DCAcademy Landscape Report 2025

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Executive Summary

This Landscape Report presents an overview of the current funding landscape for postdoctoral research.

The report highlights the critical consequences for the Danish postdoctoral researchers within the cardiovascular domain posed by the forthcoming closure of the Danish Cardiovascular Academy (DCA).

DCA has provided essential opportunities for postdoctoral fellows to apply independently for competitive funding, participate in structured education and training, engage in community-building activities, and access internationalisation programmes.

With the announced closures of DCA (2026), the Danish Diabetes and Endocrine Academy (2027), and the Danish Data Science Academy (2026), a substantial number of these opportunities will disappear entirely.

Specifically:

- Annual open calls for postdoctoral fellowships will no longer be available.
- Domain-specific educational programmes and summits dedicated to postdocs will cease.
- Nationally coordinated community-building and networking activities, particularly those bridging basic, pre-clinical, and clinical research, will vanish.
- Support internationalisation, such as visiting researcher grants and faculty programmes, will terminate.

The result is a severe reduction in the ability of early-career researchers—especially postdocs—to act independently and shape their careers through self-initiated applications. Remaining opportunities will predominantly depend on senior researchers applying for large-scale project grants, leaving postdocs with very limited avenues to secure their own funding.

This structural gap poses a major threat to Denmark's ability to nurture the next generation of cardiovascular and biomedical researchers, undermining competitiveness, innovation, and international collaboration.

Introduction

This report presents an overview of Danish funding opportunities for postdoctoral research as well as support of education, community building and internationalisation for postdocs and early career researchers within the cardiovascular domain. The aim is to provide a solid basis for strengthening and developing the future role of Danish Cardiovascular Academy for post-PhD researchers.

About the Danish Cardiovascular Academy

DCA is a strategic initiative aimed at boosting the Danish cardiovascular research community. The academy is based on a 180.000.000 DKK grant from the Novo Nordisk Foundation and the Danish Heart Foundation. The mission is to be an elite academy for excellent interdisciplinary education, training, funding, and networks, across the entire field of cardiovascular research.

DCA Strategic Objectives

To accomplish the mission, four strategic objectives have been pursued:

- To provide grants to the best PhD students and Postdoctoral fellows
- To provide international level research training and education
- To create and nurture national, international, interdisciplinary, and inter-sectoral networks
- To establish a national cohort mentality

Methods

The report is based on funds and organisations identified to be supporting the cardiovascular research community. The included funding bodies have been identified in collaboration with the Research Support Office at Aarhus University.

The cardiovascular domain is defined as all areas of research conducted at the health faculties at Danish Universities, such as (but not limited to):

- Clinical research
- Epidemiological research
- Basic research
- Public health research
- Rehabilitation

The analysis includes funding bodies and the like (scientific societies, academies etc.) who:

- Provide Postdoctoral fellowships
- Host or funding education activities for early career researchers
- Support community building and networking activities
- Support internationalisation of the Danish research community

The analysis does not include organisations providing activities beyond the scope of DCA, such as:

- International funding bodies
- Providers of research infrastructure
- Universities/state-funding bodies (e.g. the Graduate Schools, Innovation Foundation, Independent Research Fund Denmark)
- Scientific societies (e.g. The Danish Society of Cardiology)

Danish postdoctoral funding opportunities

This section seeks to answer the question: Who are the major providers of funding for Postdoctoral Fellowships within cardiovascular research? Either as direct support of salary, or as part of project dedicated grants.

Postdoctoral Fellowship funding

Novo Nordisk Foundation (NNF): NNF does not have dedicated Postdoctoral Fellowships within the cardiovascular or clinical/translational domain but refer to the several calls for project grants within health sciences. E.g. the "Project Grants for Clinical and Translational Medicine" and the "Hallas Møller Research Leader Programmes" for Emerging, Ascending and Distinguished Investigators. Through these instruments, the NNF is by far the largest donor of postdoctoral positions. However, although these grants may be used for postdoctoral salaries, they can only be applied for by established researcher's above postdoctoral level. NNF does have calls for independent postdoctoral fellowships within other research areas such as Industrial Biotechnology, Plant Science, Agriculture, Food Biotechnology and within Nursing.

