



Christina Egelunds tale ved Novo Nordisk Fondens Cluster Day

Taler

Christina Egelund
Uddannelses- og
forskningsminister

Dato

8. februar 2023

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Novo Nordisk Fonden,
Hellerup

The non-depletable resource

Thank you for the invitation. It's a pleasure to be here.

Today is a great opportunity for me as the new Minister for Higher Education and Science to get in touch with you, and discuss some of the questions that demand our attention.

Also, I have pretty quickly realized, that most of these events that relate to science are often a good opportunity for me to practice my English vocabulary.

Scientists seem to be very efficient at making up difficult names for things.

Novo Nordisk – to me – is a company that is a part of the very DNA of Denmark. An important brand for Denmark. A part of our history, and more importantly a part of our future.

Since it was founded in 1923, Novo Nordisk has come a long way – doing groundbreaking pharmaceutical research, and producing life changing medicine for millions of people. The Novo Nordisk Foundation is proof of that work.

Today – the foundation has more than 200 employees, and operates a staggering 700 billion kr., making it one of the most prominent foundations in the world, when it comes to funding scientific research.

I'm sure you are very much aware of these facts. But sometimes it is good to be reminded of the power you wield – and the responsibilities that come with it.

On the Novo Nordisk Foundation website, one can read: “*The greatest breakthroughs often happen where you don’t expect them.*” And I found it to be a quite peculiar coincidence. Why?

Well – not long ago I had the honor of speaking at Morten Meldal’s Nobel Prize symposium held at the University of Copenhagen – Morten who we are also lucky to have with us tonight.

This exact statement is also true in Morten’s case. He was in fact researching something entirely different, when click-chemistry revealed itself. Curious of nature, Morten decided to follow his intuition, and investigate further.

This serendipitous endeavor resulted in a ground-breaking discovery, that we still find new uses for today, 20 years later, as well as a Nobel Prize in chemistry that Morten shares with Barry Sharpless and Carolyn Bertozzi.

On a quick side note – I hope I won’t be getting too many questions regarding the content of Morten’s lecture on click-chemistry – it was fairly complex – to me at least – but very interesting.

And that perhaps – is just the nature of science. Complexity and fascination. That’s why all of you hard working people still have plenty of projects in your calendars. That – and the confidence that your scientific discoveries will shed light on the things that before seemed hidden, thus benefitting us in the future.

We live in a time, where we are interconnected with the rest of the world. Even though Novo Nordisk is a Danish company, in many aspects it has an international mentality.

International collaboration is not only crucial in regards of sharing information – but also a manifestation of the mindset that is required for us to conquer the challenges of the future.

Challenges that don’t have one nationality, one language or one culture. Challenges that will affect not only humans, but every single living organism on the planet.

I am talking about the climate crisis. The biodiversity crisis. And the energy crisis. I am talking about the global pandemic we just managed to fight our way through. A pandemic that still roams wild in other parts of the world. And the list continues.

The demographics of our society are changing. We grow older. In the year 1800, the average life expectancy of a new born Dane was 37,4 years. Now – it's more than 80. In a historical perspective, that's an absolutely astonishing development in just 200 years.

This is of course a good thing – because it means that we are healthier, have more access to nutrition and better treatments. But it also requires us to think differently about age and life perspective as a society.

When it comes to solving all of these hypercomplex problems, science is one of the most efficient resources we have at our disposal. A resource that unlike most others, isn't at risk of depletion.

The Novo Nordisk Foundation is a fundamental actor when it comes to supporting scientific research within many of these critical areas: health – sustainability – and life science.

Research that helps find solutions where we need them the most.

Finding innovative solutions to problems are often an important motivation for why we do scientific research in the first place – and also why we fund it.

But we must keep an eye on the balances between the more application-oriented research – and the fundamental research, as well as the relation between public and private funding of research.

A lot of the research with great applicability – research that leads to innovation of new products – will often be based on fundamental research done years ahead. In other words – they each have a role to play.

And with the important increase in research grants donated by private research funds like the Novo Nordisk Foundation it will certainly benefit us all in the years to come to further investigate and develop the positive synergies between

private and public funded research.

I would like to mention some of the projects and collaborations initiated or funded by the Novo Nordisk Foundation. Partly because they each in their own right help uncover new knowledge across a wide range of important areas. But also, because I hope they will serve as an important inspiration for future projects.

Land-craft is one of the thematic pioneer centers that was initiated by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science, with funding from, among others, the Novo Nordisk Foundation.

The center was established as an international partnership between universities in Denmark, Germany and the United State of America in order to better understand the connection between nature and agriculture.

To preserve nature, produce better foods and pave the way for a green transition of our agriculture.

The pioneer centers are an example of fundamental research on the highest level, with a strategic, problem-solving scope, as well as an example of cooperation between public and private research foundations.

Another example is the Open Discovery Innovation Network – or just “ODIN”. A disruptive and open research project between the University of Aarhus and several international pharmaceutical companies.

The goal with ODIN is to create a platform for sharing information between the participating scientists, to help create innovative solutions for patients, companies and society.

Experience tells us that the flow of information between scientists, companies and government institutions is key to creating an optimal climate for creative innovation and product development – yet this can be very tricky. We must increase this flow of information, and ODIN is a step in the right direction.

Finally, I wish to mention the huge contribution of no less than 1,5 billion Danish kroner that the Novo Nordisk Foundation donated to the ambitious

project of making Denmark's first functional quantum computer. A technology that has the potential to radically change society as we know it.

These are just a few of the initiatives, but together they give an indication of the variety of projects that receive funding from the Novo Nordisk Foundation.

We have come a long way – yet many challenges still loom in the shadow of tomorrow.

So now is not the time to lower our gazes. We must look forward. Beyond the brink of what we know. Curiously. Decisively.

We need both fundamental research and application-oriented research. We need both private and public funding. Especially in a small country like Denmark it is important that we align our focus and create as much synergy between the two sectors as possible. Both sectors are crucial, and will play an important role in deciding the overall vision for the future of Danish research.

We must continue to debate our objectives, so that we can ensure the best circumstances for important new discoveries and innovations in the times to come.

Discoveries that help people breathe, sleep, eat, laugh, love and live. Discoveries that create jobs and support welfare. Discoveries that build a better society – for us, and for the rest of the world.

Because you in this room wield the power to discover. The power to change things for the better.

Thank you so much for your time!

Kilde

ufm.dk

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Dokumentation på online medie

Tags

Moderaterne, Politisk tale

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