

INTO CHANGE AWARD

Call for nominations – Into Change Award 2026

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Call for nominations: Into Change Award 2026

European research and science have always sought to answer the major questions, and to expand our understanding of ourselves, our societies, and the world around us.

Today, research and innovation play an increasingly vital role in addressing major societal challenges, and Denmark wishes to pay tribute to the next generation of outstanding, world-changing research groups from across Europe.

The importance of research and innovation in finding answers and solutions to our most pressing societal challenges – whether related to the environment, security, democracy, competitiveness, or other areas – is becoming ever more evident.

In a geopolitical landscape marked by uncertainty and rapid technological advancement, fundamental scientific values such as collaboration, curiosity, responsibility, and openness should be actively promoted and recognised.

1. Objective

With the **Into Change Award**¹, the Danish Ministry of Science, Higher Education and Digital Affairs aims to acknowledge and pay tribute to European research groups that have conducted outstanding, ground-breaking research at the highest international level—research that carries substantial societal significance and/or impact—while also exemplifying the best practices in terms of collaboration and key scientific values.

In 2026, a total award of DKK 8,000,000 will be presented to a research group composed of exceptional group members from institution(s) across Europe, representing all scientific fields.

The award consists of an honorary award of DKK 100,000 for each group member, as well as a research grant of DKK 7,200,00 - 7,800,000 (i.e. the remaining amount after the honorary awards has been deducted from the total award). The research grant may be used for a wide range of research activities within the recipients' respective fields.

Nominations will be evaluated by the Board of Directors of Independent Research Fund Denmark (DFF). Based on this evaluation, selected nominations will be assessed by an evaluation committee. The committee will recommend final candidates for appointment by the Danish Minister for Science, Higher Education and Digital Affairs.

2. Who can be nominated?

The Into Change Award is awarded to a group of researchers from institutions in Europe², who have demonstrated outstanding, ground-breaking research with substantial or fundamental societal significance and/or impact, and who have demonstrated the values of curiosity, collaboration, responsibility, respect, and openness in research at an exceptional level. The prize can be

¹ ufsn.dk/into-change

² Defined as members of the Council of Europe: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/about-us/our-member-states> and Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

awarded to research groups within and across all fields of science and to both current/active and former research groups.

Definition of 'Research Group'

All research involves some degree of collaboration – whether through formal, long-term research or lab groups, or through project teams working together on a specific research question, issue, or product. There are no fixed requirements regarding the structure or characteristics of a research group, as these may vary across disciplines and project formats. The number of named members in a nominated research group must be no fewer than three (3) and no more than eight (8). The Danish Ministry of Science, Higher Education and Digital Affairs recognises that research groups may include more than eight members; however, for administrative purposes, only up to eight named members can officially receive the award and represent the group. Nominators will be required to describe the composition and nature of the research group and to demonstrate that/account for the ways in which the group of researchers can be understood as constituting a 'research group'.

In the overall assessment of nominations, attention will also be given to the composition of the research group, including diversity in terms of gender, career stage, disciplinary background, geographical spread, and other relevant aspects. While not a formal assessment criterion, such diversity may be viewed positively in the evaluation process.

Eligibility

All nominated members must be explicitly named in the nomination form. The majority of the group members must be affiliated with an institution in Europe³. In case of an even number of groups members more than half of the members must be affiliated with an institution in Europe. All nominated members must be actively engaged in research.

Nominators must identify one group representative from among the members. This representative is required to hold a PhD degree or equivalent qualifications at the time of nomination. The remaining group members may – but are not required to – hold a PhD.

Who Can nominate?

Nominations are invited through an open process. Nominations may be submitted by European universities, research institutions, foundations (public, private, or non-governmental), and academies of sciences and letters, etc. Each research institution, foundation and academy of sciences and letters, etc. is strongly encouraged to nominate no more than one research group in total. Each European university is strongly encouraged to nominate no more than one research group from each faculty (or equivalent). It is not required that the nominated group is affiliated with the nominating institution. However, research groups may not submit nominations on their own behalf.

3. Assessment criteria

In the assessment of nominated research groups, the below criteria⁴ will be taken into consideration. The nominator must provide a motive for the nomination, and explain in what ways the

³ Please refer to definition above.

⁴ The assessment criteria are founded on the principles of The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, the FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship among others. To read more, please visit: <https://allea.org/code-of-conduct/> and <https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/>.

research group fulfils the criteria.

