strategicRESEARCH

Cross-programme activities for societal impact of strategic research

Objectives, practices and responsibilities

ACADEMY OF FINLAND

Contents

1. Foreword

Each year, the Strategic Research Council (SRC) prepares a proposal for the Government of Finland on wide-ranging key challenges concerning the future of Finnish society. Following the Government's decision, the SRC will open programme calls based on these research themes. The programmes aim to achieve greater impact than can be achieved through a collection of separate projects. When the SRC decides which projects to fund, the assessment criteria include societal relevance and impact as well as scientific quality. While making funding decisions, the SRC also assesses what kinds of a programmes the projects form as a whole. A programme director promoting coordination and cooperation between projects and programmes will also be funded for each programme.

Figure 1. The activities of the Strategic Research Council include the promotion of societal impact.

In this document, cross-programme activities for societal impact refer to coordination across research programmes outlined by the SRC and carried out by the Division of Strategic Research in cooperation with programme directors and funded projects. The aim is to promote interaction that advances the societal impact of strategic research and supports the use of strategic research in decision-making. Cross-programme activities for societal impact do not focus on supporting activities or developing operating models within programmes, as the programme director is responsible for them.

This document describes the cross-programme activities for societal impact in strategic research and the actors involved. It defines the vision and objectives of the activities and the means to implement them. The annual processes will also be presented, both as the internal interaction within strategic research and promotion of the societal impact of research, and as the external activities for societal impact with stakeholders and wider society.

The beginning of the concept for cross-programme activities for societal impact (chapters 2–4) is intended as a permanent directive. The Strategic Research Council discussed the concept for cross-programme societal impact at its meeting on 23 November 2020. In addition, the concept has been discussed together with the management of the Academy of Finland (5 February 2021), SRC programme directors (23 June 2020) and personnel in the Division of Strategic Research (9 June 2020). Chapter 5 describes concrete measures to achieve the objectives of cross-programme activities for societal impact. The cross-programme societal impact team at the Division of Strategic Research coordinates the updating of measures at least once a year. Appendix 1 presents the latest innovation in strategic research in promoting dialogue between research and decision-making: the Knowledge Partnership approach.

2. The objective of cross-programme activities for societal impact

The SRC funds research that is of a high scientific standard and that has societal relevance and impact. Cooperation between the SRC, programme directors, programmes and projects, and the Division of Strategic Research will develop methods that strengthen the dialogue between scientific research and societal decision-making.

Strategic research is part of a broader field where knowledge is produced to support decision-making. Universities and research institutes have their own strategies for promoting the societal impact of research and their own interaction channels and contacts with knowledge users to support it. The objective of strategic research is specifically to produce knowledge to support societal decision-making and operating policies (Figure 1).[1] A particular feature of strategic research is long-term scientific research to address the key challenges concerning Finland's future, as well as active interaction with knowledge users. The programme structure and cross-programme activities for societal impact of strategic research will

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[1] The joint analysis, assessment and research activities, coordinated by the Government of Finland, also generate information that supports decision making, working practices and management by knowledge. Read more: https://vnk.fi/en/government-s-analysis-assessment-and-research-activities.

