

The Research Council of Norway through 30 years

Research has never been more important than now. Norway and the world have major challenges in terms of climate and environment, health and welfare, and economic restructuring. Challenges that only can be solved through knowledge.

In 2023, it will be 30 years since five research councils were combined to form The Research Council of Norway. Throughout these 30 years, we have worked to make the best research and innovation possible. We work for a society where research is created, used and shared, and we contribute to restructuring and a more sustainable society.

From five to one research council

In the reconstruction of the country in the post-war period, there was great optimism regarding the potential for increased industrial exploitation of Norwegian natural resources and raw materials. Consequently The Royal Norwegian Council for Scientific and industrial Research (NTNF) established in 1946, as the first research council in Norway.

Greater awareness of the contribution of research to social development formed the basis for the establishment of four new research councils: The Norwegian Research Council for Science and the Humanities (NAVF) and The Norwegian Agricultural Science Research Council (NLVF) in 1949, The Norwegian Fisheries Research Council (NFFR) in 1972 and The Norwegian Applied Social Research Council (NORAS) in 1987.

In 1993, the five research councils were combined to form The Research Council of Norway. Norway was thus the first country in the world where a research council was given responsibility for all subjects, disciplines and topics; and also basic research, applied research and research-driven innovation.

A comprehensive knowledge picture

The Research Council of Norway was given an independent role as strategic research advisor to the government. The main reason for the merger into one council was a desire for linking basic research and applied research, coordination across disciplines and sectors, and more efficient use of resources.

The ambition was to get a comprehensive overview of the knowledge base in Norway and internationally, and to provide better services for the users of the Research Council. This change in the research council structure must be understood in light of a major reform to modernise and renew the state apparatus through the 1980s and 90s.

The volume of funding allocated by the Research Council was about NOK 3 billion in 1993. In 2022, this has auka to 11.4 billion.

Find out more about the history of The Research Council of Norway 1946-2016 in [the Project Bank](#) of The Research Council of Norway or in [Cristin](#).

The Research Council today

We invest NOK 10 billion in research and innovation annually on behalf of the Norwegian government. It is our task to ensure that this funding goes to the best research and innovation projects.

Over 2 000 international peer reviewers assess and rank the grant proposals submitted to us. Funding decisions are taken by our portfolio boards, which are comprised of nearly 200 independent board members from across all sectors.

We are at the forefront in developing research of the highest quality and relevance.

We are the key advisory body to the authorities on research policy issues and carry out tasks commissioned by 15 ministries. Our activities play an important role in the Government's long-term plan for research and higher education.

- [Trade and industry](#): Research is an important tool for Norwegian trade and industry. We have a variety of funding schemes for research-based innovation and knowledge-building.
- [Public sector](#): We promote renewal and innovation in the public sector through a number of schemes.
- [Research organisations](#): Research organisations may apply for funding within all relevant thematic areas and subject fields.
- [International cooperation](#): We work to encourage increased international cooperation with and participation in EU research and innovation programmes. Ninety per cent of Norwegian grant applications for EU research funding have received support and guidance from the Research Council.
- [Science communication](#): We reach out to the public through National Science Week, a science festival during which researchers interact with people across all of Norway, from Hammerfest in the north to Mandal in the south. Through the "Grand Prix" stage contest, we have enabled more than 500 researchers to communicate their activities successfully. The Research Council also promotes scientific thinking among the general public. Each year, thousands of Norwegian pupils participate in the contests known as the Norwegian Contest for Young Scientists and the Nysgjerrigper Science Knowledge Project.

The Research Council has 360 employees working to address societal challenges and create jobs for the future.

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