



The Research Council  
of Norway

# The Research Council of Norway

Organisation – goals – tasks

# The Norwegian research council model

The Research Council of Norway is a common public administrative and allocating agency for all disciplines and segments within the research sector.

## The Research Council of Norway serves as

- a national strategic body for research, that works to increase the national knowledge base and meet society's needs for research by supporting basic and applied research as well as innovation. The Research Council also provides input to the government authorities on issues relating to research policy.
- an agency for the administration and allocation of public research funding, through the establishment and operation of targeted funding schemes aimed at achieving national research policy objectives.
- a meeting place and network builder for researchers and the research community, funders, stakeholders and end-users of research findings.
- a bridge-builder between Norwegian and international research, that actively promotes international research cooperation and the exchange of research expertise across national borders.

## Organisational structure

The Research Council of Norway's organisational structure is comprised of four research divisions and an administrative division. The research divisions are:

- Division for Science
- Division for Energy, Resources and the Environment
- Division for Society and Health
- Division for Innovation

The Director General's executive staff is responsible for coordinating activities relating to budget planning, annual reports, statistics, strategic planning and communication activities and international cooperation. *Arvid Hallén* is the Director General of the Research Council.

The Research Council of Norway is administered under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Research. The Council's Executive Board consists of nine permanent members, two deputy representatives and the employees' representatives. Four of the external members also serve as the chairs of the respective Research Division Boards. *Ingvild Myhre* is the Chair of the Executive Board.

Much of the Research Council's activity is channelled through research programmes and other funding activities linked

to specific areas of research. Individual programme boards are appointed for each of the Research Council's research programmes.

## Grant applicants and expert referees from abroad

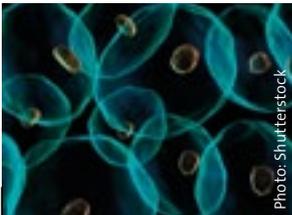
Normally, applications for funding under the Research Council's research programmes and other funding opportunities are only accepted from Norwegian institutions and companies. Researchers from abroad must as a rule have a formal affiliation with a Norwegian institution to be eligible to seek Norwegian funding. However, a number of programmes and fellowships have been established with applicants from other countries specifically in mind, and in coming years more research programmes are expected to become directly open to international researchers.

The competition for research funding is fierce, and every effort is made to ensure appropriate and fair distribution of funding grants. The Research Council employs top expertise when assessing grant applications. Combined use of expert referees from Norway and abroad is widespread, and for certain research programmes the exclusive use of international referees is relatively common.

For more information, see:  
[www.rcn.no/english](http://www.rcn.no/english)

# Division for Science

The Division for Science administers the Research Council's responsibilities vis-à-vis the universities, university colleges and independent research institutes. The division is also in charge of the National Financing Initiative for Research Infrastructure as well as key funding instruments to promote long-term, high-calibre basic research.



## Principal tasks

The Research Council plays a key role in the effort to create and maintain a flexible research sector and promotes high-quality scientific research by means of a variety of funding instruments. The Division for Science provides research policy input to universities, university colleges and government ministries on issues such as cooperation, task-sharing, concentration of expertise, finances and other framework conditions, recruitment and researcher training.

The division is responsible for strategic development of independent research institutes, with special responsibility for the research institutes that receive their basic funding via the Research Council. Independent research institutes comprise a central component of the Norwegian research and innovation system and play an important role in achieving national research policy objectives.

The division carries out subject-specific evaluations of Norwegian research communities on a regular basis to obtain a critical review of scientific merit, research strategy and research management. This creates a basis for input to the institutions and government ministries on how to target further development activities. Evaluations also provide valuable knowledge when the Research Council designs new research programmes and initiatives. Evaluations are followed up with action plans, and funding is often earmarked for the institutions involved.

## Key funding instruments

The funding scheme for independent projects (FRIPRO) and the Centres of Excellence (SFF) scheme are two of the most important national quality-promoting instruments under the division. To achieve its strategic objectives, the division awards funding in its open competitive arenas using scientific merit as the primary criterion, independent of considerations relating to politically-established thematic or technology priorities.

The division also initiates thematically and strategically-oriented basic research programmes in selected fields.

The division administers public funding for national research infrastructure, including advanced scientific equipment, large-scale research facilities, scientific databases and collections, and electronic infrastructure (einfrastructure). The objective of the ten-year National Financing Initiative for Research Infrastructure is to provide researchers with the equipment they need in order to perform high-quality science and efficiently meet society's needs for new knowledge and innovation.

