSSAK: Videreføring av Senter for konkurransepolitikk (Bergen Center for Competition Law and Economics, BECCLE)

Henvisning til bakgrunnsdokumenter

- Styresak [16/16](#) Videreføring av Bergen Center for Competition Law and Economics (BECCLE)
- Styresak [22/21](#) Videreføring av Bergen Center for Competition Law and Economics (BECCLE)
- Fakultetsstyresak [7/25](#), Det samfunnsvitenskapelige fakultet
- Fakultetsstyresak [12/25](#), Det juridiske fakultet

Saken gjelder

Universitetsstyret vedtok i 2011 (styresak 45/11) å opprette [BECCLE](#) (Bergen Center for Competition Law and Economics) i første omgang for en 5-årsperiode fra 1. juli 2011. Rektor fikk fullmakt til å inngå en samarbeidsavtale med Norges handelshøyskole (NHH) om opprettelsen av senteret. Samarbeidsavtalen fastsetter rammene for senterets drift og organisering. Senterets faglige aktivitet er et samarbeid mellom Det samfunnsvitenskapelige fakultet ved Institutt for økonomi, Det juridiske fakultet, og Norges Handelshøyskole (NHH). Senteret har også hatt et nært samarbeid med Konkurransetilsynet.

Senteret har siden 2011 blitt evaluert og videreført to ganger, i 2016 og i 2020. Begge gangene har NHH og UiB vært tilfredse med evalueringene og foreslått å videreføre senteret for nye femårsperioder. Også i 2020 inkluderte universitetsstyrets beslutning om videreføring av BECCLE et vedtak om en ny faglig evaluering innen utgangen av femårsperioden 2021-2025.

Styret for BECCLE behandlet saken om evaluering av femårsperioden 2021-2025 i sitt møte den 11. september 2024 og følgende evalueringskomité ble opprettet:

- Professor i økonomi Otto Toivanen, the Department of Economics, Aalto University
- Professor i jus Anne Witt, EDHEC Business School
- Direktør for eksterne relasjoner Kjell Jostein Sunnevåg, Konkurransetilsynet

Evalueringskomiteen leverte sin rapport høsten 2024, vedlagt. Grunnlaget for evalueringen var BECCLEs egevaluering, årsrapporter for 2023 og 2024, samt et digitalt møte med ledergruppen 23. oktober 2024. På bakgrunn av rapporten fra evalueringskomiteen anmoder styret i BECCLE om at senteret videreføres. Fagmiljøene, ledelsen og fakultetsstyrene ved Det juridiske fakultet og Det samfunnsvitenskapelige fakultet

stiller seg bak styret for BECCLE sin anbefaling for en ny periode på fem år fra og med 1.1.2026. Senteret er ikke en fast del av UiBs interne organisering (grunnenhet) og det følger derfor ikke av universitets- og høyskoleloven at videreføring av senteret må behandles av universitetsstyret selv. Det foreslås derfor at universitetsledelsen, i samråd med fagmiljøene, for fremtiden behandler spørsmål knyttet til videreføring, organisering og drift av BECCLE i tråd med samarbeidsavtalen som er inngått med NHH.

Det samfunnsvitenskapelig fakultet viderefører administrativ støtte til senteret og Det juridiske fakultet og NHH viderefører støtte til senteret i form av driftsmidler i tillegg til forskernes egeninnsats i senteret. UiB vil støtte senteret i form av dekning av kostnader til husleie og et årlig driftstilskudd.

Universitetsdirektøren sine kommentarer

Evalueringsrapporten viser at har BECCLE oppnådd gode faglige resultater innenfor de målsettingene som er satt. BECCLE har utvilsomt gitt betydelige faglige bidrag til det konkurransepolitiske feltet og bidratt til å styrke den konkurransepolitiske kompetansen i Norge og øke kunnskapsgrunnlaget for konkurransepolitikken.

Forslag til vedtak

1. Universitetsstyret viderefører Bergen Center for Competition Law and Economics, BECCLE, for perioden 2026 til og med 2030.
2. Det skal gjennomføres en ny faglig evaluering av senteret innen utløpet av neste femårsperiode.
3. Universitetsstyret delegerer til universitetsledelsen å ta stilling til framtidig videreføring av BECCLE.

Tore Tungodden

30/04/2025/Arne R. Ramslien

Vedlegg

- 1 BECCLE internal evaluation 2024
- 2 Evaluation of the Bergen Center for Competition Law

Date: September 26 2024

From: BECCLE (general management)

To: External evaluation committee of BECCLE

INTERNAL EVALUATION OF BECCLE – 2024

Background and the goals

For more than twenty years ago it was decided by the Parliament (Stortinget) that the Norwegian Competition Authority (the NCA) should move from Oslo to Bergen. The NCA has been in full operation in Bergen since 2006. At that time both the University of Bergen (UoB) and the Norwegian School of Economics (NHH) had many researchers working on competition policy, especially within economics. A working group consisting of members from both UoB, NHH and NCA submitted a report in October 2010 to the leadership at UoB and NHH, respectively. They proposed to establish Bergen Center for Competition Law and Economics (BECCLE). NHH and UoB supported the idea and asked the working group to specify more details about costs and financing. In September 2011 NHH and UoB decided to establish BECCLE as a center jointly owned by NHH and UoB for a five years' period.

The objective of this cooperation is to strengthen and further develop the expertise in competition law and economics. The centre's main activity is research within the fields of competition law and economics.

BECCLE will be a meeting place for faculty, including postdocs and PhDs, from UoB and NHH who conduct research within the fields mentioned above.

In cooperation with the Norwegian Competition Authority and other relevant stakeholders, the parties should continue the effort to secure long term external funding for the center.

To assess to what extent BECCLE had succeeded in contributing to these objectives, the Board of the University of Bergen and the Board for the Norwegian School of Economics has decided that the Center should be evaluated every fifth years of operations.