strengthen dialogue between research and the rest of society. In addition, strategic research develops methods and facilitates encounters to establish the mutual dialogue.
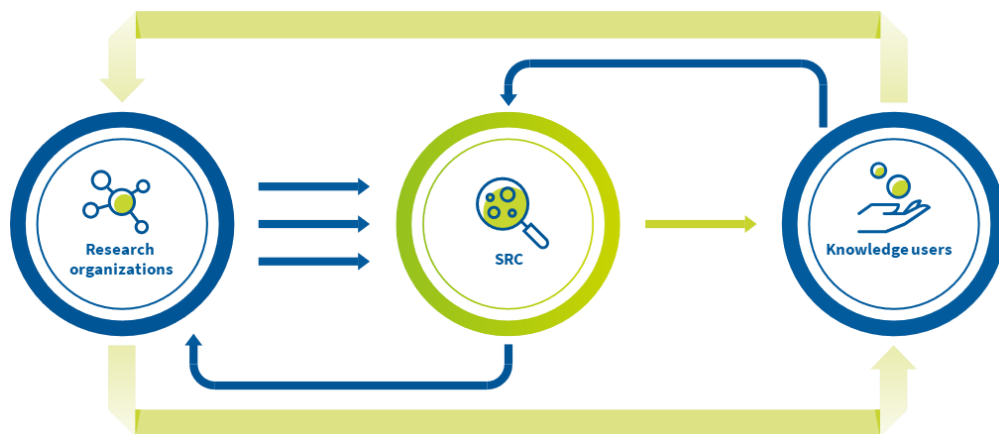

Figure 2. Research funded by the Strategic Research Council (SRC) produces knowledge to support knowledge users and promotes an interactive relationship between the producers and users of knowledge.

3. Strategic research from the viewpoint of cross-proframme activities for societal impact

Strategic research as a whole consists of the Strategic Research Council (SRC) established within the Academy of Finland, the programme directors, projects and their researchers funded by the SRC, as well as the Division of Strategic Research. This network is ever moving and changing, as the members of the Strategic Research Council change, programmes begin and end, and programme directors, projects and researchers come and go in accordance with the funding cycle.

In the cross-programme activities for societal impact, the **SRC** is a decision-making body that develops the funding instrument for strategic research and its societal impact. When preparing , opening programme calls, making funding decisions and evaluating the impact of programmes, the SRC will take the programmes as a whole into account. The SRC defines the guidelines for cross-programme activities for societal impact to be implemented by the Division of Strategic Research in cooperation with programme directors.

Each strategic research programme has a part-time **programme director** (40–60% of working hours) who works in their host organisation, such as a university or research institute. In the cross-programme activities for societal impact, programme directors are responsible for developing the interaction within their own programmes, for cross-programme cooperation and for

promoting the societal impact of strategic research. Programme directors act as an intermediary between researchers and the SRC and the Division of Strategic Research. Programme directors also promote the compilation of knowledge on research and interaction in each project.

Research-based knowledge is the result of the work of **researchers in individual projects**. Cross-programme activities for societal impact promote the use of this knowledge in decision-making in various sectors of society. Researchers participate in joint activities for societal impact mainly when coordinated by programme directors.

Project interaction coordinators are important to both the interaction within their own projects and to the joint activities for societal impact within strategic research. Programme directors coordinate the cooperation between the interaction coordinators of the projects in their programmes.

The Division of Strategic Research at the Academy of Finland is responsible for implementing the SRC's cross-programme activities for societal impact. It coordinates activities and develops methods to promote the societal impact of research in cooperation with programme directors and stakeholders. The Division's cross-programme activities focus on establishing connections between programmes and strengthening the societal impact of strategic research through joint development, communication, and facilitation of knowledge support. The Division of Strategic Research is also responsible for familiarising new projects and programme directors with the characteristics of strategic research funding. The Division's staff promote the societal impact of strategic research particularly through communication and active stakeholder cooperation with knowledge users.

4. Cross-programme activities for societal impact is network cooperation

Cross-programme activities for societal impact promote the societal impact of strategic research particularly through joint development and facilitation of knowledge support. *Joint development* refers to continuous interactive development between knowledge producers and knowledge users, which supports research in projects and the utilisation of research-based knowledge in decision-making in various sectors of society. The joint development of cross-programme activities for societal impact will involve the SRC, programme directors, the Division of Strategic Research and stakeholder representatives in dialogue with each other.

Facilitation of knowledge support means that the Division of Strategic Research, in cooperation with programme directors, coordinates and produces expert opinions, expert hearings, information summaries and other similar forms of support for knowledge users. The content of knowledge support is produced by project researchers and interaction coordinators. It is not just a question of transferring knowledge and experts

from one place to another, but of enabling active dialogue and interaction between research and decision-making.

