



Dec 2018

Mission for the government: Transform higher education and science into a winning asset for Finland

A high level of education as well as comprehensive knowledge and learning increase wellbeing and provide the basis for active citizenship. Science and education help address global challenges, while also contributing to Finland's success. True innovations and sustainable solutions can only be created through top-level basic research.

The core funding of Finnish universities has declined throughout the 2010s. This trend must be reversed to promote Finland's success. A highly trained workforce and world-class research infrastructure help Finland attract not only top-level experts, but also international companies. An investment in education and research is an investment in the future.

The next government has the opportunity to provide sustainable resources for science and academic education and to create a shared, widely accepted notion of the role of science and knowledge in Finnish society. If Finland wishes to continue to generate wellbeing and rank among the leading countries in the world in terms of skills, our country must invest even more in education and state-of-the-art research.

We at the University of Helsinki wish to play a prominent role in building Finland's future wellbeing on a foundation of high-quality education and research.

1 Make the necessary investments in the future of research and higher education

Academic education and research are to be supported as part of the knowledge chain:

- The university index is to be permanently reinstated.
- A sufficient level of university funding is to be ensured by injecting capital into universities or raising the level of core funding. Funding can also be developed by incorporating existing resources into clearer strategic entities.
- The level of competitive research funding granted by the Academy of Finland is to be raised.
- The level of research infrastructure funding granted by the Academy of Finland is to be raised to at least €30 million per year. The long-term goal is to raise this funding to an internationally credible level.
- Resources are to be allocated to the research and commercialisation funding granted by Business Finland, including *New Business from Research Ideas* activities.



- The research, innovation and education budget is to be doubled in the EU's long-term funding framework for 2021–2027. The role of, in particular, basic research and research-based innovations is to be promoted in the EU budget and operations.
- The resources of the Office of the Data Protection Ombudsman are to be increased to meet the needs of universities and research so as to ensure our ability to guarantee the conditions for international state-of-the-art research in Finland.

Finland's wellbeing is dependent on ensuring that our high-quality knowledge chain remains intact, from early childhood education to academic education and research. During the next government term, universities must therefore be guaranteed sufficient, predictable core funding, and efforts must be undertaken to increase the share of research and development activities as a percentage of GDP to the nationally outlined objective of 4% by 2030.

For this to occur, the university index must be permanently reinstated. In addition, the stability of university funding could be increased by injecting capital into universities through a long-term plan. This capital would be an investment made with public assets for future generations. Funding can also be developed in the long term by incorporating existing resources into clearer entities so as to increase the share of funding based on the implementation of each university's own strategic choices.

For the private sector and research to work together to increase the share of research, development and innovation activities as a percentage of the GDP, it is also important to increase the research and commercialisation funding granted by Business Finland. *New Business from Research Ideas* has proved to be a particularly successful funding instrument. Such measures support research-based innovations and their commercialisation, and increase cooperation between the academic and business worlds.

The amount of competitive research funding distributed through the Academy of Finland must also be secured, while ensuring that the ways in which such funding is distributed are not too labour-intensive for researchers. External funding must not be fragmented into new forms of support, which would place an additional burden on researchers and force them to spend their working hours on administration and reporting. Existing mechanisms can be used for new, innovative scientific initiatives.

Research infrastructures are essential for research work. Their maintenance and development is key for Finland's competitiveness, but current resources are clearly insufficient (Finland's Strategy and Roadmap for Research Infrastructures 2014). In the long term, the level of the Academy of Finland's research infrastructure funding that is open for application should be raised to an internationally credible level.

Public resources must be allocated to research on the basis of quality. This will ensure that Finnish universities are able to compete internationally with appropriate support at home and can continue to benefit Finland as a whole.

It is important to increase and acquire international competitive funds. Finland must strengthen the profile of quality-driven basic research and research-based innovations in



the EU budget and operations. We propose that the research, innovation and education budget be doubled in the EU's funding framework for 2021–2027 and that education be selected as the priority for the Finnish Presidency of the EU Council.