In September 2024, the BECCLE Board decided to appoint an evaluation committee ("the Committee") consisting of:

- Professor of economics Otto Toivanen, the Department of Economics, Aalto University
- Professor of law Anne Witt, EDHEC Business School
- Director External Relations Kjell Jostein Sunnevåg, the Norwegian Competition Authority

The Committee's assignment is to evaluate the center according to the objectives outlined above by the end of December 2024.

As documentation for the Committee, the BECCLE management will deliver a self-assessment report (internal evaluation) and its annual reports. In addition, the BECCLE management is available for a meeting with the Committee if the Committee so wishes, where the management presents the center's activities, and the Committee has the opportunity to ask questions.

Both in 2015 and in 2020 the evaluation consisted of an internal as well as an external evaluation. This third time we follow the same procedure. This document is the internal evaluation, done by the management of BECCLE (Lars Sørgard, Bjørn Olav Johansen, Ingrid M. H. Barlund and Ronny Gjendemsjø).

Note that Covid-19 reduced the activity considerably for the years 2020 and 2021, and this was indeed a large challenge for BECCLE since a lot of the activity is based on physical meetings, seminars and conferences. Normally we publish an annual report each year, but because of Covid-19 we have no annual report neither for 2020 nor for 2021. The annual report for 2022 summarizes some of the activities also in 2020 and 2021. Enclosed you will therefore find only two annual reports this time, from 2022 and 2023. The annual report for 2024 is not yet ready, but we will in our internal evaluation refer to some of the activities this year as well.

To strengthen and develop the expertise in competition law and economics, and to succeed with research in this field, it is a need for a broad approach concerning activities. There is a need for an interplay with international researchers in this field, but also with various stakeholders such as competition agencies and private parties. Organizing seminars, conferences and taking part in the public debate are therefore activities that contribute in broad terms to the overall goal of BECCLE. There is also an interplay with teaching, since research can be triggered by relevant teaching and teaching should be research based. Finally, for recruitment it is of large importance to stimulate master and PhD students within this field. We will also discuss the funding of BECCLE, ref the goal to continue the effort to secure long term funding for the center

Activities in the relevant time period

(1) Research and recruitment

Articles in journals

If we consider both competition law and economics, we see that for the four years 2020-23 it was published in total 64 articles in scientific journals. This is more than for the five years 2015-2019. 49 of these articles are published in economics journals and remaining 24 in law journals. 21 of the articles are in level 2 journals in Norway, which demonstrates high quality of the submitted works. In addition, there are published 10 books or chapters in books, and 9 out of 10 of them are in law.

Here are some examples of publications:

- Dubois, Pierre, and Morten Sæthre. "On the effect of parallel trade on manufacturers' and retailers' profits in the pharmaceutical sector." *Econometrica* 88(6) (2020): 2503-2545.
- Friberg, R., F. Steen and S. A. Ulsaker, 'Hump-shaped cross-price effects and the extensive margin in cross-border shopping', *American Economic Journal: Microeconomics*, 14(2), 2022, 408-438.
- Cosnita-Langlais, Andreea, Bjørn Olav Johansen, and Lars Sørgard. "Upward pricing pressure in two-sided markets: Incorporating rebalancing effects." *International Journal of Industrial Organization* 74 (2021): 102692.
- Gabrielsen, T. S., B. O. Johansen and O. R. Straume. "National pricing with local quality competition", *Journal of Economics & Management Strategy*, (2022), 1-27.
- Ingrid Margrethe Halvorsen Barlund, *Leniency in EU Competition Law*, Wolters Kluwer 2020 (ISBN:9789403517223).

- Ronny Gjendemsjø and Ignacio Herrera Anchustegui, “Regulating the food supply chain in Europe and the Unfair Trading Practices Directive”, *Revue Européenne de Droit de la Consommation*, (Vol 2020 (2), p. 165-188.

PhD dissertations and candidates

There are several PhD candidates affiliated with BECCLE, and the following defended their PhD in 2020 or later:

- Timothy Wyndham (2020): Essays on Industrial Organization, department of Economics, Norwegian School of Economics.
- Kristian Strømsnes (2020): Uten virkning, Faculty of Law, University of Bergen
- Håvard Mork Sandvik (2021): Exclusion and discrimination in vertical markets, Department of Economics, University of Bergen
- Andreas Jørgensen Tveito (2022): Price Coordination and Consumer Behavior, Department of Economics, University of Bergen
- Linda Midttun (2022): Offentlige anskaffelser – håndtering av avvikende og uklare tilbud’, Faculty of Law, University of Bergen
- Alina Ozhegova (2024): Essays in Industrial Organization of Spatially Differentiated Markets, department of Economics, Norwegian School of Economics.

One of these candidates (Tveito) was on leave from the Norwegian Competition Authority when he wrote his PhD, and the PhD was financed through ‘public sector PhD’ and thereby a cooperation between the Norwegian Competition Authority and the University of Bergen/BECCLE.

In addition, there are currently 7 PhD candidates affiliated with BECCLE:

- Emil Mathias Strøm Halseth, Department of Economics, Norwegian School of Economics
- Marte Dahl Reisæter, Faculty of Law, University of Bergen
- Paula Navarro Sarmiento, Department of Economics, Norwegian School of Economics
- John Sæten Lilletvedt, Department of Economics, University of Bergen
- Ole Kristian Dyskeland, Department of Business and Management Science, Norwegian School of Economics
- Joséphine Thorson, Faculty of Law, University of Bergen
- Øivind Erstad Villanger, Faculty of Law, University of Bergen

The PhD candidates write the thesis in either law or economics, but since law and economics is so integrated in competition policy BECCLE constitutes a forum where they meet and learn from each other’s disciplines. One of the candidates in law (Thorson), is jointly supervised by a lawyer (Barlund) and an economist (Sørgard).