5. Annual tasks of cross-programme activities for societal impact

5.1. Internal processes of cross-programme activities for societal impact

Action group for cross-programme societal impact

(The members are programme directors and staff from the Division of Strategic Research)

- Objective: to support the exchange of information between the SRC, the Division of Strategic Research and programme directors, and to facilitate coordination and improve cross-programme activities for societal impact

- Implementation: programme directors and the Division's staff meeting each month, as well as joint working groups for the implementation of different activities

- Responsibility of the Division's staff: Coordination (documenting and preparing for meetings)

- Responsibility of the programme directors: preparing for and participating in meetings

Implementation, monitoring and development of annual planning and reporting by programme directors

- Objective: giving the SRC an overall picture of the content and form of the cross-programme societal impact of each programme, mapping the objectives and results of programme directors' activities, monitoring activities and cost allocation

- Implementation: drawing up the annual plan of programme directors by 31 January, and reporting of the previous period (1 May–30 April) once a year by 30 April in accordance with the programme directors' list for impact stories and performance indicators

- Responsibilities of the Division of Strategic Research: coordinating and compiling reports, and communicating the results to the SRC (early autumn)

- Responsibility of programme directors: reporting according to schedules

Programme directors and projects

- Objective: enabling and strengthening cooperation within and between programmes

- Implementation in the Division of Strategic Research:

  a) managing the application process and orientation of new programme directors

  b) planning and implementing the orientation of key personnel in new projects in cooperation with the communication services

  c) meeting with the interaction coordinators about once a year

Communication services

- Objective: consolidating the role of strategic research as a key actor in knowledge support and joint development worthy of following

- Implementation:

  o content production and administration for the strategic research website (www.strateginentutkimus.fi) and newsletter

  o active presence in social media (Twitter: @Akatemia_STN, Instagram: stn_akatemia)

  o annual update of the communication and stakeholder plan as necessary

- Responsibilities of the Division of Strategic Research: thematic coordinating and planning

- Responsibilities of programme directors: writing blogs, etc. for the websites and newsletters, active personal communication e.g., in social media

Ratkaisujatieteesta.fi and Solution Cards

- Objective: providing knowledge users with a concise overview of the entire range of strategic research and attracting interest in reading more about the projects and their research results

- Implementation: action group for cross-programme societal impact

- Responsibilities of the Division of Strategic Research: content editing and harmonisation together with programme directors, overall process coordination (incl. scheduling, advertising, contact with the graphic designer and printing house)

- Responsibilities of programme directors: advertising, compiling the content of the Solution Cards together with the projects and programme directors, communicating and coordinating with projects in matters relating to the contents of the Solution Cards

5.2. Solutions from Science: interaction between strategic research and stakeholders

The Solutions from Science package consists of joint events with researchers and data users (e.g., Saumakohtia Dialogues), the Ratkaisujatieteesta.fi website and the digital Solution Cards by strategic research, other materials (e.g., compiled policy briefs from projects, Knowledge Partnership compilations, etc.). Each of these are activities in which research-based knowledge and information on strategic research programmes, projects and researchers are transmitted to support decision-making.

- Objective: promoting awareness of strategic research, strengthening its societal impact, and enabling cooperation between knowledge users and research programmes or projects

- Implementation: the Division of Strategic Research in cooperation with projects and programme directors

- Responsibilities of the Division of Strategic Research: coordination (e.g., content planning, material production/updating, communications, event arrangements)

- Responsibilities of programme directors: content planning, contacts with projects, participating in implementation

5.3. Networking with decision-makers, representatives of trade and industry and other knowledge users

- Objective: strengthening the societal impact of strategic research by building effective and active cooperation relationships with knowledge users and responding to the challenge that knowledge users often need the information produced by individual researchers and projects to be compiled

