

Report of the Executive Board for 2009

The Executive Board of the Research Council of Norway 2007-2010.

From top right: Knut Liestøl, Johs. Kolltveit (employee representative), Ole Henrik Magga and Geir Stene-Larsen.
Left row: Kari Melby, Unni Steinsmo, Tarjei Nødtvedt Malme (deputy representative for employees) and Peter Wesenberg.
Not present: Margareth Øvrum and Vibeke Hammer Madsen. Photo: Sverre Jarild

1 The Research Council plays a key role as advisor on and implementer of Norwegian research policy

In his speech to the nation on New Year's Eve 2010, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg emphasised that knowledge is the key to solving the challenges facing Norway at the national and global levels alike. He pointed out that investment in research, development and education form the very foundation of the knowledge society.

The Research Council plays a vital strategic role in the development and implementation of research policy in Norway. In its advisory capacity, the Research Council provides input on where and how to focus Norwegian research activities. As an implementer, the Council administers a large portion of the public funding for research and development, in addition to fulfilling functions as meeting place and network builder. All told, and with the inclusion of the SkatteFUNN tax deduction scheme, the public sector invested a total of NOK 22.3 billion in research and development activities in 2009. The Research Council distributed NOK 6.4 billion in 2009, up 12.7 per cent from 2008. The Council administered half of this year's growth in public funding for research.

Viewed as a whole, growth in public investment in R&D has been NOK 6.5 billion over the past five years, and the Research Council's budget has increased by nearly NOK 2 billion during the same period. In the view of the Council, Norwegian research is on a positive track thanks to several underlying factors. One is that a greater proportion of the available funding has been used for larger, more long-term grants to the highest quality projects. In addition, international cooperation has gained momentum, not least through participation in EU research programmes. And independent of this, Norway has managed to cultivate high-profile Norwegian research groups that are sought-after as partners to international scientists and that attract broad-based international involvement. The Research Council has expressed great concerns about the lag in investments in infrastructure in Norwegian research, and has drawn up a national strategy for this area. The Government's decision in 2009 to establish a dedicated fund for infrastructure that will be providing an annual yield for ten years represented a major breakthrough in this regard. The Research Council has thus far been able to pledge NOK 500 million in grants for infrastructure.

In response to the need to resolve emerging global challenges, the cross-political agreement on climate policy reached in the Storting (Norwegian national assembly) provided substantial growth in investments in environment-friendly energy, CO₂ capture and storage and climate research. In 2008 the Research Council provided input to the debate on the white paper on climate, and was assigned a crucial role in the follow-up to the climate policy agreement. In 2009 the Council received over NOK 300 million in allocations to use for this purpose, and has established eight Centres for Environment-friendly Energy Research (FMEs). This will

strengthen Norwegian research in this field significantly and will enhance the potential for industrial innovation in the energy sphere.

The Programme for User-driven Research-based Innovation (BIA) is a general support scheme for industry that has been established to provide funding for projects in areas that are not covered under any of the individual programmes. A total of NOK 410 million was allocated for use under this scheme for 2009. In response to its input to the Government's crisis package efforts, the Research Council received an additional NOK 175 million to strengthen industry-oriented research and recruitment activity.

The Research Council's main strategy points to the structure and efficiency of the research system as critical to further advancement. The government white paper on research presented in 2009 also emphasises the importance of increased cooperation, better distribution of tasks and more concentrated focus, and this will necessarily form part of the backdrop for the Research Council's activities. The implementation of a new basic funding scheme for the independent research institutes, the infrastructure funding initiative and the specialised centre schemes all comprise measures that will have a clear impact on the research system. Other such measures include the launching of the regional research funds, the Focus on the Arctic and Northern Areas initiative and facilitation of increased international cooperation, especially with regard to the development of the European Research Area (ERA). Substantial resources are being deployed by the programmes to promote learning, dissemination and commercialisation, all of which help to enhance the knowledge pool, create a better basis for policy-making, and spawn innovation and industrial development.