## International cooperation

The division oversees Norway's membership of a number of international collaborative projects, and targeted funding schemes are in place to enable Norwegian researchers to fully exploit the opportunities offered by these projects. Among other things it follows up activities relating to the European Research Council (ERC), which is the EU's open competitive arena, and helps Norwegian researchers to make the most of available ERC funding opportunities. The division also provides individual fellowships and support for research mobility and network-building between Norway and other countries.

The division has the primary responsibility for coordinating national and international cooperation on research infrastructure.

For more information, see:  
[www.rcn.no/organisation](http://www.rcn.no/organisation)

# Division for Energy, Resources and the Environment

The Division for Energy, Resources and the Environment shapes the direction of research, development and innovation activities relating to the environment and marine resources, climate and polar research, and petroleum and energy research.



Photo: Sverre C. Jarid



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Photo: Sverre C. Jarid

## Principal tasks

The Division for Energy, Resources and the Environment coordinates Research Council efforts, conducting analyses and developing strategies within the relevant thematic areas. The division coordinates and implements the Research Council's Research Strategy for the Arctic and Northern Areas.

The division helps to achieve effective, sustainable exploitation of Norwegian resources in order to boost value creation in Norwegian industry. It also works to develop solutions to relevant national and global challenges within its sphere of responsibility. Its tasks include enhancing the knowledge base for policy development and increasing knowledge about market conditions and the application of policy instruments in Norway and internationally. Its activities form an integral part of the central national strategic planning processes.

Climate change is the most pressing environmental problem of our time. Developments in the polar and northern areas are of particular importance for Norway, in part because the country has a management role in these areas and in part because the climate is changing more dramatically and more rapidly in the Arctic than in other areas.

Global energy needs already surpass the amount of energy available and will continue to climb in the years ahead. Norway must therefore invest considerable resources in developing renewable energy resources. At the same time, oil and gas will continue to be a key energy source for many years to come. Thus Norway has a dual role to play as a reliable supplier of oil and gas to the world community and a driving force in the development of technology to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The oceans are vital to the global food supply. Norway's marine areas, not least in the northern areas, are rich in fish stocks and other biological resources. Thus Norway has a responsibility for ensuring the strategic development of

effective, targeted research activities to achieve sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture resources.

## Key funding instruments

The division administers four of the seven programmes under the Research Council's Large-scale Programme initiative: Aquaculture – An Industry in Growth (HAVBRUK); Climate Change and its Impacts in Norway (NORKLIMA); Optimal Management of Petroleum Resources (PETROMAKS); and Clean Energy for the Future (RENERGI). The division also administers the Centres for Environment-friendly Energy Research (FME). As a whole, the division's research programmes provide funding for basic research, innovation and technology demonstration projects.

## International cooperation

The division facilitates international cooperation in keeping with the Research Council's Strategy on International Cooperation and Norway's participation in the EU Framework Programmes under the EEA Agreement. The division provides input on strategic initiatives involving individual countries and actors, and promotes Norway as a leading research and innovation nation in selected areas. The division represents the Research Council in a large number of international organisations and networks, and administers Norway's participation in important joint programmes.

The division works to generate and disseminate knowledge that will enable decision-makers to take constructive decisions. The division also promotes innovation in key Norwegian industries within the energy, petroleum, fisheries and aquaculture sectors, and initiates strategic processes in the interface between the government administration, the research and development sector, and the industrial sector.

For more information, see:  
[www.rcn.no/organisation](http://www.rcn.no/organisation)

# Division for Society and Health

The Division for Society and Health promotes research and innovation to meet global and national societal challenges related to health, welfare, education and social organisation.



## Principal tasks

The division works to identify national research needs, build knowledge and research capacity for societal development, and enhance innovation capability within the priority areas set out in the white paper on research, *Climate for Research*.

Key goals from the white paper include “better health and welfare services” and “addressing social challenges and providing research-based practice in the relevant professions” as well as “meeting global challenges” to a certain extent. The division provides an arena for interaction that fosters links across disciplines, subject areas and sectors throughout the entire research value chain.

The division works to enhance the quality of social welfare schemes. The launch of a wide-ranging programme on welfare, working life and migration has helped to improve coordination of research in these subject areas. Steps have also been taken to improve coordination within research on education.