- Implementation:
  - o Knowledge Partnership (see Appendix 1)
  - o parliamentary cooperation (committee hearings, parliamentary group visits, such as Saumakohtia Dialogues)
  - o cooperation with ministries
  - o cooperation with the municipal sector
  - o dialogue with organisations and actors in trade and industry

- dialogue with the civil society, in particular with NGOs

- participating in the Prime Minister's Office's information exchange meetings and organising Harnessing Knowledge events

- cooperation with other key stakeholders (e.g., Sitra, Business Finland, National Foresight Network, National Audit Office)

- Responsibilities of the Division of Strategic Research: planning and coordinating events and producing material in cooperation with the action group for cross-programme societal impact responsibilities of programme directors: planning events, in particular their contents, in cooperation with projects and their researchers, participating in their implementation, coordinating the production of material with projects

Appendix 1 Knowledge Partnership

Description of the Knowledge Partnership approach

The Strategic Research Council (SRC) considers it important that cross-programme activities for societal impact develops methods for making more extensive and effective use of research in decision-making and its preparation. The SRC also wishes to enable researchers to work in a wide range of expert roles and to promote the use of the best possible expertise in decision-making processes.

According to feedback from stakeholders and knowledge users, there is a need for compiled and summarised information in which an individual expert can still be identified if necessary. The message and impact of research results are strengthened by a sufficient amount of diverse research, disciplines and researchers behind the compilation of knowledge.

The challenge for researchers is to identify when, where and to whom research-based information should be communicated. To transmit research-based knowledge at the correct time to influence different policy processes requires the cooperation of researchers with stakeholders across programmes. Fruitful interaction between knowledge producers and knowledge users that is based on trust requires that the interaction is working and that the characteristics of research and decision-making are understood in both groups. The strategic research *Knowledge Partnership* was developed as a method that responds to the needs of both knowledge users and researchers and strengthens the dialogue between research and decision-making.

This document describes the Knowledge Partnership approach and its *Memorandum of Understanding*. T

The description is intended for the Knowledge Partners, i.e., knowledge users, programme directors and researchers who produce the knowledge for the Partnership, and the Division of Strategic Research at the Academy of Finland.

Knowledge Partnership is joint development

Knowledge Partnership is joint development. It is a process that strengthens dialogue between research and decision-making. Unlike the traditional producer–customer relationship, the Knowledge Partnership includes cooperation and joint development throughout its course.

The partners commit to respect moral copyrights: to always mention the source when reference is made to the compilation of knowledge. Researchers and programme directors who participate have the right to record their contribution as their publication as if they had published an article in a compilation. There will be no legal contractual relationship between the partners to define rights, obligations or possible sanctions. No one has financial copyright in the compilation of knowledge, i.e., it can be freely used, copied and made available to the public.

The Knowledge Partnership is completely voluntary. It is based on trust, loyalty between partners, and the firm intention to comply with jointly agreed partnership rules.

The parties to the Knowledge Partnership respect each other's commitment to the joint project and recognise each other's legitimate expectations by adhering to the agreement. The framework for this trust and the base for the Knowledge Partnership consists of the following elements:

- the compilation of knowledge responds to jointly defined questions (information needs and existing research in strategic research projects)

- freedom of science and research

- understanding of and respect for the different realities and operating policies of research and decision-making

- compliance with the established timetable and responsibilities

If the jointly agreed operating policies are not complied with, the Knowledge Partnership can be annulled. As this is not a legal agreement, there will be no sanctions. The annulment is agreed upon by the signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding.

Knowledge Partnership is a continuous dialogue

The objective of the Knowledge Partnership is to engage in dialogue throughout the partnership, for example as follows:

- Defining the questions: Once the Partnership has been initiated and a decision has been made to form it, representatives of the knowledge user and strategic research will meet to discuss what kind of research information is available in strategic research programmes and projects, and what information needs and concrete questions the knowledge user has. The aim is to identify the themes and issues where the available research and information needs meet.