Recruitment to home institutions

Several of those persons that were affiliated with BECCLE as PhD candidates and/or post docs have in this time period qualified for a permanent position at their home institution:

- Ignacio Herrera Anchustegui, Professor of Law, Faculty of Law, University of Bergen
- Malgorzata Agnieszka Cyndecka, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Bergen
- Teis Lunde Lømo, Associate Professor, Department of Economics, University of Bergen
- Ingrid M. H. Barlund, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Bergen

- Morten Sæthre, Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Norwegian School of Economics

Note that Kristian Strømsnes and Linda Midttun are still employed by the Faculty of Law, University of Bergen as Postdoctoral Research Fellows.

Research projects

Many of the researchers have received research grants from external sources. Since BECCLE is not formally organizing research projects, those projects have been administered through the home institutions research centers, such as SNF at NHH and NORCE at UoB. Here are some examples from recent years:

- ‘Distributional effects of environmental policy: DEEP’. ERC Starting grant to Morten Sæthre at NHH from ERC (European research Council)
- ‘Cartel Policy in Nordic Countries’. Project leader Lars Sørgard, and project members Ingrid Barlund and Joseph Harrington. Funded by the Norwegian Competition Authority.
- ‘Strategic barriers to entry and expansion in grocery retailing’. Project leader Morten Sæthre and project member Alina Ozhegova. Funded by the Norwegian Competition Authority.
- ‘Methods for detecting illegal cooperation and abuse of dominance applied to the pharmaceutical market’. Project leader Kurt Brekke, and project members Odd Rune Straume and Tor Helge Holmås. Funded by The Norwegian Competition Authority.
- ‘Gjelder det et skjerpet beviskrav for utmålingsmomenter som inngår i fastsettelsen av administrative reaksjoner? Jf. Høyesteretts dom i Rt-2012-1556 (Brosaken) avsnittene 35 og 60’. Project leader Tore Lunde. Funded by The Norwegian Competition Authority.
- ‘Between predation and bid rigging: Competition issues in procurement markets’. Ronny Gjendemsjø and Malin Arve. Funded by the Norwegian Competition Authority

Professor II

There are several international researchers that have been affiliated with BECCLE. Typically, they are funded 50 % by BECCLE and 50 % by the home institutions (Department of Economics at UoB or NHH or Faculty of Law at UoB). They visit Bergen several times a year and have guest offices at their disposal both at BECCLE and the home institution. They have an important role in supervising PhD candidates, taking active part in the annual BECCLE Conference and other teaching obligations, conferences or seminars when they are visiting Bergen. Since 2020 we have had the following researchers in professor II positions at BECCLE:

- Professor Thibaud Verge, CREST in Paris and Department of Economics at University of Bergen (until 2023)
- Professor Greg Shaffer, University of Rochester and Department of Economics at Norwegian School of Economics (until 2023)
- Professor Joseph E. Harrington jr., Wharton School of University of Pennsylvania and Norwegian School of Economics (until 2023)
- Associate professor Özlem Bedre-Defolie, ESMT Berlin and Department of Economics at University of Bergen (until summer 2024)
- Professor Odd Rune Straume, University of Minho, Braga (until 2024)
- Professor Natalia Fabra, University Carlos II and Department of Economics, Norwegian School of Economics (since 2023)
- Professor Tommaso Valletti, Imperial College London and Department of Economics, Norwegian School of Economics (since 2023)

- Assistant Professor Thomas Vinje, chairman emeritus at Clifford Chance (since 2023)

Note that Professor of Law, Lars Henriksson, from the Stockholm School of Economics is in the process of becoming a Professor II at BECCLE.

(2) Teaching and supervision

Teaching

It has for many years been several courses at NHH and UoB that cover topics such as competition economics and competition law. This has been the case also in recent years. At Norwegian School of Economics there are courses in industrial organization both at bachelor - and master levels. At master level the course Konkurranserett (Competition Law) is taught by an economist (Sørgard at NHH) and a lawyer (Hjelmeng at University of Oslo and NHH). In three of the master courses at NHH (Konkurransestrategi, Competitive Strategy and Konkurranserett) Thomas Vinje has been a guest lecture on the issue of abuse of dominance in digital markets, illustrating how a person affiliated with BECCLE through Faculty of Law at UoB has been involved in teaching at NHH.

There are also several relevant courses at University of Bergen. Department of Economics are offering courses on Industrial Organization at both bachelor - and master levels, both focusing on competition policy; 'Industrial Organisation and Competition Policy' on bachelor level and 'Strategic Firm Behaviour and Market Power' on the master level. At the Faculty of Law the course Competition Law is offered at both bachelor - and master levels.

In addition, there have also been offered doctoral courses. Unfortunately, courses in 2020 and 2021 were cancelled due to Covid-19 (for example a planned course by Shaffer and Özlem-Bedre, both with a Professor II position at BECCLE). In 2024 there were held two courses related to competition economics:

- 'Firms, Markets and Economics' by Chad Syverson, University of Chicago
- 'Energy Market design' by Natalia Fabra, Carlos III University of Madrid and BECCLE

An agreement between the Department of Economics at UoB and NHH makes it possible for master students to take courses at both institutions, for example 'Konkurranserett' at NHH.

There is the possibility for even more cooperation between lawyers and economists concerning teaching. However, that would only be possible if we scale down the present teaching in competition law and economics. This could be problematic, given the fair number of students on the existing courses.

Supervision and grants

BECCLE has actively promoted competition policy as a topic for master theses, both at UoB and NHH. To do so, we have awarded a master's grant prize to those that write within these topics and that receives a good grade (either A or B). In the years 2020-23 there were 28 master theses that received grants, and they are all listed on the BECCLE home page. 10 of these are on competition law, illustrating that both competition law and competition economics is well covered amongst the master theses.

The system with grants for students writing on competition policy has been important for recruitment. We see that many of those that continue with a doctoral degree have received such a grant, and a large amount of those writing their master thesis in this area has been hired by the

Norwegian Competition Authority or continued to pursue a career within competition law or economics in private consultancy firms or law firms.

