

FIRI Committee policy: characteristics of administrative ownership of national research infrastructures

Ownership and know-how is one of the development areas mentioned in the Strategy for National Infrastructures in Finland 2020–2030. The objective during the strategy period is to clarify the meaning of ownership in the context of research infrastructures, its characteristics and the rights and obligations associated with it. This policy aims at describing key roles and tasks related to the administrative ownership of research infrastructures.

Who/What is a research infrastructure owner?

The owner of a research infrastructure may be only one legal person, and the other parties are involved in the activities on a contractual basis. The administrative owner of the research infrastructure is that and/or those research organisation(s) which maintain(s) the services of the infrastructure and which act(s) as employers of the personnel of the infrastructure at their own organisation. Scientifically and technically, the ownership of research infrastructures lies with the constructors, developers and users of the infrastructures. This policy focuses on the characteristics of administrative ownership.

Strategic framework for ownership of national research infrastructures

In their strategic documents, research organisations systematically and proactively promote the construction, development and maintenance of research infrastructures of strategic importance to them. A research infrastructure may also play a significant role in carrying out the organisation's statutory tasks. Organisations may be administrative owners in the research infrastructures of one or more research organisations. If several research organisations jointly own a research infrastructure, the coordinating research organisation and the infrastructure operator have been clearly defined, and the procedures for cooperation and decision-making have been recorded.

Ownership of international research infrastructures

The activities of national research infrastructures are often also related to international collaboration, either directly by acting as a node of an international research infrastructure or through other cooperation. The cooperation and activities are usually defined by agreements. The agreements may set framework conditions for ownership and define the objectives of ownership. Finland becomes a member of an international research infrastructure by decision of the Finnish Government, after the Government has consulted Parliament. In connection with the accession to new research infrastructures, the Government or Parliament will not commit to covering the costs, but the costs will mainly be covered by the administrative owner/owners of the research infrastructure.



Obligations of the owner

The owner monitors the state of the research infrastructures they maintain by regularly reviewing their significance and impact in support of the organisation's RDI activities as well as the activities of the research infrastructures to assess the carbon footprint. The owner also monitors the financial development of the research infrastructures and their networking at national and international level. In cooperation with the research infrastructures, the owner shall draw up a long-term financial framework and revise it at regular intervals, also taking into account the preparation for the costs of the termination stage.

If the activities of the research infrastructure have been defined by national and/or international agreements, the owner is obliged to influence the content of the agreements during their preparation phase and to comply with them after the conclusion of the agreements. The owner is also obliged to agree on a level playing field with other parties in the decision-making bodies of international research infrastructures.

In order to maximise the benefits of investments in the construction, development and use of the research infrastructure, the administrative owner, together with the scientific owner, is responsible for personnel resources, competence development and career paths. The owners will ensure that the research infrastructure has the opportunity to operate according to an open operating culture and the principles of sustainable development and to regularly assess its own carbon footprint.

Rights of the owner

The owner has the right to make decisions based on the strategic choices of his organisation in relation to the national and/or international research infrastructures it maintains, to participate in the drafting of the relevant agreements and/or to act as a contracting party, and to supervise the infrastructures and set targets for them.

Role of Finnish Research Infrastructure Committee

The Finnish Research Infrastructure Committee emphasises good administrative and scientific ownership in FIRI roadmap and funding calls and supports the construction and upgrading of infrastructures through the funding calls. This is evident, for example, in the form of the information on ownership collected in connection with the roadmap calls. The Committee also produces monitoring data and other information for organisations and research infrastructures to support the development of the ownership.