- Dialogic development of the compilation of knowledge: While writing the compilation of knowledge, representatives of the knowledge user and strategic research will meet to discuss the compilation manuscript. The knowledge users will provide feedback and comments to support the programme directors and researchers.

- Promoting societal impact: Once the compilation of knowledge has been completed, it will be published in a manner agreed upon by the parties. The knowledge user will enable discussion with e.g., the committee, the management of the ministry, or the parliamentary committee.

- Each partner will share information on the completed compilations with its own stakeholders and strive to inspire them to read the summary and to discuss it in different forums.

Compilations are based on existent research information

In the Knowledge Partnership approach, the end result is a compilation of knowledge that can take many different forms (e.g., research report, podcast series, blog series, etc.). It is essential that its contents are based on existing research-based information. The knowledge user cannot therefore request that a new study be carried out. The objective of the Knowledge Partnership is to gather extensive, multidisciplinary research and knowledge of ongoing strategic research projects to support decision-making.

When researchers present solutions to future challenges that are crucial for Finland, their claims and interpretations are based on scientific research and currently existing knowledge. Like all research-based information, knowledge is ever changing. New research can clarify, challenge or even refute previous research findings. In multidisciplinary strategic research projects, there may also be different perspectives and solutions to the same problem, depending on the research tradition and research design with which researchers approach the problem.

What do the Knowledge Partners give and receive?

Partners will invest time and expertise in the Knowledge Partnership. The knowledge user provides the space to make use of the compilation of knowledge in decision-making and societal debate. The knowledge user books a sufficient number of meetings and gathers feedback for researchers. The knowledge user is also responsible for publishing and transmitting the compilation to other presenting officials and decision-makers central to the compilation.

The Division of Strategic Research is responsible for coordinating and producing the compilation of knowledge. It also shares the responsibility for communications on the compilation with the knowledge user. Programme directors are responsible for coordinating the production of the compilation and the synthesis of the content written by researchers. Researchers produce the contents based on the results of their research.

In the Knowledge Partnership, the knowledge user receives a wide range of information from multidisciplinary strategic research projects in a form that is most useful to it. Researchers will be provided a forum to present information based on their research and to reach out to practical information needs, as well as a possibility to form or strengthen interaction networks. From the point of view of strategic research, the greatest contribution is to promote the societal impact of research through the Knowledge Partnership and to enable researchers to have new contacts and forms of interaction.

How to form an Knowledge Partnership?

The SRC will discuss the requests for compilations of information and prioritise when to respond to them as needed. The Knowledge Partnership will be formed when there is a need for a compilation with a broad, multidisciplinary approach, which will benefit a wide range of presenting officials and decision-makers. The need for information must concern a societal challenge relevant to Finland that is currently addressed with research and interaction in programmes and projects funded by the Strategic Research Council.

A request for a compilation of knowledge should be sent to the Registrar's Office at the Academy of Finland by e-mail to kirjaamo@aka.fi. The recipients should be the Division of Strategic Research, programme directors and project researchers. The Division of Strategic Research will begin coordinating the partnership once the request has arrived at the Registrar's Office.

The programme directors and project researchers will be instructed on the production of the content. They will co-write their responses on a shared platform. The Division of Strategic Research prepares a document template for the compilation of knowledge, which defines the structure and the maximum length of the responses. Programme directors coordinate the production of content.

How to prepare an Knowledge Partner compilation?

We urge researchers to read the introduction to the Knowledge Partnership approach in full. This section contains only a few more detailed instructions for researchers.

Responsibilities:

- Programme directors coordinate the Knowledge Partnership and contact projects and researchers in their programme.

- Researchers produce the contents that are compiled as a synthesis by the programme directors.

- The Division of Strategic Research coordinates the production of information into a publication (a compilation of knowledge, a podcast, etc.) together with programme directors.

- The Knowledge Partner (the knowledge user) is responsible for publishing the compilations of information.