(3) Conferences, seminars and debates

An important mission for BECCLE from the start was to stimulate debates on competition policy in Norway as well as to take part in the international debates. We have done that in various ways.

Annual BECCLE conference

The first BECCLE Conference was held in 2015. It has been held every year since, except for 2020 and 2021 due to Covid-19. The conference covers both competition policy issues within economics and law. It combines keynote lectures with invited sessions on specific topics, as well as contributed sessions with presentation of scientific papers. The contributed papers are selected among submitted papers. Each year there have been 2-3 keynote lectures, 2-4 invited sessions, and 25-30 presentations of contributed papers. Every year we have had a substantially larger number of submissions than available slots for contributed papers. This has led to a high quality of the papers presented at the conference each year.

Each year we have invited well known international researchers to give keynote speeches. For the years 2022-24 the keynote speakers were Volker Nocke, Massimo Motta, Natalia Fabra and Frank Verboven on competition economics and Pinar Akman, Heike Schweitzer and Thibault Schrepel on competition law. For the 2025 BECCLE Conference we have already booked Fiona Scott Morton (economist) and Herbert Hovenkamp (law) as the keynote speakers. For the invited session we have covered topical issues, as for example the future of Article 102, merger policy, competition policy and the labor market, competition policy and sustainability, and legal standards in antitrust enforcement.

The BECCLE conference has become an internationally highly ranked conference amongst academics and practitioners working with competition law – and economics. Not only does it attract people working in important positions in Norway and in the Nordic countries (such as executive staff working in the NCAs), but also academics and practitioners working throughout Europe (for example in the European Commission and at the European University Institute). The conference also attracts academics and practitioners from the US.

External Seminars

BECCLE also arrange seminars, both directed at a national audience as well as an international audience. Due to Covid-19 there were no seminars in 2020 and 2021. In 2022-23 there were in total 15 seminars. Some were targeted towards the ongoing competition policy debate in Norway, such as:

- Should input prices in the grocery sector be regulated?
- Is the merger control [in Norway] too strict?
- Market investigation tool in Norway?

The seminars are typically held physically at the Faculty of Law, in addition to being streamed. The audience varies from 10 to 40-50, and in addition a substantial number of people attend digitally.

BECCLE has also organized longer hybrid seminars (for a half a day or more) covering more broad topics, and allowing for more in-depth discussions:

- From bid rigging to zero pricing

- Cartel policy in the Nordic countries
- Towards a more active administrative enforcement of competition law?

In addition, BECCLE was a co-host for the bi-annual conference in industrial organization between University of Berkeley and NHH/UoB on a Peder Sather workshop. It was held at June 8-9 at NHH.

Internal seminars

Last fall we started to have internal seminars on Thursdays. The idea was to have an informal lunch some of the days when both lawyers and economists are present. We then invite people to talk very informally about a topic, for example we have had talks about labour market and merger control, the mandate for the committee revising the competition law and the guidelines for vertical restraints. It is also an offer to our junior researchers to raise issues they are currently working on in a friendly environment. This promotes a further integration between lawyers and economists that are affiliated with BECCLE, since it leads to a physical meeting place where you meet up with colleagues in an informal setting.

Public debate

Several of the members of BECCLE have been involved in the public debate through appointments to public committees that have submitted white papers (NOU – Norges Offentlige Utredning) to a ministry. Recently it was appointed a public committee that will revise the Norwegian Competition Act, and three of the members are employed by the Norwegian School of Economics or the Faculty of Law at University of Bergen (Ingrid E. H. Barlund UoB, Malgorzata Cyndecka UoB and Linda Orvedal NHH). This illustrates the important role of Bergen and BECCLE in the Norwegian debate on competition policy.

Finally, four of the members of BECCLE are appointed members of The Competition Appeal Tribunal (Konkurranseskjennemnda): Tore Lunde and Ronny Gjendemsjø at the Faculty of Law, University of Bergen, Teis Lunde Lømo at Department of Economics , University of Bergen and Frode Steen at Department of Economics at Norwegian School of Economics.

(4) Organization and funding

BECCLE has from the start had a physical meeting place at the University of Bergen. First years BECCLE had offices in Parkveien, but after 2013 the physical meeting place has been at the Faculty of Law at the University of Bergen (Juss II building). This means that the meeting place is fully integrated with the lawyers at the Faculty of Law working on competition law. In 2023 it was a relocation in Juss II, which meant that BECCLE's meeting place is not only integrated with the BECCLE people at the Faculty of Law, but also with lawyers affiliated to the Centre on the Europeanisation of Norwegian law (CENTENOL). This is a center working on different legal areas under the umbrella of EU - and EEA law, and many of them work in areas that are close to what is of interest to BECCLE. The economists from both the Department of Economics at University of Bergen and from the Norwegian School of Economics have their office spaces at BECCLE 1-2 days a week. The rest of the week the economists are sitting at their home institutions, but the BECCLE offices are at the disposal notably for junior researchers affiliated to BECCLE the entire week.

Although BECCLE is independent from the Norwegian Competition Authority, we have close relations with them. As mentioned above, one person was on leave from NCA and then wrote his PhD at the University of Bergen in competition economics (empirical study of the petrol market). In 2022 the ICN (International Competition Network) had its annual workshop for chief

economists in Bergen, back-to-back with the BECCLE conference. Lars Sørsgard from BECCLE was one of the keynote speakers at the ICN workshop, and by having this workshop back-to-back with the BECCLE Conference more people attended both the workshop (the open part of it) and the BECCLE Conference.

It is a challenge that the physical meeting place is at University of Bergen and not the Norwegian School of Economics. To mitigate this challenge, the BECCLE Conference is typically every second year at NHH (both in 2022 and 2024), and some of the seminars are physically located at NHH.