2 Cooperate to make Finland the world leader in knowledge

The universities and the government are to cooperate in overhauling higher education to meet future needs:

- Growing student numbers are to be taken into account in university funding, as 50% of young cohorts will complete an academic degree.
- High-quality models of continuing education are to be created alongside the degree education provided by institutions of higher education.
- The coordination and broad-based funding of continuous learning are to be agreed upon during the next government term.
- The government and institutions of higher education are to cooperate in promoting the digitalisation of teaching, particularly the development of digital pedagogy and the provision of sufficient resources for new learning environments.

Finland's future hinges on knowledge and skilled people. We must reform our education system to offer the knowledge and skills needed in the job market and society in this century.

High-quality basic, early childhood and upper secondary education provide the foundation for university studies. This foundation must be sound when higher education is reformed. The number of school dropouts must be brought down, the number of graduates from general upper secondary school must be increased, transitions from one system to another must be facilitated, and educational equality must be promoted. The average age of students starting university must be lowered. Finland now ranks below the OECD average in number of university graduates aged 25–34.

A public policy document sets out the objective of increasing the number of university graduates from the current 41% to 50% by 2030. When more degrees are completed than at present, sufficient resources must also be ensured to prevent a drop in the quality of teaching.

We at the University of Helsinki are keen to meet changing educational needs: in the future, degree education must be supplemented with continuous learning and the flexible updating of skills. The role of universities in the chain of continuous learning is to offer research-based in-depth education that provides new knowledge. The funding of universities should take into account the increase of non-degree education.



It is important to agree on the broad-based funding of continuous learning during the next government term, but this must be preceded by public discussion on how the funding should be distributed between employers, society and students.

For students, it is vital that their education not only provides the skills required for scientific thought and problem-solving, but also ensures that they are well-equipped for employment. The aim of the education reform implemented at the University of Helsinki is for our degree programmes to be based on research and an extensive and in-depth understanding of issues and phenomena. This is why our graduates have the solid career skills needed in a changing society.

In the future, digital and face-to-face learning will blend together. Digital elements will make learning more flexible, but high-quality studying also requires that students be physically present and become integrated into their discipline and community through social contacts. A high-quality digital learning experience requires not only the construction of learning environments, but also the creation of an infrastructure that supports digital teaching and the development of digital teaching skills.

In the future, the University of Helsinki will increase its cooperation with providers of upper secondary education. For example, we will develop digital teaching programmes open to all general upper secondary pupils in Finland. In the long term, digital courses and MOOCs will become an increasingly significant admissions channel to university studies.

We wish to play our part in developing Finnish universities into the country's best workplaces and communities. Everyone's contribution is needed to ensure that universities have sufficient resources to achieve their objectives and that students and staff have confidence in their career prospects and opportunities to make a difference.

We consider it important that students are guaranteed the conditions (incl. social benefits) they need to concentrate on their studies, complete their degree in a smooth and seamless fashion, and transition to the job market. In addition, research and teaching staff must be able to focus on their actual work.

The legal provisions governing education and degrees should be streamlined, and universities should also be able to design their provision of education by anticipating global changes and the needs associated with internationalisation.

3 Promote the relocation of international students and researchers to Finland

- Mobility to Finland is to be promoted by investing in learning and research environments and strengthening internationally competitive clusters of expertise.
- The relocation and settlement of students and researchers arriving in Finland is to be supported by making it easier for them to apply for and receive residence permits and for their families to move to Finland.



- Students are to be granted a residence permit for the entire duration of their degree studies.
- The quick and smooth registration of EU citizens is to be guaranteed through a separate route.
- Obstacles preventing integration into Finland and the Finnish job market are to be removed.

Finland's success and wellbeing in the next decades will be affected by whether we open our doors to new influences and people, go out into the world ourselves or withdraw into our shell. A survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights shows that Finland is one of the most discriminatory countries in Europe. This issue must be addressed through nationwide action. Respect for and the cherishing of human rights are our core values.