2 The Research Council provides comprehensive research policy input

The Research Council fills an important function in its capacity as research policy advisor to the government authorities. Each year, the Council submits a budget proposal that specifies priorities for public R&D activities. The Council also provides input to relevant political processes, prepares reports, strategies and statistics and makes other contributions to expanding the knowledge base for research policy.

Follow-up of the white paper on research

In April of 2009 the Government presented its white paper on Norwegian research policy. While the new white paper pursues many of the central research policy perspectives of its predecessor, it also seeks to promote renewal, emphasising in particular the role of research in resolving the challenges facing society today.

The Research Council took active part in drawing up the new white paper both through submission of written input and through direct participation in the preparation of the document. In January 2009 the Executive Board approved the consolidated submission from the Research Council, which was based on the Research Council's strategy for 2009-2012 and incorporates the principles and targets of the Research Council's governing bodies and the results of a comprehensive external consultative process. The Research Council recommended that the white paper should be formulated at an overall level to reflect the distribution of responsibility within the research policy system and facilitate the incorporation of other stakeholders' contributions in the designation of policy at the more detailed level. It also recommended that challenges arising in the wake of the financial crisis should be addressed. The Board is pleased to note that the Research Council's views were given significant weight in the process of drawing up the white paper. The Research Council has further followed up

the white paper by establishing working groups to ensure that the overarching objectives of the white paper are integrated into the daily activities of the Council.

Proposal to increase the budget by NOK 1.77 billion

The annual budget proposal represents the Research Council's most important input to the Government's efforts to set up the national budget for the coming year. The proposal outlines challenges within individual fields of study, and establishes clear priorities among disciplines both for an expanding budgetary framework and within a zero-growth context. The Research Council's *budget proposal* for 2011 revolves around four main priority areas: climate and energy, research infrastructure, an open scientific quality-based arena and more research within trade and industry. The proposal also recommends increased investment in health-related research, internationalisation activities, basic funding to the independent research institutes and the other priority areas set out in the white paper. The proposal recommends an overall increase of NOK 1.77 billion, extending across all 16 of the ministries that allocate funding to research via the Research Council.

Policy for polar research

Norway is at the international forefront of polar research both in the Arctic and in the Antarctic. In 2009 the Executive Board approved a new policy for Norwegian polar research from 2010-2013. This is the first time the Research Council has drawn up a document that covers research in both the Arctic, including Svalbard, and the Antarctic. It gives priority to the research areas that are most important to Norway and to our international management of the polar regions, on the basis of the scientific strength and quality of different research groups, the infrastructure available, Norway's natural advantages and research, environmental, natural resource and industrial policy priorities. Polar research includes topics within the natural sciences (climate, pollutants and biodiversity), research related to economic activity, as well as important topics in social science, law and the humanities. One of the main areas of focus of the strategy is the need for integrated Earth observing systems in the Arctic to follow up the intensified observation activities carried out during the International Polar Year.

Establishment of regional research funds

The regional research funds represent a new development in the research policy landscape. The Government approved the establishment of the regional funds in 2007, and in 2008 the Research Council was charged with devising a proposal for their organisation. In 2009 the Research Council has been actively involved in the further specification of how these funds should conduct their activities and what measures must be in place to ensure the necessary quality control and coordination. The Executive Board notes with satisfaction that the Research Council's recommendations have been accepted and the Council has been assigned a central role in the administration of the funds. A department for regional R&D has been established to strengthen coordination of activities at the regional level and promote shared learning and harmonisation of measures.

Better utilisation of Norway's biobanks

The biotechnology and biomedicine sector is large and expanding rapidly internationally. The unique biological material that is found in Norwegian biobanks is of considerable interest to

both the research community and the trade and industry sector. In 2008 the Research Council was asked by the Ministry of Health and Care Services to appoint a working group to study ethical, legal and political aspects of industrial development and commercial use of Norwegian human biobanks. According to the working group, it is imperative for Norway to act quickly to position itself vis-à-vis its competitors in a growing international market. Successful industrial development of the biobanks is contingent on a political willingness to promote active public participation. Such participation may be achieved in part through long-term ownership and in part by allocating adequate start capital. According to the working group, there is a window of two to five years within which activities must be implemented if Norway is to fully exploit the significant potential of current Norwegian biobanks.