The general management has since March 2022 consisted of four persons: Lars Sørsgard from the Department of Economics at the NHH (leader), Ingrid E. H. Barlund and Ronny Gjendemsjø from the Faculty of Law at the University of Bergen, and Bjørn Olav Johansen from the Department of Economics at the University of Bergen. They have regular meetings where they plan for seminars and other activities each semester.

The BECCLE Conference has been organized with a scientific committee consisting of professor IIs and some BECCLE members, and a local committee that organizes all the practical matters. In the local committees we have PhD students from both the Norwegian School of Economics and the University working on competition law and economics. This has turned out to be a valuable meeting place for PhD students across these two institutions.

The financing of BECCLE started out with a grant from the Ministry of Fisheries and Industry in 2011. After that BECCLE has received annual general grants from both the University of Bergen and the Norwegian School of Economics. In addition, BECCLE has received funding for the BECCLE Conference both from the University of Bergen, the Norwegian School of Economics and SNF (the research center fund). In many years BECCLE also had some support from a research fund at the Norwegian Competition Authority, but after the fund was reorganized they no longer give grants to such activities.

So far BECCLE has had a satisfactory financial situation. The budget is at a rather low level, since all wages (except for professor IIs) are paid by the home institutions and there is no direct payment by BECCLE for the offices used at the Faculty of Law. Low activity during Covid-19 led to a surplus, but after the reopening in 2022 we see that we have to scale down the activity somewhat unless we receive some additional funding. The reason is that we no longer get any annual support from the research fund at the Norwegian Competition Authority, since they no longer give any general support to infrastructure. In Figure 1 we have shown revenues and costs in 2023, and compared that with a steady state where we have a small surplus.

	Revenue	Cost		
U of Bergen centrally	137 000			
U of Bergen social science fac	137 000			
NHH centrally	200 000			
U of Bergen Faculty of Law	150 000			
SNF support conference	50 000			
NHH support conference	50 000			
Fac. Of Law support conference	50 000			
		Steady State	2023	Change to steady state:
Professor II		200000	377 000	Only two professor II positions
Master grants		170000	230 000	Reduced with 60000
Support to guests			0	
General support		60000	82 602	Reduced with 22000
Equipment and IT		30000	153 558	Reduced due to investments 2023
Travelling		20000	21 114	
BECCLE Conference		250000	254 293	
seminar		40000	38 341	
TOTALLY	774 000	770000	1158930	
SURPLUS STEADY STATE		4 000	-384 930	
Balance 1.1.24	486810			

Figure 1: Revenues and costs 2023 versus steady state

To balance revenue and costs in steady state with the existing annual revenues, we need to have lower costs than in 2023. There were some extraordinary costs in 2023 (among other things IT investments). In addition, we plan for fewer professor II positions, and to be more selective with the grants to master students. If we succeed with additional funding (see below) then we can consider to reverse the reduction in activity that is reported in Figure 1.

Are the goals achieved?

The goals of BECCLE can be summarized as follows (from the mandate to the external evaluation committee):

- Strengthen and further develop the expertise in competition law and economics.
- The centre's main activity is research within the fields of competition law and economics.
- BECCLE will be a meeting place for faculty, including postdocs and PhDs, from UoB and NHH who conduct research within the fields mentioned above.

Finally, in cooperation with the Norwegian Competition Authority and other relevant stakeholders, the parties should continue the effort to secure long term funding for the center.

Based on the annual reports as well as what is reported above, the activity at BECCLE has been high. We see that publications are at the same level as previously, and members of BECCLE have been active in the public debate. One illustration of this is that three of the members in the public committee that will revise the competition law is from the University of Bergen or the Norwegian School of Economics. We also want to highlight BECCLE's contribution to recruitment in both competition economics and law. Several of the persons that were part of BECCLE already in their early career are now in permanent positions at the home institutions. For the first time there are three PhD candidates working on competition law (and a fourth candidate now applying). Our Professor II positions have also been important, since we through the split with the home institutions contribute to the building of competence in competition law and economics both at BECCLE and the respective home institutions. In our view, BECCLE has to a large degree achieved this goal.

Although Covid-19 dampened the activity quite considerably in 2020 and 2021, we see that the activity quickly picked up again after Covid-19. The annual BECCLE Conference has upheld its position as a well-respected meeting place for international researchers that works on competition law and economics, and it has also attracted more people than before working in the NCA in Norway as well as other NCAs in Europe.

There are still many students that write a master thesis within this field. It has been important for recruitment, since some of them continue on a PhD and after some time a permanent position at our home institutions, and many of them start working at the Norwegian Competition Authority.

In addition to the annual BECCLE Conference, BECCLE has continued with organizing seminars on specific topics and half day workshops on broader topics. We have the last two years had workshops back-to-back with the BECCLE Conference (ICN workshop in 2023 and cartel conference in 2024) and we see that this had a positive impact on the number of people attending the BECCLE Conference. We therefore plan to have a back-to-back conference right before BECCLE also in 2025, this time the yearly Nordic Academic Competition Law Network

Conference. The internal seminar one day a week has become an important meeting place where we give the chance for all the people affiliated with BECCLE to be present.

All in all, after Covid-19 the activity picked up again and it has been high and on some areas we have expanded compared to earlier.

Potential for improvements

We have concluded that BECCLE, in our view, has reached its goals also in the last period it has been in operation. But, as always, there is scope for improvement. Let us mention those areas we find most important to focus on.

Firstly, the external funding can be improved. BECCLE is a low-cost organization that builds on the resources of the home institutions at the University of Bergen and the Norwegian School of Economics. This model is based on the idea that BECCLE can generate large synergies by joining forces across the institutions and promote various activities and various building of competences that also favors the home institutions.

The home institutions have asked us to find alternative external funding. This is something BECCLE is continuously working on, and researchers at BECCLE are inter alia planning to send an application for funding to the Norwegian Research Council in March 2025.

