

## **Strategic Research Council's perspectives on the theme 'Democracy for the Future'**

### **Democracy for the Future**

This theme focuses on the future of democracy. Democracy based on citizens' freedoms and rights, equality, inclusion and pluralism is the foundation of a welfare society and the rule of law. A democratic system only works if it has the trust of its citizens. When making long-term decisions, policymakers must involve and take into account not only present but also future generations. Global crises that call for radical societal reforms – such as climate change, biodiversity loss and armed conflicts – are challenges to democracy. The resources and concentration of power of multinational actors have impact on national operating environments. Democracy is also susceptible to indirect forms of power, such as the power of information and data. The uneven distribution of participation and inclusion as well as social polarisation undermine democratic institutions and cohesion. What should Finland do to foster and preserve democracy and democratic values within its borders and internationally? What is the response of democratic decision-making in situations that fundamentally challenge existing systems? How can democracy contribute to future prosperity? How can a democratic system best serve both human and natural wellbeing?

The present theme invites multidisciplinary research to build the knowledge base and expertise to address current and future challenges to democracy. International and Nordic comparisons provide invaluable perspectives on many of the issues involved. Research projects may focus on the following issues, for example: the conditions for democracy to deal with crises and geopolitical conflicts; EU policy; the dynamics between democratic and authoritarian systems; the relationship of nation states to the power of multinational corporations; the tensions between economic and political power; or the implementation of democracy at regional or local level. Interesting questions may arise related to the implementation and consolidation of democratic values, for example in public institutions, education, work, the use of natural resources or urban planning. Other relevant topics include the effects of new technologies and policies on social inclusion, participation and trust, the role of AI in future democracy, and communication, language and cultural issues.

Research under this theme shall improve the capacity to anticipate challenges and opportunities related to the future of democracy and the ability to make long-term decisions. An interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary approach and cooperation with different stakeholders are key in addressing the issues in a systemic way. Where appropriate, the research may also include experimentation and evaluation. A key objective is to strengthen democracy, inclusion and trust in society.