3 The Research Council administers close to 30 per cent of public R&D expenditures

The Research Council allocates roughly one-third of all public funding for research. Funding is distributed to universities and university colleges, research institutes and private enterprise on a competitive basis. Whereas other public support tends to be provided in the form of framework allocations to institutions, grants from the Research Council are quality assured through the process of grant proposal assessment carried out by independent expert referees.

The Research Council coordinates allocations from 16 ministries

The Research Council coordinates the financing from 16 government ministries and is responsible for research activities across all fields and thematic areas. Considerable effort is put into drawing up strategies, designing budget proposals and planning programme and networking activities that will increase cross-sectoral coordination of research activity. Many research programmes receive funding from more than one ministry. In 2009 the Research Council has continued to take part in the successful endeavour to coordinate R&D follow-up of the Storting's cross-political agreement on climate policy. However, to successfully promote cohesiveness and a long-term perspective in public research funding, the Research Council will need to have adequate funding, for example like that from the Fund for Research and Innovation, that is not based on too highly detailed, sector-restrictive principles. This will be an important challenge in the years to come.

The Research Council's budget increased by 13 per cent

The accounts for 2009 show that the Research Council allocated NOK 6.4 billion to Norwegian research. This represents an increase in R&D funding of NOK 728 million, or 12.7 per cent, compared with 2008. The Research Council's share of the total growth in R&D allocations from the national budget was close to 50 per cent, up from 19 per cent in 2008. As a result of the cross-political agreement on climate policy, the Storting allocated an additional NOK 300 million to research on renewable energy. Significant increases were also provided for research infrastructure, user-driven industry-oriented research and in connection with the introduction of a new basic allocation scheme for the independent research institutes.

Continued growth for environment-friendly energy research

During 2009 the Research Council has increased investments in environment-friendly energy research. In February, the Council announced the names of the eight applicants awarded status as national Centres for Environment-friendly Energy Research. The new centres cover all the

central areas within the field of environment-friendly energy: offshore wind energy (two centres), solar energy, bioenergy, CO₂ capture and storage (two centres), energy-efficient buildings and design solutions for renewable energy. The project portfolio of the Clean Energy for the Future (RENERGI) programme has also been greatly expanded during 2009.

Climate research should be given higher priority

The cross-political agreement on climate policy reached by the Storting gives rise to a need for increased investment in climate research. The Research Council defines climate research as research on the climate system, the impacts of climate change, and adaptation to climate change and political measures. Research on environment-friendly energy is not included under this definition. For the past two years, the Research Council's budget proposal has assigned top priority to funding for climate research. The Klima21 forum for climate research appointed by the Norwegian Government has recommended an increase in allocations over the national budget of minimum NOK 1 billion by 2015. The Research Council endorses this recommendation, and has suggested an increase of NOK 300 million for 2011.

While climate research is an integral component of many of the research programmes, the Programme for Climate Change and its Impacts in Norway (NORKLIMA) serves as the Research Council's primary channel for funding in this field. The current programme period extends through 2013.

Mid-term evaluation of the Large-scale Programme initiative

In March 2009, an external referee panel submitted its mid-term evaluation of the Research Council's Large-scale Programme initiative. The evaluation concluded that the initiative is well suited in overall terms for addressing strategic national research priorities, but recommended that the relevant programmes be further developed as funding instruments, particularly in light of the current lack of adequate coordination among the sectoral ministries. The Research Council is responding to the evaluation through two sub-projects. One of these is following up the existing seven Large-scale Programmes by means of a review and refinement of their working methods, framework conditions, etc., for the remainder of the programme period. The other focuses on the role and activities of the Research Council in national priority areas, emphasising analyses, strategy development, adaptation of funding instruments, coordination efforts, and more.