As explained above, however, we are involved in several research projects already. Important to bear in mind is that it is not possible to locate these projects to BECCLE based on our staff capacity today. Instead, it is important for BECCLE to have the home institution's research centers as the location of these types of projects. To improve our funding somewhat, we suggest that BECCLE should receive a cutoff of these fundings since it is generated by researchers at BECCLE. By doing so we could expand our annual funding.

Additionally, there are some basic activities at BECCLE that are important to maintain and that are not necessarily directly the result of research projects. In our view, the present funding from UoB and NHH has generated much value for a limited amount of money. Therefore, it is crucial for BECCLE to continue receiving basic funding from UoB and NHH at the same level as today. Secondly, the potential for direct collaboration between competition lawyers and competition economists can be improved. Compared to earlier time periods, there are fewer articles written jointly by lawyers and economists. We believe that the physical meeting place at BECCLE is crucial for the startup of such work. Covid-19 led to no physical meetings, and this could for a while explain the lack of joint work. Now it is picking up, we have several ongoing works in progress where a lawyer and an economist are writing together. We will try to stimulate such collaborations further, and a key to that is to stimulate joint physical activities such as the internal seminar. In addition, we will encourage both younger and more experienced competition economists to spend more time at BECCLE and thereby strengthen it as a physical meeting place further.

Thirdly, we can be more targeted concerning the grants given to master students. As explained above, it is important with master students for succeeding with recruitment. But given the tight budget in the future, we must prioritize and be more selective and reduce the number of grants. Then we can make sure that we target the most talented master students in competition law and economics, still recruiting the best candidates as we have done in the past, and at the same time limit the total amount paid on this type of grants.

Overall assessment

As shown in this report, the activity dropped for natural reasons due to Covid-19 but then picked up again and came back to the level before Covid-19. BECCLE is a center that generates a lot of activities compared to the rather limited budget. In our view, BECCLE generated much for a limited amount of money this last period. The quantity and quality of research is high also in this period.

BECCLE has clearly contributed to secure that Bergen is the main hub in the Nordic countries for competition policy, with many active researchers, which in our view undoubtedly demonstrates the need for the continuation of BECCLE.

Evaluation of the Bergen Center for Competition Law & Economics (BECCLE) 2021-2024

1. Background

The University Board at the University of Bergen (UoB) decided to establish the Bergen Center for Competition Law and Economics (BECCLE) together with the Norwegian School of Economics (NHH) as of 1 July 2011.

In February 2021, UoB and NHH concluded an agreement to continue the cooperation concerning the operations of BECCLE until July 31st, 2025. The agreement can be renewed for a new five year period after an assessment of BECCLEs activities.

In September 2024, the Board for BECCLE decided to appoint an evaluation committee consisting of:

- Professor of economics Otto Toivanen, the Department of Economics, Aalto University
- Professor of law Anne Witt, EDHEC Business School
- Director external relations Kjell Jostein Sunnevåg, the Norwegian Competition Authority (referred to as “the Committee” hereafter).

The Committee’s assignment is to evaluate Bergen Center for Competition Law and Economics (BECCLE) by end of December 2024 according to main objectives outlined in the assignment letter, ie.:

- to strengthen and further develop the expertise in competition law and economics;
- to maintain a meeting place for faculty, including postdocs and PhDs, from UoB and NHH who conduct research within competition law and economics;
- continue the effort to secure long term funding.

As input for the Committee’s evaluation, the BECCLE management has prepared a self-assessment report. The Committee received the self-assessment report together with annual reports for the periods 2023 and 2024 in October 2024.

As part of the external evaluation, the Committee had a virtual meeting with the BECCLE management on October 23. Here, the management of BECCLE presented the Center and its activities, and the committee had the opportunity to ask questions.

In accordance with our assignment we, the Committee, hereby submit the findings of the evaluation.

2. Operations of BECCLE

The general management of BECCLE consists of a general manager and a management group consisting of three persons. The management is appointed by the board and consist of one person from NHH and three people from UoB; one from the Department of Economics and two from the Faculty of Law.

The board of BECCLE consists of four persons, two from UoB and two from NHH.

BECCLE has its offices at the Faculty of Law at UoB, Bergen. The rental costs are covered by UoB. UoB and NHH contribute, by further agreement, to the centre's funding based on their own resources. However, it is an expressed objective to obtain long-term external financing for the centre.

3. Findings and recommendations of the 2020 external evaluation

In the agreement to continue the operations of BECCLE for the period 2021-2025, it is referred to the assessment of the external committee which presented their report in 2020.

In its report, the external committee concluded that BECCLE clearly had succeeded in meeting the aims and objectives outlined in the steering documents. The committee also found that BECCLE has an organizational model that supports and is well suited for reaching the aims and objectives outlined in the steering documents.

Moreover, the committee found that the funding for BECCLE is well motivated and that support at existing levels is warranted and highly recommended. The committee was of the impression that the parent institutions get a very good return on their investment in BECCLE.

However, the committee also has some recommendations that could improve and target BECCLE's activities better in relation to goals, namely:

- more conscious strategic management
- improve visibility and interaction with NHH
- strengthen communication of its accomplishments

To what extent these focal areas for improvement has been considered and followed up, has also been considered by this Committee.

4. Achievement of goals

The objectives behind establishing BECCLE are, as described above, threefold: i) to strengthen the knowledge base for competition law and economics, ii) to provide a joint platform for discussion and interaction for law and economics, and iii) to continue the effort to secure long term funding.

To what extent the external evaluation committee considers the activities at BECCLE to have contributed to achieve these objectives in the evaluation period is presented below.

In addition, the evaluation also covers the committee's assessment of the current organizational structure and other operational and management issues the committee finds relevant to highlight.

I. The knowledge base

a) Research and recruitment

BECCLE brings together academic lawyers and economists interested in competition policy-related questions. One of the objectives is to thereby enhance the quality and quantity of research, and the recruitment potential of the participating units.