Carlsbergfondet: Carlsbergfondet solely supports Natural Sciences including cardiovascular relevant areas such as comparative physiology and Zoo physiology, humanities and social sciences. The foundation offers Reintegration Postdoctoral Fellowships providing two-year Postdoctoral Fellowships at Danish research institutions for Postdoctoral Fellows returning from research stays abroad.

Villum Fonden: Villum Fonden has two Postdoctoral Fellowships earmarked for excellent female researchers in Technical and Natural sciences.

Danish Cancer Society: The Danish Cancer Society has Postdoctoral Fellowships for junior researchers within cancer. This also includes cardiovascular related cancers.

Danish Heart Foundation: The Danish Heart Foundation offers project grants of 3 – 10 Mio DKK within specific themes. Grants can be applied for by Postdoctoral Fellows.

Danish Data Science Academy (DDSA): DDSA annually offers up to four 2-year Postdoctoral Fellowship in both thematic and open calls, including areas as data science within health care, as MR-scan analysis etc. However, the DDSA will not support fellowships after 2026.

Danish Diabetes and Endocrine Academy (DDEA): DDEA annually offers up to six 2-year Postdoctoral Fellowship in both open and thematic calls within all areas of cardiometabolism. However, the DDEA will not support fellowships after 2026.

Danish Cardiovascular Academy: Has terminated its funding activities, but until 2025, the DCA annually offered open calls for up to four 2-year Postdoctoral Fellowship and four 5-year 20% clinical fellowships.

Summary:

The funding of cardiovascular postdoctoral research in Denmark heavily relies on the senior researchers receiving larger project grants with funds dedicated for postdoctoral positions. Postdoctoral positions included in larger grants will not be openly advertised, if the grant holder already has a named postdoctoral candidate. As this is often the case, only a fraction of the granted postdoctoral positions ends up in open competition.

As DCA has hosted its last call and DDEA and DDSA also cease their funding activities in 2026, there are very few Danish funding opportunities within the cardiovascular and cardiometabolic research domains that can be applied for by early career researchers.

Education and training related support opportunities

Industry sponsorships are often supporting scientific society activities, as the annual meeting for The Danish Society of Cardiology and the Danish Hypertension Society. Industry also supports smaller events as the SYNAPSE career fairs, FYC (Society of Younger Cardiologists) podcast series and webinars and the many local student driven clubs (e.g. Union of Younger Researchers at Rigshospitalet) hosting local seminars.

Danish Data Science Academy offers grants for smaller local events within data science and a few educational activities open for postdocs. However, DDSA will be terminated by the end of 2026.

Danish Diabetes and Endocrine Academy offer a dedicated 4-day annual Postdoc Summit as well as a multitude of courses and summer schools within sub-specific areas and research skills, such as courses in Thyroid Autoimmunity and Ethics and artificial intelligence (AI). However, DDEA will be terminated by the end of 2027.

Danish Cardiovascular Academy offers a 4-day annual Winter Meeting for postdocs and third-year PhD-students. DCA also offers a multitude of courses within sub-specific areas of the cardiovascular domain, as atherosclerosis, mitochondria and sex-differences in heart disease. DCA will be terminated by the end of 2026.

Summary:

Dedicated course activities within sub-specific areas or dedicated postdoctoral training is primarily offered by the DDEA and DCA. The Danish universities do offer early-career talent development for early career researchers, however, these are not domain specific and the courses often span across several faculties.

Community building and network related support

Novo Nordisk Foundation funds network building scientific conferences and workshops within all areas of science.

Carlsbergfondet funds bringing large international conferences to Denmark, primarily aimed at natural sciences, but also at cardiovascular relevant areas as comparative physiology.