Crucial measures for basic research

The Research Council provides funding to basic research via a number of programmes and activities. The primary funding instrument in this context is the FRIPRO scheme, an open competitive arena for high-quality, researcher-initiated, thematically independent basic research projects. The scheme has had unchanged financial parameters for many years, and in 2009 the Research Council recommended that the FRIPRO scheme funding base be increased by 30 per cent. The Council has made a concerted effort to obtain more funding for the scheme through co-financing with relevant sectoral ministries. However, no growth was awarded in the 2010 national budget.

Laying the foundation for stable conditions for the best among researchers has remained a priority task for the Research Council in 2009. The Centres of Excellence (SFF) scheme will be continued, and the board has approved principles regarding how to phase out the SFF allocations in accordance with the scheme's stipulated time-frame. The Research Council has

initiated activities to prepare a new call for proposals. In 2009 the Research Council also put forward a proposal to conduct a new round of calls under the Outstanding Young Investigators scheme (YFF).

Instruments that strengthen industry-oriented research

The Research Council offers a wide range of support schemes for companies wishing to incorporate research into their development activities. Industry-oriented activities are usually organised under the auspices of the various research programmes, including the Large-scale Programmes, that encompass specific thematic or strategic priority areas of research. The initiatives available vary widely in focus, from energy to ICT, food and transport. For areas of research that are not covered under a specific programme, funding may be sought under the Programme for User-driven Research-based Innovation (BIA), which is an open competitive arena. The Research Council administers a number of other industry-oriented schemes, including the SkatteFUNN tax deduction scheme, support for networks and competence brokering.

Industry-oriented research activities help to build bridges between companies, research institutes and academia. Industry-based researcher training receives a major boost through the education of doctoral candidates in projects funded by the Research Council. The Industrial Ph.D. scheme plays an important role in this context. Under the scheme, employees working at a company can pursue a doctorate while still remaining in the company's employ. In 2009 there were 720 doctoral and post-doctoral candidates (of which 280 were women) participating in a total of 1 100 active innovation and competence projects.

Follow-up of the national strategy for research infrastructure

It is essential that Norway invests adequate resources in research infrastructure to enable Norwegian research groups to participate on the international research front. The Research Council has launched its implementation of the ten-year national strategy for research infrastructure, and the first round of funding announcements within all categories was issued in 2009. Funding for a total of NOK 500 million was announced, for which grant proposals amounting to NOK 6.7 billion were received under the first call.

The National Financing Initiative for Research Infrastructure gives priority to infrastructure that is nationally oriented, and that is considered to be of major strategic importance for Norwegian research. In 2009 26 projects involving advanced scientific equipment, eInfrastructure, pre-projects for large-scale infrastructure, and scientific databases and collections were awarded a total of NOK 272 million. The first decisions regarding grants for large-scale infrastructure will be taken in April 2010, at which time the remaining NOK 228 million will be distributed.

The Research Council placed special focus on International Polar Year activities

The International Polar Year (IPY) was launched in March 2007 as an intensive, internationally coordinated observation and data collection programme over the course of a two-year period. In Norway, the IPY Programme has run for four years and will be concluded in 2010. The Research Council has been in charge of coordinating Norwegian participation under a joint international committee headed by the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). Researchers from more than 60

countries have taken part in the programme. Norway was ranked third highest among all the countries that allocated extra funding to polar research during IPY and is considered a major player in this field. Polar researchers from all over the world will be gathering in Oslo in June 2010 to present the scientific results obtained during IPY. This will be the largest international polar research conference ever held, and the Research Council is pleased to be serving as the host. Findings from the IPY are already providing crucial new information about the causes and effects of climate change in the Arctic and Antarctic, knowledge that will be incorporated into the basis for the next report of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as well as for the UN Climate Change Conference (COP16) to be held in November 2010. The IPY, as a coordinated effort, has achieved much more than could be expected vis-à-vis the individual national budgets for polar research.

