

Norwegischer Forschungsrat legt neue Richtlinien zur Förderung unabhängiger Projekte fest

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http://www.forskningsradet.no/prognett-fripro/Home_page/1226994096426

Der Norwegische Forschungsrat hat neue Rahmenbedingung für die Förderung "unabhängiger Projekte" (FRIPRO) beschlossen. Im Vordergrund steht die Unterstützung innovativer Forschungsansätze und junger Forscher. In den für April geplanten Ausschreibungen sollen die neuen Richtlinien erstmals zur Geltung kommen.

Greater focus on scientific renewal and willingness to "think outside the box" in research projects, as well as better opportunities for talented younger researchers are among the elements to be given new emphasis under the Research Council of Norway's funding scheme for independent projects (FRIPRO).

The scheme's redefined framework will be applied in its next funding announcement, which will be issued in April with a submission deadline of 29 May 2013.

"The overall structure underlying the changes has been approved by the Research Board of the Division for Science," says Executive Director Anders Hanneborg. "Even though we have yet to hammer out all of the details, we have chosen to publicise the main features now as this is essential information needed by potential applicants."

The FRIPRO scheme is the Research Council's most important and comprehensive instrument for funding basic research of high scientific quality independent of research area and discipline. In 2012, 106 projects were granted a total of NOK 527 million in funding under the scheme.

Key changes in spring 2013

The funding announcement to be issued in April will include new objectives in the following areas.

- Increased scientific renewal: The willingness to seek new approaches and scientific renewal in grant applications will be given greater importance. The purpose is to cultivate projects with a greater potential for innovative results.
- Talented younger researchers: The FRIPRO scheme will seek to provide particularly skilled researchers with attractive framework conditions in the early stages of their careers. A separate category for talented younger researchers will be established.

Thorough process

The Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) presented its evaluation of the FRIPRO scheme in April 2012. An internal development project to enhance the scheme was conducted in parallel, and the research community was invited to provide input. The overall evaluation of the Research Council carried out in 2012 by Technopolis on commission from the Ministry of Education and Research also provided recommendations involving the FRIPRO scheme.

An important point which the changes now being implemented by the Research Council will address is that the FRIPRO scheme has done too little to support innovative, pioneering research. Another shortcoming has been that the scheme has primarily supported well-established researchers, making it difficult for researchers who are just starting their careers to successfully compete for funding.

If Norway is to achieve prominence as a research nation, more of the best and the brightest must choose to pursue a career as a researcher. The FRIPRO scheme will work to create better conditions for exceptionally talented researchers.

Closer look at interdisciplinarity

Many of the projects for which FRIPRO funding is sought include interdisciplinary components. These grant applications are normally assessed by the ordinary referee panels and expert committees, but some may have such a high degree of interdisciplinarity that the established review procedures are not entirely adequate.

"We are currently looking at how to organise the application review process to ensure optimal assessment of highly interdisciplinary projects," says Mr Hanneborg.

Broad-based expert committees may prove better for handling interdisciplinarity

The Research Board has given its approval for combining the former expert committees for the humanities and social science, so there will be three expert committees under the FRIPRO scheme in 2013:

- Expert Committee for the Humanities and Social Science (FRIHUMSAM)
- Expert Committee for Medicine, Health Sciences and Biology (FRIMEDBIO)
- Expert Committee for Mathematics, Physical Science and Technology (FRINATEK)

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