We can address the challenges of internationalisation only through cooperation between various parties: universities, companies and the business sector, decision-makers and civic society. More work is needed to attract skilled people to Finland and integrate students and researchers already living here into our job market. Currently, master's and doctoral graduates from Finnish universities who have moved to Finland from another country have difficulty finding employment here. The public sector and institutions of higher education must therefore strengthen their collaboration with the business sector.

Finnish universities play a key role in strengthening our society's knowledge base by attracting international experts and creating competitive clusters of expertise and innovative ecosystems. The mobility of researchers and students promotes the openness of Finnish society and the development of science, but mobility must go both ways. Finland may be at risk of a brain drain if we fail to provide a sufficiently attractive environment for study and research to specialists, students and researchers.

Solutions for higher education must meet the increasing global competition for top talent in Finland and abroad. The services for relocating to and residing in Finland, offered both nationwide and by cities, are a key competitive factor in international recruitment. Finland should offer the most streamlined and appropriately aligned services to attract and retain the most skilled experts.

In addition to providing well-functioning services, we can attract the most distinguished researchers simply by offering the resources needed for research infrastructures and the recruitment of research groups. These are areas in which we currently lag behind the other Nordic countries. In this respect, we must strengthen our internationally competitive clusters of expertise.

Although the practices associated with residence permits have been commendably improved in recent years, a great deal of red tape is still associated with applying for a residence permit. The practices related to the arrival of recruited researchers and international students in Finland must continue to be streamlined: applying for and receiving a residence permit as well as relocating one's family to Finland must be facilitated, and students must be granted a residence permit for the entire duration of their degree studies. EU citizens must be able to move and reside freely within the EU. A separate route is needed for the faster registration of EU citizens.



Residence permits based on employment must no longer be discretionary. Resources must be added to teaching academic-level Finnish or Swedish.

4 Make Finland the world leader in the use of research-based knowledge in decision-making

- Research-based knowledge is to serve as the basis when the government determines its strategic focus areas and related objectives (government programme).
- Viable institutional structures and approaches based on dialogue are to be created for utilising the expertise of the academic community, with the commitment of the government and Parliament. This may include the increased and expanded use of academic expert panels and preparatory committees, particularly in large projects that span sectors.
- Sufficient resources are to be ensured in ministries for the utilisation of research-based knowledge, and a chief scientific adviser is to be appointed to the Prime Minister's Office.

Humankind is facing increasingly complex problems, and the solutions require ever more comprehensive knowledge and expertise. Quick and simple solutions are few and far between, whilst at the same time administrative officials and decision-makers are required to produce rapid results.

The status of science and the use of research-based knowledge to support decision-making are being intensely debated, with decision-makers, officials and researchers expressing interest in the topic. To bring about change and make real progress, the government and the research community must together take concrete measures to increase interaction. The efforts of the scholarly community are needed at the beginning of the decision-making process, during preparations and in the assessment of impact. An agreement on the matter would be desirable up to the government-programme level. Research-based knowledge should be used when the government determines its strategic focus areas and related objectives (government programme).

The utilisation of research-based knowledge can be increased in many ways, and existing models can also be developed. Creating institutional structures and approaches based on dialogue is important for the utilisation of research knowledge. This can take the form of increasing the use of academic expert panels and preparatory committees in large projects that span sectors.

The government must also ensure that public officials have enough time to acquaint themselves with and utilise research. We propose the appointment of a chief scientific adviser to the Prime Minister's Office to coordinate and develop the use of research in decision-making.

The scientific community and universities must increase communications with Parliament, the government and public officials on topical research relevant for decision-making as well as on how such research can be used. The University of Helsinki also trains



researchers to work as experts and disseminate research-based knowledge in the wider community, and develops incentives for the promotion of public engagement.

Could Finland become the world leader in the use of research-based knowledge in decision-making?