- The Knowledge Partner, the Division of Strategic Research, programme directors and projects involving the authors of the compilation will all participate in communications concerning the compilation.

Policies:

Programme directors will introduce the Knowledge Partnership compilation and the desired contributions to the projects and researchers they have invited to participate. Researchers need not sign the Memorandum of Understanding. Instead, they agree on the operating policies of the Knowledge Partnership when participating in the compilation of knowledge.

Programme directors will provide the researchers they invite with this description of the Knowledge Partnership approach. If the Division of Strategic Research and the Knowledge Partner have already drawn up a Memorandum of Understanding, it will also be delivered to the researchers involved in the compilation of knowledge.

When participating in the Knowledge Partnership and the compilation of knowledge, researchers commit themselves to the following principles:
- The content of the compilation of knowledge is based on scientific research

    o the results, observations and solutions presented are always based on existing research, and this is made clear by references and bibliographies

    o the uncertainties of the research are presented in the results in accordance with what is customary in each discipline

- The compilation of knowledge also highlights the policy recommendations made in strategic research projects and other publications of general interest. These are included in the references and bibliographies.

- Programme directors compile a synthesis of background texts produced by the researchers, which means combining and summarising text segments and possibly excluding some of them from the compilation

    o programme directors will carry out a round of comments for the researchers before publishing

    o a researcher has the right to withdraw their name from the compilation, but not require the removal of segments based on the synthesis of their or other researchers' texts

    o if such a situation arises, contact not only the programme directors but also the contact persons at the Division of Strategic Research

- Researchers strive for a clear, concise and popularised style while writing for the compilation of knowledge

    o e.g., when academic terms are used in the text, their meaning should be made clear in the body of the text or a footnote.

- Co-writing and cooperation between researchers supports the creation of a well-structured text
    - it is easier to produce a well-written and concise text co-writing rather than combining individual segments
    - it is particularly valuable if cooperation can be carried out across projects and programmes to enable new ideas and insights to form while writing the compilation
- The names and contact details of all researchers who participated in the compilation will be recorded so that the Knowledge Partner or other knowledge user can contact the researchers directly if necessary

Knowledge Partnership Memorandum of Understanding

The details of the Partnership will be agreed on in this Memorandum of Understanding. A Memorandum of Understanding will be drawn up for each Knowledge Partnership.

Partners and contact details
- Strategic research
    - Division of Strategic Research (Academy of Finland)
        - Director Päivi Tikka, tel. +358 295 33 5007, paivi.tikka@aka.fi
        - Senior Science Adviser Milja Saari, tel. +358 295 33 5123, milja.saari@aka.fi and Science Adviser Katri Huutoniemi, tel. +358 295 33 5195, katri.huutoniemi@aka.fi
        - Programme directors funded by the Strategic Research Council
- Knowledge User / Knowledge Partner (party, organisation, etc.)
    - Name and contact details of the contact person

Objectives of the Knowledge Partnership compilation
- Description of the subject of the compilation
- Description of the form of the compilation (report, podcast, blog series, etc.)
- The extent of the compilation
- Description of the methods of joint development and the stages of the process

     o   specification of responsibilities in cooperation between partners

     o   how the dialogue between partners is conducted while preparing the compilation and how the researchers receive feedback

     o   promoting societal impact: how, when and to whom?

Timetable for the Knowledge Partnership compilation

When a Knowledge Partnership is agreed upon, the Partners will include the dates for forming and ending the Partnership in the timetable. Other matters included in the timetable may be agreed upon when the partnership begins.

- When will we begin?

  Date:

- When will it be ready?

  Date:

- When will the Partners meet?

       o   Defining the questions the compilation of knowledge will address.

          Date:

       o   Comments of the compilation.

          Date:

       o   Completion of the compilation and its presentation to the knowledge user and decision-makers.

          Date:

       o   Publishing the compilation of knowledge.

          Date:

Place and date

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Päivi Tikka

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The representative of the Knowledge User / Knowledge Partner