Lundbeck Fonden funds conferences and workshops related to neuroscience.

Leo Fondet funds meetings related to skin disease.

Otto Mønsteds Fond supports events bridging research institutions, or between students/startups and industry.

Industry sponsorships are often supporting scientific society conferences as The Danish Society of Cardiology and the Danish Hypertension Societies' annual congresses.

Danish Data Science Academy hosts the annual D3A conference that brings together researchers, students, and professionals from the fields of computer science, data science and AI to share cutting-edge research and to grow the Danish Computer Science, Data Science and AI communities across geography and scientific domains via scientific and technical interaction. It is currently not known if D3A will continue beyond DDSA.

Danish Diabetes and Endocrine Academy have an Annual Day showcasing the high-quality research in diabetes, metabolism and classical endocrinology in Denmark and abroad. The day entails keynote presentations and panel discussions. The Annual Day is unique for the community as it brings together researchers from all corners of their scientific community and also offers opportunities for networking. As DDEA is to be terminated, the last Annual Day will be held in 2027.

Danish Cardiovascular Academy hosts an annual Summer Meeting which is the only meeting bringing together more than 200 researchers, representing both clinical, pre-clinical, and basic research. The meeting aims at creating a translational perspective on novel developments within cardiovascular research. The programme further includes a poster session, workshops aimed at younger researchers, as well as keynote talks by leading cardiovascular researchers. As DCA will be terminated, the last DCAcademy Summer Meeting will be held in 2026.

Summary:

The support for community building and network creation in Denmark is ample, however, only DCA and DDEA offer meetings dedicated to the translational approach of bringing clinicians, pre-clinical and basic scientists together thus creating truly bridging collaborations. Furthermore, there are no national coordinated networks for postdoctoral education, let alone a domain specific effort.

Internationalisation funding opportunities

Novo Nordisk Foundation has a number of granting programmes supporting internationalisation.

Carlsbergfondet solely supports Natural Sciences including cardiovascular relevant areas as molecular, comparative and zoo physiology, as well as Humanities and Social Sciences. The Carlsberg Foundation offers two-year internationalisation postdoctoral grants and also offers smaller grants for exchange visits to other research groups.

Danish Data Science Academy annually offers travel grants up to 15.000 DKK. However, the DDSA will not support travel grants after 2026.

Danish Diabetes and Endocrine Academy offer Visiting Researcher Grants up to 400.000 DKK. However, the DDEA will not support internationalisation after 2026.

Danish Cardiovascular Academy offers Visiting Faculty Programme, Visiting Professors Programme, and an Internationalisation Programme as well as small travel grants for students. The Visiting Faculty Programme entail inviting a faculty of up to 4 international researchers to provide Master Classes for students and to speak at a symposium. The Visiting Professors Programme is for longer (or multiple shorter) visits by international senior researchers. The Internationalisation Programme is for supervisors and PhD-students visiting international groups together, for a least five days. All DCA programmes terminate in 2026.

Summary:

The international funding opportunities for postdoctoral researcher will be marked reduced with the closure of the DCA, DDEA and DDSA, especially the possibility for minor travel grants and visiting professors. Furthermore, the termination of the DCA Visiting Faculty and International programmes poses loss of possibilities for international community building and network creation in Denmark.

Summation

In unison the NNF sponsored academies DCA, DDEA, and DDSA has proven to be substantial providers in the Danish funding landscape of postdoctoral fellowships that can be applied for by postdoctoral candidates themselves. The academies are also significant providers of support within education, training, community building, and internationalisation for early and mid- career researchers.
The termination of the academies will severely reduce the availability of these activities for early-career researchers, thus reducing their ability to act independently and shape their careers through self-initiated applications and structured training and education. This upcoming structural gap poses a major threat to Denmark's ability to nurture the next generation of cardiovascular and biomedical researchers, potentially undermining competitiveness, innovation, and international collaboration of Danish research.

Danish Cardiovascular Academy