The assessment process will place great emphasis on the fact that all of the criteria mentioned below should be met to the greatest possible extent – on the basis of the nomination letter itself, as well as the nominated research group’s CVs and lists of publications. Nominators are asked to address the ways in which the research group fulfils the criteria listed under all three overall assessment criteria categories: a) *The quality of the research group’s exceptional research contribution in the area/field*; b) *Societal impact or significance of the research group’s contribution*; and c) *The demonstration and promotion of key research values*.

The actual assessment will be based on a concrete, overall evaluation in which the various criteria and sub-criteria may be met to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the nature of the research group, its contributions, and its field of research.

A: Quality of the Research Group’s Exceptional Research Contribution in the Area/Field

- What is the research group’s exceptional contribution to scientific or research breakthroughs or insights?
- How has the research impacted its field?
- In what ways can the group’s research achievements be considered ground-breaking?

B: Societal Impact or Significance of the Research Group’s Contribution

- How have the group’s research achievements demonstrated central societal significance and/or impact?
- Examples of societal significance and/or impact may include – but are not limited to – collaboration or engagement with, or contributions that benefit the environment, security, democracy, or competitiveness, e.g., the development of the civil society, the economy, culture, the state, the public sector, innovation, businesses, educational institutions, political and administrative bodies. This may involve contributions to advances in technology, businesses, educational institutions, political and administrative bodies, security and defence, the healthcare system the environment, or the quality of life for citizens as well as contributions to public debate, welfare and services. Societal significance and/or impact could also include the ways in which the group has shown societal engagement via dissemination of their research, teaching, outreach, knowledge exchange, etc.

C: Demonstration and Promotion of Key Research Values

All nominated research groups are expected to demonstrate key scientific values in the work for which they are nominated. The expression of each value may vary in extent depending on the nature of the research and other factors. When describing the group’s demonstration of research values, nominators are encouraged to reflect on the ways in which these values have contributed to the group’s research output.

- *In what ways has the research group demonstrated scientific curiosity?*
Curiosity-driven research seeks to understand how the world works and is motivated by a desire to close knowledge gaps. It often aims to 'shed light on the unknown'⁵, shedding a new light on what we think is already known, often with new or different methodologies or theories.
- *In what ways has the research group exercised collaboration?*

⁵ Source: <https://forhumanity.yale.edu/news/mystery-and-thrill-curiosity-driven-research>.

Collaboration may take the form of responsible, equal, and inclusive teamwork within the research group or across the academic community. This may include cooperation with other research groups, transnational and interdisciplinary collaboration that extends geographical and national borders, scientific collaboration across several research disciplines, or collaboration and/or co-creation with citizens, communities, and other agents outside the research group or the academic world.

Collaborating partners include all parties involved in the research and collaboration.

- *In what ways has the research group demonstrated responsibility and accountability?*
Award recipients are expected to have upheld research integrity by: fostering responsible research practices; providing training, supervision, and mentoring; reflecting on the potential societal impact and ethical implications of their research; and engaging in public discussions about their research and its potential uses or misuses.
- *In what ways has the group conducted its activities with respect for each other and other actors/entities?*
Award recipients will have conducted their research with respect for all actors and systems potentially affected by their research, including colleagues, participants, research subjects, society at large, ecosystems, cultural heritage, and the environment.
- *In what ways has the research group demonstrated openness in its research?*
Award recipients are expected to demonstrate transparency in the development, execution, reviewing, communication, and sharing of research. They will have demonstrated this to the extent possible given the nature of their field of research, and in a manner, which is compatible with the recommendations outlined in the European Commission's council recommendation on enhancing research security (see section 6). Principles of openness in research include: the open sharing of research; open access to, for example, research data, publications and outputs; ensuring the verifiability and reproducibility of research results; responsible research output management in line with the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) and the [UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science](#); and promoting public engagement in research and innovation.

4. Requirements for the nomination

Nominations should be submitted via the online system e-grant (www.e-grant.dk). Submission opens on 10 June 2026 and closes on 14 August 2026 at 12 (noon).

Each research institution, foundation and academy of sciences and letters etc., is strongly encouraged to nominate no more than one research group in total. Each European university is strongly encouraged to nominate no more than one research group from each faculty (or equivalent). It is not a requirement that the nominated group(s) are affiliated with the nominating institution/company.

Contents of the nomination

A justification for the nomination (in English), in accordance with the assessment criteria outlined in section 3. The justification is entered into three text boxes in the nomination form on e-grant. The three sections of the justification must contain the following:

- 1) **Description of the nominated research group's research and research field.** A brief

description of the research group and the research group's scientific contribution/focus of the research. It must be clearly stated which specific project/contribution/output the research group is nominated for. (2,400 characters incl. spaces).

