

Agreement on Pioneer Centers initiative is in place - 1 billion DKK to research focusing on major societal challenges

During the recent negotiation of Denmark's Financial Act, the parties of the Danish Parliament agreed to give 177 million DKK to establish a so-called Pioneer Initiative, which will contribute to securing Denmark's position among the global research elite.

The Danish National Research Foundation (DNRF), the Carlsberg Foundation, the Lundbeck Foundation, the Novo Nordisk Foundation, and the Villum Foundation have now agreed on cooperative funding for the Pioneer Centers, and the initiative can now be launched with a total funding of 1 billion DKK.

The ambition is to establish excellent research units that carry out basic research aimed at solving major societal challenges within 2-3 selected themes, including, among others, artificial intelligence and climate/energy.

"It is very gratifying for Denmark that we now have broad support politically and from the universities and the private foundations for an extraordinary ambitious research initiative. If we are to solve some of the enormous challenges facing the world today, there is a need to strengthen basic research in areas of interest, where research breakthroughs are the prerequisite for finding new solutions. For instance, we need to find new ways to store renewable energy if we are to solve the climate challenges while maintaining our standard of living. And artificial intelligence will, in many ways, shape our society in the future. We must help develop the technology and ensure that it is ethically and humanly sound," said Professor Jens Kehlet Nørskov, chair of the DNRF board.

"The Pioneer Centers are a groundbreaking project that will give Danish basic research a solid boost. It is a very ambitious funding amount, but also the cooperation between the private foundations, the universities and the Danish National Research Foundation has a really interesting perspective for Danish research. With what the foundations are proposing, Denmark can be at the forefront of the research within artificial intelligence, and we can strengthen the basic research in climate-friendly solutions. I look forward to seeing the initiative become concrete in the coming years," said Tommy Ahlers, Danish Minister of Higher Education and Science.

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FACTBOX

- The establishment of the Pioneer Centers is an ambitious national initiative, which is being developed in close cooperation between the Ministry of Higher Education and Science, the Danish National Research Foundation, the Carlsberg Foundation, the Lundbeck Foundation, the Novo Nordisk Foundation, the Villum Foundation, and possibly other private foundations, and the Danish universities.
- The Danish National Research Foundation will administer the initiative and contribute 223 million DKK. So the total public funding contribution is 400 million DKK.
- The Carlsberg Foundation, the Lundbeck Foundation, the Novo Nordisk Foundation, and the Villum Foundation will contribute the remaining funding amount of 600 million DKK.
- This is the first time that the Danish National Research Foundation and four of Denmark's major research-funding private foundations are joining forces in a national research initiative that will benefit Danish society. The five foundations have jointly agreed on a preliminary focus on artificial intelligence and climate/energy as research topics.
- A Pioneer Center must be led by an extraordinarily skilled researcher, who will be carefully recruited from the global research community. The foundations are currently working on refining the two research topics and possibly a third. The subject areas are formulated broadly, and the foundations emphasize that all subject areas are relevant to the initiative.