

Danish Research Agency and Councils.

The Danish Research Agency (DRA) is the administrative body for the Danish Research Councils, consisting of The Danish Councils for Independent Research, The Danish Council for Strategic Research and the Danish Research Coordination Committee.

The Danish Councils for Independent Research provide support to Danish research based on the initiatives – both single-discipline and cross-discipline – of researchers themselves. From February 1, 2005, the Danish Natural Science Research Council (SNF) has been terminated, and the Research Council for Nature and Universe (FNU) has been established, providing financial support to research activities and research training in physics, chemistry, geo- and biosciences (excl. medical research), mathematics and computer science.

The Danish Council for Strategic Research supports research in politically prioritized research areas and contributes to strengthening interaction between public and private research.

The Danish Research Coordination Committee ensures the coordination between all government research funding, promotes Danish research's international activities, and provides advice on research training.

The Danish Research Councils invest more than 1 billion DKK in research.

Regulations for research funding

The general legal regulations for Danish public organisations are stated in Danish Administrative Law and Danish Law of Openness in Administrative Documents. The specific legal regulations for research funding are the Law on Research Advise of 28th of May 2003 and the Consolidation Act of 20th of April 2004. The Law on Research Advise regulates the overall frame work for the new organs in the Danish Research Council System, while the Consolidation Act gives the Boards specific mandate to decide on the content of calls e.g.: projects description, CV, use of standard form, budget specifications, number of copies, language demand, etc.

Funding instruments

Existing strategic programmes handled by the Danish Research Councils and of interest for complexity research and research-training are

- Strategic IT-Research
- Young researchers
- Research Schools
- Innovation accelerating research platforms
- Visionary research areas
- Young talents
- International co-operation
- Research communication
- Research consortia and networks

Framework grants

Primary in the case of international cooperation, e.g. via ESF, the council has previously allocated specific funds for more focused research areas such as material research or molecular biochemistry. The board of the independent research councils can withhold up till 20% of the total budget to specific initiatives.

Young scientists

One of the most important focus areas is the funding of young scientists. FNU (previously SNF) has a chain of funding mechanisms to support young scientists from their first post-doc. to a position at the full professor level (Ole Römer stipend). The overall aims of the initiatives taken towards young scientists in Denmark are to:

- Encourage mobility, net working and international exchange of ideas
- Promote research training at world leading labs
- Alleviate an expected generation shift in Danish universities

The funding mechanisms 'Römer', 'Skou' and Steno' stipends are serving to help young researchers to start a carrier at Danish universities and research institutes and assist to even the generational change in the employment structure. The post-doc. grants aim to give young researchers international experience and network.

International collaboration

FNU is financing international collaboration through contributions to international organisations and research programmes. Another more direct collaboration mechanism is to provide funds for senior scientists' residence abroad and foreign post-doc.s going to Denmark. Young Danish scientists can apply for support for a post-doc. position abroad.

There are no general legal restraints on the possibilities for the research system to participate in international co-operation and the law in fact gives priority to internationalisation. This is, however, only to the extent that the participation is not impinging upon the national decision-making powers. The international co-operation must not entail a loss of budgetary sovereignty. The Independent Research Council can not allocate an amount to a European programme committee, if there is no link between the Danish system and the qualitative distribution of funds. The overall policy is that the funding should promote and support Danish research, only when employed with a Danish research institution can funds be distributed to foreign researchers.

Gender equality

In the Danish research councils, boards, committees and administrative bodies, the official policy is to have at least the ratio 1/3 of the minority sex. When the council is evaluating an applicant, considerations are given to maternity / paternity leaves, or other breaks in career progression for childcare. There is no present programme or overall theme focusing on gender equality in the funding of the councils. However, a programme call Female Researchers in Joint Action, FREJA, was running from 1999 until 2003.

Complexity-NET

In 2003 a total of 567 applications were sent to SNF, 478 from male and 89 from female applicants. The overall success rates for SNF applications in 2003 were 45 % and 37 % for male and female researchers, respectively.

Application conditions

If an application to the Research Councils is going to be evaluated by international experts (e.g., applications for large grants) it has to be written in English. The Councils can refuse to evaluate the application if this requirement is not met. For most applications the language is voluntary.

Proposal evaluation

The overall procedure is that the incoming proposals are read intensely by 2-3 council members depending on the area. They prepare an oral presentation and recommendation at council meeting where all members of the council in plenum make the final decision.

Every member of the research councils is appointed by the Danish Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation in their personal capacity.

Reporting and evaluation on funded research

All researchers funded by the Research Councils must fill out a general reporting form and financial report 3 months subsequent to the funding period. Every year during the project, a financial report is handed in the 1st of April. This is the basis legal requirement for project reporting. Besides the requirements mentioned in the legal statutes, there are supplementary requirements for larger projects. It is the principle investigator, PI, who is responsible for the reporting. The general report form asks about:

- Financial details of the funding
- Description of the main results and scientific discoveries
- Planned and finished publications
- Derivative research ideas

For larger projects, e.g. the Research Centers, a midterm reporting is handed in, in addition to the general requirements for funded research. The midterm report should include:

- Status and perspectives of the ongoing research activities
- Results achieved in comparison to the scientific goals described in the application
- Publications, citations, patents etc. accomplished so far
- Educational status (number of master students, Ph.D. students and pos-doc.s connected to the project)

Furthermore, the PI of a large project and young scientists getting post-doc. stipends are required to make a description for non-scientists available for the agency's web site.

The council and the administrative employees decide the content and requirements. The involved administrative employees and the research council members use the report internally. It is in total reviewed by 2-3 persons.

Result dissemination

The Research Councils have decided to put extra focus on promotion of science communication to the public. The hope is that this will bring more public awareness to the field of science and enhance the interest for an education in science among young people. The Danish Research Agency (DRA) publishes an annual report on the research funded by the organization. It is expected that funded scientists present their results in peer reviewed international publications and conferences. Prints of the papers published within the project are enclosed in the final report. For the larger funding, including Römer, Skou and Steno stipends, an article for non-scientists is required. These articles are published on the website of DRA (www.forsk.dk). Research centers are required to have a communication plan.

Some parts of the description above was formulated by the Danish Research Agency as a part of their ERA-NET BONUS work.