In terms of quantity of research, the material provided to the committee can be summarized in table 1 below:

Table 1. BECCLE research output

	Articles		Book chapters & monographs		MSc theses	
	Law	Economics	Law	Economics	Law	Economics
2023	1	17	0	1	NA	NA
2022	1	10	1	0	3	5
2021	7	12	1	0	1	1
2020	9	10	1	0	3	12

Notes: Data from BECCLE annual reports 2022 and 2023.

The quantity of research is at a very good level with the yearly fluctuations quite normal given the relatively small size of BECCLE.

The table conceals an important fact though: The committee is very impressed by the quality of research, in particular in economics. The research published by BECCLE-affiliated researchers is published in good journals in general, and, in the domain of economics, quite regularly in some of the best journals. BECCLE researchers have published in *American Economic Review*, *American Economic Journal: Policy and AEJ:Microeconomics*, as well as *Management Science*, *Journal of the European Economic Association* and *Econometrica*. In 2022 and 2023, there were significantly fewer outputs in law than in economics. However, these were also published in good journals (e.g., *The Journal of Competition Law & Economics*) and with recognised publishers (e.g., Wolters Kluwer and Edward Elgar).

There is no direct data on recruitment of faculty, but the above publication data strongly suggests that the departments behind BECCLE have been able to hire, retain and train very talented researchers. There is however data on Professor II appointments, the lists of which can be found in the BECCLE annual reports in 2022 and 2023. It is clear to the committee that BECCLE – affiliated departments have been able to hire researchers at the forefront of competition policy into Professor II positions.

b) Teaching

While the BECCLE annual reports do not provide information on teaching except for listing the number of MSc theses written (see table 1) and the number of PhD students working on competition policy – related topics, the BECCLE website offers some information: BECCLE faculty teach

- 3 MSc level courses in economics of competition policy
- 1 BSc level course in economics of competition policy
- 4 Law courses in competition policy related law

BECCLE is well placed to organize short (PhD) level courses on competition policy and there is a history of BECCLE doing so. The best way for (economics) students to benefit from such courses would be that they had access to more standard PhD level Industrial Organization courses. The committee encourages BECCLE to think of ways of providing the relatively small number of PhD students at BECCLE access to such courses. One possible solution would be cooperation with economics departments of other (Nordic) universities.

c) Conferences, seminars and other dissemination activities

Obviously, these activities have been affected by COVID-19 and its aftermath. Taking that into account, the committee finds that BECCLE is very active in terms of conference and seminar organization. Besides the annual BECCLE conference which has established itself as one of the important competition policy conferences not only in Europe but more widely, there is an active seminar series. BECCLE organized 6 seminars in 2023 and 8 in 2022. In addition, BECCLE hosted the Peder Sather Conference in Industrial Organization in June of 2023. This conference brings together economists from BECCLE and UC Berkeley who work on competition policy.

II. Joint platform

The second goal of BECCLE is to serve as a joint platform for researchers from UoB and NHH who conduct research in the area of competition law and economics.

The Committee concludes that BECCLE has undoubtedly fulfilled this goal during the period under review.

BECCLE encompasses researchers in competition law and economics, including PhD students and post-doctoral researchers, from both UoB and NHH. Its management board is composed of members from both institutions, with an equal distribution of lawyers and economists.

BECCLE provides a regular meeting place for BECCLE members at UoB Faculty of Law, where lawyers are present every day, and economists at least once a week. Like most research centres, face-to-face interaction at BECCLE significantly suffered during Covid. To reencourage regular in-person meetings, BECCLE has lately been organizing regular weekly lunch seminars, in which members present ongoing research and discuss current policy developments. These meetings are also meant to promote further interaction between lawyers and economists affiliated with BECCLE, and offer junior researchers the opportunity to raise issues they are currently working on in a friendly and informal environment. Based on the feedback received during the Q&A session with the BECCLE management, this measure appears to have met with success, and seminars are well attended.

PhD students from both institutions, and from both disciplines, also regularly meet at BECCLE's premises and form part of the local Organising Committee for the annual BECCLE conference.

BECCLE members further use the BECCLE platform to organize numerous joint events addressed to a broader public in Norway and the international competition law and economic community, which extends well beyond the two institutions involved. The annual BECCLE Conference, in particular, brings together many outstanding international scholars from law and economics. Importantly, this flagship conference takes place in rotation at NHH and UoB.

Despite the inherent difficulties of interinstitutional cooperation, BECCLE therefore manages to ensure that there is regular exchange and cooperation between its members from UoB and NHH. In addition to the regularly internal meetings and external events, this is also reflected in multiple joint publications by BECCLE members from the two institutions.

III. Funding

The BECCLE-activities are funded based on grants from various sources. For 2023, the centre received annual grants from the UoB, both centrally and from the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Social Sciences as well as a grant from NHH. In addition, the centre received support NHH, UoB and SNF for specific events. Total funding for 2023 was 774.000 NOK.

A break-down of sources of income and sources of expenditures has been provided by the BECCLE-management to the evaluation committee. The numbers have been compared to the break-down of funding from the 2020 evaluation, as provided below:

Sources of income (in '000)	2019	2023
Grant from UoB	120	137
Grant from NHH	150	200
Grant from Faculty of Law	150	150
Support from UoB Social Science Faculty		137
Grant from SNF - support for events	45	50
Grant from NHH – support for evens		50
Grant Faculty of Law – support for evens		50
Support from Institute of economics, UoB	150	
Grants from fund managed by Konkurransetilsynet	485	
Project funds from Norce	313	
Sum sources of financing	1 413	774

The evaluation committee notes that total funding for 2023 is lower than the level of support available for 2019. The reduction in total income amounts to 639.000. The reduction in grants from Konkurransetilsynet and project funds from Norce amount to a total of 798.000,-

Expenditures	2019	2023
Payment/wage (professor II, student, visitor scholarships and master grants)	836	607
Operations (rent/energy, general operations, equipment and website, travel expenditures)	171	257
Activities (conferences and seminars)	368	293
Sum expenses	1 375	1 157

According to the self-assessment¹, BECCLE has so far had a satisfactory financial situation. Notably, the budget is at a rather low level, since all wages (except for professor IIs) are paid by the home institutions and there is no direct payment by BECCLE for the offices used at the Faculty of Law.

