

[Uddannelses- og forskningsminister Sophie Carsten Nielsens forord til den internationale evalueringsrapport af Det Frie Forskningsråd: "Evaluation of the Danish Council for Independent Research". (60 sider, oktober 2014) ]

## Preface by the Minister for Higher Education and Science

The Danish Council for Independent Research (DFF) has been a key institution in the Danish research funding landscape for the past ten years. By funding bottom-up independent research projects and providing support for young researchers, DFF has been a cornerstone of many researchers' careers.

Last year the Danish National Research Foundation was evaluated, and this year three former Danish research and innovation councils merged to form the Innovation Fund Denmark. In light of this, it was decided to carry out this evaluation of DFF.

The evaluation clearly shows that DFF fulfils its role very successfully. DFF supports the brightest minds and most talented young researchers while maintaining the highest respect and appreciation throughout the Danish research landscape. This is very impressive.

I am convinced that DFF contributes to the high performance of Danish research. DFF is the stepping stone for talented young researchers, who are given a chance to embark on a research career. And the council is open to researchers' own ideas that may be risky, but can lead to genuine breakthroughs that provide important new knowledge and solutions to our society's challenges.

Even so, I also take notice of the many useful recommendations made by the panel. For instance, as it is pointed out, there is clearly room for improving the gender balance in Danish research. Female researchers are still markedly underrepresented, especially in senior level research positions. This means that we are missing out on both talent and excellent research ideas, which is an issue that we must take very seriously.

Like the panel I too consider internationalisation to be an opportunity which should be seized by all the Danish researchers. International collaboration and researcher mobility are crucial elements in developing and strengthening Danish research and its results, and DFF is an important institution in this regard.

The recommendations of this evaluation report are not met overnight and they will require active participation from many stakeholders. But I feel confident that we are on the right path, and I look forward to the continued dialogue on these important questions. In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the panel for taking on the task of evaluating the research council.

Sofie Carsten Nielsen  
Minister for Higher Education and Science