Gender equality is fundamental to enhancing recruitment

The Research Council has adopted an action plan for gender equality and gender perspectives in research, and seeks to play a central role in the advancement of gender equality in Norwegian research. Satisfactory recruitment of women in research activity is absolutely fundamental to maintaining Norway's competitiveness as a research nation. Typically, women comprise a high proportion of the total students at master's degree level, but the figure declines dramatically as the career trajectory progresses. Only 18 per cent of all professorships are filled by women, placing Norway at roughly the same level as the European average.

In cooperation with the Government-appointed Committee for Gender Balance in Research (KIF Committee), NordForsk, the Nordic Gender Institute (NIKK) and the Ministry of Education and Research, the Research Council organised a major Nordic conference on gender and quality in research in 2009. Speakers included researchers and representatives of central research-policy players from the Nordic region, and was attended by some 200 delegates. Two other conferences have been held in this sphere: one on the role of women in innovation (in cooperation with Innovation Norway and SIVA – The Industrial Development Corporation of Norway) and one on gender equality within the independent research institutes (in cooperation with the KIF Committee and the Norwegian Association of Research institutes (FFA)).

In 2009 the Research Council published a report summarising the results of a review of the calls for proposals under the schemes for Centres of Excellence, Outstanding Young Investigators and Centres for Research-based Innovation: *Gender equality in research – what works? An analysis of the grant allocation process used under the Research Council's YFF, SFF and SFI schemes to promote excellence in research.*

4 The Research Council is important as a hub

The Research Council provides a valuable meeting place for institutions, ministries, politicians, the media and the public at large. This is an extremely important function that is being given increasingly greater priority. In 2009 the Research Council registered 14 900 visitors to its offices, compared with 12 880 in 2008.

The Research Council takes active part in the public dialogue

The Research Council participates actively in the public debate on R&D activities both in the media and through formal bodies. In 2009 the Research Council figured in 4 366 articles in

the media. The Council cultivates active contacts with the political community and arranges an annual visit of the parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Research and Church Affairs. In addition, the Research Council takes part in consultative reviews conducted by the Storting when relevant. A study trip is arranged almost every year for a selection of political advisors working at the Storting.

Internally the Research Council has worked to improve its capabilities in relation to analysis of and advisory services on research and innovation policy, and active steps are being taken to share the analysis results with relevant parties.

Public-oriented measures

Public interest in research is growing day by day, and there has been a general increase in interest in research policy as well. The Research Council has been assigned national responsibility for dissemination of research to the general public and administers a variety of measures for this purpose, including the Nysgjerrigper Science Knowledge Project and National Science Week in Norway. The most recent development in this context is the launching of the Proscientia project, which administers the Norwegian Contest for Young Scientists and is designed to generate greater interest in research among adolescents and young people aged 12-21.

With this most recent addition, the Research Council's dissemination activities now encompass measures for all age groups from 6 and up. The Nysgjerrigper Science Knowledge Project is primarily directed towards children at primary school level, but can provide assistance to pre-school facilities as well. Discussions are underway as to whether to expand the Nysgjerrigper project to incorporate the pre-school level more formally. In addition to these measures, the Research Council provides funding and information to Forskning.no, a website for national and international research news, and publishes *Forskning* magazine, which features articles about research projects and findings as well as research policy issues. The Research Council will continue to work actively to strengthen dialogue and understanding between the research communities on the one hand and politicians, the media and the general public on the other.

The Research Council gives out three annual awards, for outstanding research, excellence in communication of science and most innovative company.

Visit by US Secretary of Energy, Dr Steven Chu

The Research Council received a number of visits from state and high-level delegations from the other countries in 2009. A highpoint in this context was the visit paid by US Secretary of Energy, Dr Steven Chu, who was in Norway in connection with the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to President Barack Obama. At the request of the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy, the Research Council served as host when Dr Chu, himself a Nobel Laureate in Physics, met with leading representatives of the Norwegian energy research community.

Energy seminar at the climate summit in Copenhagen

Together with the trade organisation Energy Norway, the Research Council organised a seminar on energy-related topics in Copenhagen during the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 15). The seminar was attended by a wide range of representatives from Scandinavian scientific and political circles and institutions.