As can be concluded by comparing the tables above, BECCLE runs at a deficit in 2023. The low activity during Covid-19 led to a surplus, with buildup of funds which is now used to finance the deficit.

BECCLE will according to the self-assessment have to scale down the activity somewhat unless the centre receives some additional funding. In practice, a reduced activity with fewer professor II positions, and more selectivity regarding grants to master students.

The committee is of the view that scaling down the activity level will not only have a negative impact on BECCLE itself, but also the wider academic community concerned with competition policy as well as other beneficiaries of the knowledge generated by BECCLE activities.

The committee notes that the centre is dependent on basic support from parent institutions in addition to external funding. The Committee agrees with BECCLE management that the parent institutions could consider transferring a part of the project revenue generated by BECCLE researchers to fund BECCLE-activities.

In the last evaluation of BECCLE, it was noted that several research projects in economics, law and law and economics had received grants from "Det alminnelige prisreguleringsfond" managed by the Norwegian Competition Authority. This source of funding for projects has been discontinued.

Regardless, even though the statutes for the funds allocated by the Norwegian Competition Authority has been altered and the funds allocated are at a lower level, it should be explored whether the revised statutes allow for applications for funding the type of activity the BECCLE management consider to reduce, ie. professor II positions and grants to master students.

5. Organization

The organization of BECCLE is quite lean, with a board of four professors and a management team of also four professors. Naturally, all of them do this on the side of their other responsibilities. As BECCLE is performing well, there seems little reason to change this structure. That notwithstanding, the committee notes that the current board and management would do wisely if they planned ahead in terms of replacement. It is the experience of the members of this committee that having rotation in tasks such as running BECCLE is a way to spread ownership and to empower faculty at large.

The committee enquired to what extent BECCLE is using or can use the communications resources of the universities. It seems that such cooperation has been attempted in the past, but with at best mixed success. The current solution is that MSc students are hired to help with e.g. maintaining the website.

As BECCLE is producing excellent material and bringing in external researchers with deep knowledge, there seems to be more that could be done in terms of societal outreach. Such efforts would require coordination and cooperation with the universities as such activities are not naturally within the comparative advantage of professors.

¹ Internal Evaluation of BECCLE – 2024

The committee also notes that to the extent that running the administration of BECCLE takes anything but an inconsiderable amount of time, a reduction in other administrative or teaching duties may be in order.

6. Other evaluation issues

After the last external review, the evaluation committee had made several recommendations in its report, namely:

- more conscious strategic management
- improving the visibility and interaction with NHH, and
- strengthening communication of BECCLE's accomplishments

The Committee notes that BECCLE has acted on these recommendations and has taken appropriate measures to implement the above suggestions.

General Management now have regular meetings to plan BECCLE activities in light of its goals, discuss what works well and make adjustments if necessary. The introduction of the internal lunch seminar programme to reinvigorate the uptake of face-to-face meetings after Covid is an example of a strategic measure resulting from such a meeting.

Despite BECCLE's meeting premises remaining at UoB because of space limitations at NHH, BECCLE has taken steps to ensure greater integration of NHH. Several BECCLE seminars now take place at NHH, and the BECCLE conference is hosted by NHH every second year. The management now also ensures that PhDs from NHH are involved the organisation of the BECCLE Conference.

BECCLE has significant resource constraints when it comes to improving its visibility and engage in more PR. In particular, it has no dedicated PR staff. Nonetheless, it is noticeable that BECCLE have increased their visibility on LinkedIn by regularly posting about internal and external BECCLE events. The Committee applauds these efforts, but nonetheless recommends that the management ensures that the BECCLE website is kept up to date, and that BECCLE is listed more prominently amongst UoB and NHH's research centres (or at least include a hyperlink that allows users to navigate to the BECCLE webpage).

7. Summary of findings of the committee

BECCLE's goal is to be a meeting place for faculty, including postdocs and PhDs, from UoB and NHH who conduct research within the centre's area of research, and to facilitates research, conferences, and seminars to promote discussion and knowledge development in the fields of competition law and economics.

This Committee's assignment has been to evaluate to what extent BECCLE has succeeded in reaching these main objectives. In addition, the Committee has also assessed BECCLE's efforts to secure long term funding.

For the evaluation period, the Committee finds that the BECCLE management has been highly successful in reaching the objectives behind its operations.

First of all, the Committee is very impressed by the quality of research, in particular in economics. The quantity of research is also at a very good level.

BECCLE brings together academic lawyers and economists interested in competition policy-related questions. The Committee concludes that BECCLE has undoubtedly fulfilled its goal to serve as a joint platform for researchers from UoB and NHH who conduct research in the area of competition law and economics during the period under review.

Also, the Committee finds that BECCLE has been very active in terms of conferences and organization of various seminars.

Moreover, the Committee notes that BECCLE has improved integration of the research environments at UoB and NHH. BECCLE has also succeeded in increasing its visibility on social media, but the Committee notes that there still is room for improvement in its digital presence.

As regards funding, the Committee notes that the management of the Centre is very lean. Regardless, BECCLE is still to a large degree dependent on various forms of basic support from parent institutions, and the current funding situations implies that some important activities might have to be scaled back. Considering that the results of the BECCLE activities are highly beneficial for the parent institutions, the Committee supports efforts to have a constructive dialogue to find models that secure BECCLE a more significant part of this added value. The Committee also encourages the management to explore possibilities related to external funding sources.