

Themes for SRC strategic research programmes 2027

Theme 1: Common security in a diverging world

This theme focuses on security and on strengthening psychological crisis resilience. The aim is to understand the social, institutional and cultural mechanisms that influence people's sense of security and to identify ways to strengthen society's ability to function in the midst of change and uncertainty.

The theme examines psychological security and the functional capacity of the population, both of which are essential elements of comprehensive security. The experience of security is built on a sense of belonging, community and trust. In an increasingly diverging world, demographic changes, regional disparities, growing economic uncertainty and global crises, for example, challenge the sense of security and increase the need for a strong capacity for adaptation and reform. Increasing inequalities, social echo chambers and value conflicts may also weaken the readiness to face threats with shared goals. The dynamics of the digital operating environment, rapid technological development and security risks associated with increasingly extensive data collection may further increase feelings of insecurity. Key questions in this theme include: What sustains trust and a sense of belonging to society in a diverging world? What kinds of social and institutional structures are needed to maintain Finland's collective functional capacity? What role might culture, the arts and broad-based education play in building this capacity?

This theme approaches security as a perceived, social and structural phenomenon and analyses the interconnections of these dimensions in a diverging world. Within the theme, a central issue is to examine factors that strengthen psychological resilience in the context of various threats and disruptions. The research may focus, for example, on supporting good relations between population groups and shared agency, on strengthening confidence in the future, or on creating new forms of participation and influence. The importance of shared democratic values and the role of culture and the arts as forces that help create a shared worldview may also provide relevant perspectives for the theme. In addition, research under this theme may address the construction of economic security at both the individual level and the level of the national economy. Individual projects may also study the role of the information environment in building trust and a sense of security.

An interdisciplinary and interactive approach and stakeholder cooperation are of key importance in exploring the societal structures that maintain common security. Networks, partnerships and stakeholder cooperation contribute to Finland's comprehensive security.

Theme 2: Strategic resources for the future

This theme focuses on strategic resources, on their responsible use and on securing their future supply. Here, strategic resources are defined as materials and data essential to the functioning of Finnish society and whose availability is constrained by risks related to security of supply, the environment, governance or geopolitics.

Growing demand for strategic resources, combined with global constraints on their availability, create fundamental tensions between ecological sustainability, geopolitics, economic competitiveness and global justice. Closed material cycles, data, competitiveness and security policy are also key issues for the circular economy. Critical resources and control over them are, however, unevenly distributed across countries and regions. The sustainable use of strategic resources requires not only technological solutions but also changes in consumption patterns and practices that shape demand for resources.

Key questions for this theme include: What resources are likely to gain strategic importance for Finland's economy and wellbeing in the future? How can these resources be produced, used and managed while taking into account planetary boundaries and global responsibility? How can data support the sustainable management of raw materials, and how can data availability be ensured?

The aim of the theme is to generate new knowledge and concrete solutions that support the material self-sufficiency of Finland and the EU and strengthen critical value chains in the future. Research projects under this theme may address resources and the strategic transformation in the material economy both from a global perspective and from the perspective of Finland's own raw materials. Sustainable cycles of natural resources and materials and related value chains and material flows are also essential to the theme. The research may also focus on data as an important enabler of sustainable resource use and of technological development, as well as on data as a strategic resource, including questions of management and self-sufficiency. Other intangible resources may also be examined, but only as part of a broader context that is clearly connected to strategic materials or data. The sustainability transition is not merely a technical or economic challenge. It is essentially linked to social, cultural and ethical dimensions, such as sustainable consumer behaviour or an equitable distribution of the benefits and burdens associated with resource use at local and global level.

Interdisciplinary research and close cooperation with businesses, the public sector and other stakeholders are key to addressing the technological, economic and social dimensions of use of strategic resources. Partnerships and research ecosystems contribute to strengthening Finland's competitiveness and export opportunities in this field.

Cross-cutting priority: Data as power

Data as power is the cross-cutting priority for the 2027 strategic research programmes.

Data and data quality, in particular data representativeness, openness, accessibility, interoperability, limitations and opportunities for use, are increasingly determining the direction of research. Data has economic and societal power, which makes data quality particularly important. At the same time, data raises important ethical, legal and societal questions, for example regarding ownership, access rights, privacy and security. The utilisation of data is limited by uneven access and identified blind spots, in particular by the under-representation of socially vulnerable groups in data.

In the 2027 strategic research programmes, these data-related issues are examined from the perspective of each research topic. In the data they use and the data collection methods, projects must take into account factors that the Finnish scientific community can use more widely in future.