- 2) Description of the research group's exceptional contribution to the field, including the societal significance and/or impact of the research group's contribution.** An assessment of the research group's exceptional and ground-breaking scientific contributions must be made, including the ways in which the research demonstrates a central and fundamental societal significance, and/or impact. The description of this contribution should therefore reflect the group's exceptional contribution, and in what ways the group has conducted ground-breaking research (i.e., research that has led to sensational insights within their field of research). The description should address how this has influenced the research field, as well as how it has demonstrated a central societal significance, including (if relevant) how the group has shown societal engagement and fostered knowledge exchange, e.g., via scientific advice, dissemination of research, teaching, outreach, co-creation, etc. (3,000 characters including spaces).
- 3) Description of how the research group's work has demonstrated and promoted values of curiosity, collaboration, responsibility, respect, and openness in research.** In the form of a statement that describes how the research group's work has demonstrated and promoted key research values such as curiosity, collaboration, responsibility, respect, and openness in research. In this description, nominators are encouraged to reflect on the ways in which these values have contributed to the group's research output. (3,000 characters including spaces).

The nomination must include the name and contact information of the formal nominator/author of the justification/nomination. All research group members must have agreed to proceed with the nomination.

The following appendices must be attached to the nomination in PDF format:

- A. For each nominated candidate CV and selective list of the candidates' most significant publications (in English).

Please note that the CV and selective list of publications must not exceed 3 A4 pages in total for each person in the group. It is optional how the 3 A4 pages are structured.

The following optional appendices can be attached in PDF format:

- B. Letter(s) of support (in English) – up to 5 letters of support can be attached.

5. Process and further details

The prize will be awarded before the end of 2026 and disbursed in the beginning of 2027. The research grant of DKK 7,200,000-7,700,000 (incl. any overhead/administrative expenses/indirect costs) is awarded as a framework grant for distribution between the group members. The grant can be spent on various research activities (e.g. salaries, mobility, conferences, dissemination of research, etc). The grant must be used within four years.

The recipients of the award will be asked to submit a brief budget that shows the distribution of the research grant between group members. Please note that the framework grant should be administered by one of the recipients' place of employment.

Each group member will receive an honorary award of DKK 100,000.

If the specified deadlines in this call are not met, the nomination will be rejected without prior active consideration. If the submitted material is incomplete, the nomination will be evaluated based on the material which has been submitted.

Requirements that should be met in the nomination:

- The nomination is submitted via e-grant (www.e-grant.dk).
- The nomination must be received before the nomination deadline.
- The research group leader/representative holds a PhD degree (or equivalent qualifications) at the time of nomination.
- The nominated research group comply with requirements for the size of the research group (at least three (3), and no more than eight (8) named members).

Nominations will be evaluated by the Board of Directors of Independent Research Fund Denmark (DFF), who will select a shortlist of the most qualified candidates for further assessment and selection by an evaluation committee. Based on this assessment, potential award recipients will be recommended for final selection by the Danish Minister for Science, Higher Education and Digital Affairs.

The evaluation of the submitted nominations will be completed by October-November 2026. The award ceremony is expected to take place 16 December 2026 (date to be confirmed) in Copenhagen.

Timeline:

- 10 June 2026: Call for nominations is announced
- 14 August 2026 at 12:00 (noon): Submission of nominations closes
- August-October: Assessment of nominations
- October: Shortlisted nominees are notified and announced
- November: Award recipients are notified
- December: Award recipients are announced
- 16 December 2026: Award ceremony (date to be confirmed)

6. Research integrity and research security

Award recipients are expected to comply with the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.

Due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, nominations of research groups with participants employed at Russian or Belarussian institutions will not be accepted. Moreover, prize recipients cannot use the award for research activities in Russia or Belarus.

Based on the submitted budget, prize recipients will receive a grant letter, further detailing these and similar expectations.

Furthermore, all nominated candidates are expected to comply with the administrating institution's implementation of / the recommendations outlined in the European Commission's council recommendation on enhancing research security ("Council Recommendation of 23 May 2024 on enhancing research security (C/2024/3510)").

7. Deadline for submission of nominations

The deadline for submission of nominations is 14 August 2026 at 12:00 noon (CET).

8. Processing of personal data

Documents containing personal data are registered and processed in accordance with the Access to Public Administration Files Act (*offentlighedsloven*) and transferred to the national archive system of Denmark in accordance with the Archives Act. After transferring data to the national archive system of Denmark, the Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science will preserve a copy of the documents for around 5 years, after which the data will be deleted by the Agency.

9. Contact

For further information, please contact the Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science via e-mail at intochange@ufm.dk.