Meetings in the research sector

Many of the Research Council's employees participate in common learning arenas together with experts from the ministries, directorates, and other relevant bodies. These activities facilitate mutual exchange of experience and encourage debate and shared learning. In addition, a large number of meetings, seminars and workshops are carried out under the auspices of the Research Council programmes and divisions.

The Research Council maintains up-to-date contact with the various research institutions by means of both regular meetings at top administrative level and through ongoing scientific cooperation.

5 Challenges that the Research Council is facing

The internationalisation of Norwegian research poses a major challenge

The internationalisation of Norwegian research has gained increasing momentum. In 1989 there was international co-authorship in 27 per cent of the articles by Norwegian researchers. By 2008 this figure had risen to a full 53 per cent. Especially noticeable is the rise in number of co-authors from EU countries outside of the Nordic region. Over the past decade, research policy, too, has become progressively more internationalised. The Research Council is a player in a research arena extending beyond national borders, and its task is to motivate and support international participation among Norwegian R&D institutions and companies.

Greater weight is being attached to international competitiveness, and it is essential that the division and programme boards as well as the various relevant committees give priority to international research collaboration and projects. Changes in the international research landscape will lead to the establishment of new international arenas along with new forms of funding cooperation that are more binding. This will in turn set new parameters for the Research Council's efforts with regard to the prioritisation, coordination and distribution of tasks between national and international initiatives. It will be necessary for the Research Council to make use of several types of international funding cooperation, with differing levels of coordination and risk.

The Norwegian research system must be developed to achieve greater cooperation, better distribution of tasks and more concentrated focus

The effectiveness of the research system is a key factor in maintaining the quality of Norwegian research. The structure and coordination of activities within the university and university college sector has been reviewed by a government-appointed commission, and last year's white paper on research puts efforts to achieve greater cooperation, better distribution of tasks and more concentrated focus in the research system high on the agenda. This is of critical importance to raise efficiency and increase international competitiveness.

The Research Council seeks to play a key part in these efforts. The impact of funding instruments on the structure of the research system in terms of promoting cooperation, encouraging more targeted focus and fostering more proficient research management must be carefully weighed. The centre schemes have provided valuable experience in this context, and the Research Council's strategy points out that instruments of this type can be used to create

more effective collaborative networks elsewhere in the Norwegian research system. The Centres for Environment-friendly Energy Research are a case in point.

The higher education sector is facing major challenges in relation to its educational tasks and research activities alike. A government commission appointed to assess the capacity for independent prioritisation among the higher education institutions has identified some of these challenges in its report. The Research Council will take active steps to follow this issue up through funding instruments that support the autonomy of the institutions and promote satisfactory utilisation of resources.

New knowledge is needed to resolve industrial challenges

Norway's substantial value creation is linked to the level of knowledge, creativity, high productivity and a good natural resource base. Norway must aim its economy in an even more knowledge-based direction. At the same time, the existing industrial structure contributes to keeping overall research investment low in relation to total value creation. Thus, public investment in knowledge becomes even more important. To succeed in enhancing value creation, Norway needs maximum public investment in knowledge. We must continue to develop our strongest industries and build on national advantages, and knowledge is rapidly gaining sway as one of the pillars of value creation.

A key indicator will be the degree to which Norway manages to attract expertise and capital from abroad. It would strengthen the international competitiveness of the Norwegian business sector if we can succeed in maintaining foreign-owned R&D centres in Norway, and manage to obtain new investments. In March 2010 General Electric announced that it will be expanding its European offshore wind power activity in Norway. The forward-looking focus on energy research that started with the political agreement on climate policy in 2008 and continued through 2009 has been an important factor in this decision – and sets a meaningful example for Norwegian research policy in the period to come.

6 The Research Council's internal activities

The Research Council of Norway is a public administrative body granted special powers of authority. Its main offices are located in Oslo, with a separate office in Brussels and 13 regional employees with offices located in other counties.