Health research occupies a prominent position in the division’s portfolio. Bringing together health and welfare research under the auspices of a single division facilitates the further development of synergies between these two separate but strongly related areas.

The division promotes innovation research in the public sector. Demographically, the proportion of elderly people is growing steadily, which will pose major challenges to the health and care sector in the years to come. These in turn will give rise to a need – and opportunities – for renewal.

## Key funding instruments

The division employs policy-oriented programmes within specific areas as its key instrument for meeting national research needs. It works together with 12 government ministries to develop research that can serve as a basis for policymaking and administration in these areas.

Within the broader field of welfare research, the division also undertakes initiatives to strengthen competence-building in the professional disciplines. The Programme for Practice-based Educational Research (PRAKUT) takes an innovative approach to the relationship between research and professional training and practice.

The Norwegian Knowledge Centre for Education represents a new activity, and is intended to serve as a portal to research in the education sector. Organisationally, the centre has been given status as a separate department under the division, and will work closely with policy-oriented and practice-based programmes in research on education.

## International cooperation

The division is responsible for development cooperation research, with a thematic focus on poverty eradication, women’s rights, peace and reconciliation, tax havens, humanitarian policy, and global health and vaccination. Activities seek to further develop bilateral research cooperation, particularly with poor countries, with the aim of bolstering research capacity in developing countries. Thus the division also serves as a driving force behind Norwegian foreign policy research.

The division coordinates research cooperation under the EEA Agreement as well as bilateral cooperation under the auspices of the Research Council. Priority partner countries for bilateral cooperation are the US, Canada, Russia, China, Japan, India, South Africa, Brazil, Chile and Argentina. The division also administers programmes for bilateral research cooperation with other countries.

For more information, see:  
[www.rcn.no/organisation](http://www.rcn.no/organisation)

# Division for Innovation

The Division for Innovation promotes innovation and value creation in trade and industry and society at large. The division performs analyses, develops strategies and administers a comprehensive portfolio of research and innovation programmes that serve as arenas for collaborative activities between academia, research institutes and Norwegian trade and industry.



## Principal tasks

The Division for Innovation is responsible for mobilising and funding research within and for Norwegian trade and industry and the public sector. This involves launching initiatives to enhance innovation and value creation in areas in which Norway already holds a strong position, fostering more research across the board in the industrial sector in Norway, and developing a national knowledge base that will be critical to future innovation. The division also works to ensure that research results are applied in an optimal fashion.

The division works to develop the industrial and public sectors as more attractive, knowledge-based, long-term partners for cooperation, able to meet future challenges in fruitful collaboration with the R&D system. It employs a variety of funding instruments, including direct support to individual projects in trade and industry, the public sector and academia, support for commercialisation of research findings and network-building and the establishment of specialised centres.

The division also evaluates, analyses and develops new instruments in addition to implementing strategic processes within important industries and technology areas. Other important tasks include promoting dialogue with trade and industry and its partners in cooperation, and actively facilitating dissemination of research results. The Research Council takes active steps to encourage innovation orientation in knowledge communities.

The division coordinates the Research Council's activities vis-à-vis the other industry-oriented public agencies in the research and innovation system, and collaborates closely with Innovation Norway and SIVA (the Industrial Development Corporation of Norway), among others.

## Key funding instruments

The Division for Innovation administers the SkatteFUNN Tax Deduction Scheme, the Programme for User-driven Research-based Innovation (BIA) (an open competitive arena), the

Industrial Ph.D. Scheme, and the programme Commercialising R&D Results (FORNY2020). Thematically-oriented innovation programmes, centre schemes and activities for mobilising research and applying research results are also part of the division's portfolio. Thematic areas range from nanotechnology, biotechnology, ICT and environmental technology to transport, maritime activities, food and service innovation.

The Research Council's Centres for Research-based Innovation (SFI) scheme promotes long-term collaboration between research-intensive companies and prominent research groups. Centres that receive SFI status showcase Norwegian industry-oriented research and play an important role in providing an industry-relevant basis for doctoral studies.

## International cooperation

Encouraging Norwegian trade and industry to participate in international research cooperation is as important as mobilising research activities at home. More than 60 per cent of the innovation and knowledge-building projects receiving funding from the Research Council have international partners. In addition, the division encourages the participation of Norwegian trade and industry in the EU Seventh Framework Programme, for example in Joint Programming Initiatives (JPI) or under the ERA-NET scheme. The division also administers EUREKA's Eurostars Programme.