In 2009 the Research Council allocated NOK 6 754 million, primarily to research institutions and companies. This represents an increase of NOK 372 million from 2008. It has been a stated objective to minimise financial transfers from one year to the next. In relative terms, the budget transfers to 2010 have decreased compared with previous years. In 2007 the Executive Board set a target to achieve budget transfers of less than 15 per cent of the disposable budget for 2009. This target was reached. Transfers to 2010 comprise NOK 973 million, which means that the percentage of the disposable budget transferred has been further reduced to 12.6 per cent. This has been achieved through the implementation of measures such as long-term programme budgeting and more realistic budgeting at the project level. The majority of the research programmes and activities have now attained an acceptable level of budget transfer.

The Executive Board has determined that administrative expenditures should not exceed 8 per cent of the Research Council's revenues. Funding for administration is distributed from an earmarked administrative allocation from the Ministry of Education and Research and through reimbursements from other revenue areas. The administrative accounts in 2009 amounted to

NOK 386 million. In addition, some programmes are charged for administrative costs in connection with special measures. Total administrative expenditures in 2009 comprised 7.6 per cent of the overall revenues.

The Research Council manages property assets as part of its portfolio. These activities are organised as a separate profit centre. At the end of 2009 the equity property fund totalled NOK 26 million. Revenues for 2009 amounted to NOK 8.7 million and comprised for the most part ground rent. Expenditures totalled NOK 2.6 million.

As of 31 December 2009 the Research Council's staff consisted of 383.3 man-years (398 individuals). Senior advisers comprise the largest group of employees, accounting for a total of 112.7 man-years. Women comprise a total of 61 per cent of the staff, and at least 40 per cent of the representatives on the Executive Board and all division research boards and programme boards.

The Research Council maintains an ongoing focus on issues relating to the working environment, and carries out preventative Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) measures, including regular assessment of the physical and psychosocial working environment, internal staff surveys conducted every other year, follow-up of employees on sick leave and cooperation with the occupational health services. The total sickness absence is 3.6 per cent, and has remained at a stable low level for several years. Responses to the 2009 internal staff survey indicate that a vast majority of the employees at the Research Council enjoy what they do and consider it to be a good place to work. As in other surveys, the 2009 results indicate that many employees, and especially those at the management level, feel that their workloads are too heavy.

Under the Research Council's established employment procedures it is mandatory to pay due regard to gender equality considerations. Women comprise 64 per cent of the leadership group, 53 per cent of the advisor/senior advisor group and 90 per cent of the executive officer group. There are 20 employees of non-Norwegian origin in the administration. The Research Council's employment procedures stipulate that it is mandatory to call in qualified applicants of non-Norwegian origin for interviews.

The physical working environment is appropriately accessible for persons with disabilities.

The Research Council's activities do not pollute the environment to any significant degree.

The Research Council is continuously seeking to improve its administrative methods and activities. Issues that have been the focus of most attention during 2009 include:

- developing the knowledge base for strategic R&D analysis and advisory functions;
- establishing interministerial cooperation to draw up common guidelines for the Research Council's performance targets and management vis-à-vis the ministries;
- maintaining regular analysis of the Research Council's R&D portfolio to ensure a reliable basis for devising internal policy and funding instruments;
- developing a better system for managing personnel resources and financing administrative expenditures;
- increasing the efficiency of and quality controls for work processes in connection with programme administration;
- increasing the level of professionalism and efficiency of activities relating to public procurement;
- further developing IT tools that support complex administrative procedures in connection with R&D activities;
- following up the Research Council's competence strategy and further developing/enhancing the profile of competence-building measures related to this strategy;
- implementing a management development programme for managers with personnel responsibilities.

Oslo, 31 December 2009

15 April 2010

In the Executive Board for the Research Council of Norway

Geir Stene-Larsen
(Chair)

Unni Steinsmo
(Deputy Chair)

Knut Liestøl

Kari Melby

Margareth Øvrum

Vibeke Hammer
Madsen

Ole Henrik Magga

Johs. Kolltveit
(employee rep.)

Arvid Hallén
(Director General)