## Presence throughout the country

The division promotes knowledge-based industry throughout Norway. Important activities in this context are the Programme for Regional R&D and Innovation (VRI) and the Research Council's regional representatives, who work out of Innovation Norway's regional offices. The division also coordinates Norway's seven regional research funds.

For more information, see:  
[www.rcn.no/organisation](http://www.rcn.no/organisation)

# Division for Administrative Affairs

The Division for Administrative Affairs provides joint administrative services to the Research Council, offers support to the research divisions and lays the foundation for optimal coordination, management and development of the Research Council as a whole.

The division is responsible for central financial activities within the Research Council, and for providing assistance with legal issues and the administration of the Research Council's R&D contracts. The division also plays a key role in the ongoing development of the organisation, through efforts to build competence and enhance leadership, ensure good working conditions and introduce new electronic working methods.

The division is in charge of the common ICT systems within the Research Council and administers the day-to-day operation of the Research Council's office premises. Library and central archival services are also organised under the division.

The Division for Administrative Affairs cooperates with the Director General's executive staff and the research divisions

on the Research Council's information and research communication towards scientific communities, politicians and public administration, trade and industry, the media, the general public and international target groups. The division also houses the secretariats of the annual National Science Week, the Nysgjerrigper Science Knowledge Project for children, and the Proscientia project for young people.

For more information, see:  
[www.forskningradet.no/organisasjon](http://www.forskningradet.no/organisasjon)  
[www.rcn.no/scienceweek/](http://www.rcn.no/scienceweek/)  
[www.rcn.no/nysgjerrigperscience](http://www.rcn.no/nysgjerrigperscience)  
[www.rcn.no.proscientiaeng](http://www.rcn.no.proscientiaeng)

## International cooperation

### Internationalisation

The internationalisation of Norwegian research and research policy is increasing in both scale and importance, and international cooperation is becoming more and more vital. The Research Council makes strategic recommendations and provides input on Norwegian research policy in the context of internationalisation needs. The Council offers advisory services, support and expertise to government ministries, R&D communities and companies. The Council also works actively vis-à-vis international organisations to promote common initiatives and to furnish researchers and organisations abroad with information on Norwegian research opportunities.

The Research Council realises synergies by improving coordination and enhancing interaction between national and international initiatives, particularly through programme-based cooperation, the opening up of national programmes to international participation and coordination of activities with European organisations.

Tasks related to internationalisation and international cooperation are carried out throughout the entire Research Council. Development of Norway's international research policy and day-to-day activities are coordinated by the International Office, which is part of the Director General's executive staff.

### Bilateral cooperation

The Research Council's international activities encompass cooperation with the EU, bilateral cooperation with priority partner countries such as the US, Canada, Japan and China, strategic and thematic initiatives with India and Russia, Nordic research cooperation, and cooperation with international organisations such as the European Science Foundation (ESF), the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), the

European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL), and the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI).

Bilateral cooperation is established in state-level agreements with the main partner countries. The Research Council's task is to develop this cooperation in close contact with the government ministries and relevant international organisations.

### The EU Framework Programmes

Norway participates as a full member of the EU Seventh Framework Programme on Research and Technological Development (FP7). Norwegian researchers are taking part in the development of the European Research Area (ERA), and the Research Council is represented on EU administrative and policy-making bodies in which the development of the ERA is high on the agenda. In addition to continuing its successful participation in the EU Framework Programmes, Norway is actively involved in establishing large-scale European Joint Programming Initiatives (JPI) to address major global challenges.

The Research Council has been charged with national coordination of Norwegian research cooperation with the EU. The International Office and National Contact Points (NCP) are responsible for coordinating activities. The NCPs provide information and advisory services regarding funding opportunities under FP7, and at the same time work to enhance coordination with national initiatives. The Research Council has a designated office in Brussels, the EU-RTD Department Liaison Office, for these activities.

For more information, see:  
[www.rcn.no/international](http://www.rcn.no/international)  
[www.rcn.no/euresearch](http://www.rcn.no/euresearch)



This publication can be ordered at:  
[www.forskningsradet.no/publikasjoner](http://www.forskningsradet.no/publikasjoner)

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November 2011

Design: Jentestreker  
Cover photo: Shutterstock  
Print: 07 Gruppen AS

English translation: Carol B. Eckmann  
and Victoria S. Coleman