

Kirsi Tirri

A greeting from the President

I BEGAN MY TERM of office as President of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters in January 2016 after two years as Vice President and three years as an ordinary member of the Governing Board, so that by the time I stand down as President in December 2017 I will have served the Academy in an administrative capacity for seven years.

2016 was a year of changes and reforms, perhaps the most significant of all being the decision to appoint a full-time Secretary General from the beginning of the year and the selection of Professor Pekka Aula for this position. His duties were defined very much as those of a CEO, a person external to the Governing Board who is responsible for putting the board's decisions into effect and acting as head of the office staff. In Pekka Aula we gained a solid professional in the field of communications who had himself done research into questions of reputation, and it was with his help that the Academy set about renewing its Internet image and establishing

contacts with decision-makers and persons of influence in society at large.

During the year we invited the Minister of Education, Sanni Grahn-Laasonen, to visit the Academy's offices in Mariankatu and meet leading figures in various branches of research in Finland. This gave us an opportunity to discuss the state of science in this country and strategies for its future development. The Academy's Governing Board also put forward its opinions on the topical issue of the ethical supervision of scientific practices in the course of the year, partly in the opinion columns of the newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat*, while the Secretary General appeared prominently on the pages of the magazine *Acatiimi*, and as President, I wrote an article on peer assessment for the daily newspaper *Aamulehti*. The Academy was thus well to the fore in science policy discussions and made every effort to increase its visibility in Finnish society in general.

The Governing Board was engaged in two major reform projects during 2016.

Preparations were made under the leadership of the Vice President, Risto Nieminen, for a reform of the system of groups which would bring it into line with changes that have taken place within science and the arts as a whole. Among other things, the aim was to strengthen the role of the sections of Science and the Humanities in the election of members in order to respond to the multidisciplinary trends in modern research. We wished to dispense with the quotas for given groups and allow for greater freedom in the choice of new members. The target was to be able to make these choices in 2018 according to the newly defined practices.

The second major reform concerned the Academy's international relations. These had for the last 40 years been looked after by the Council for Finnish Academies, a subsidiary of the Delegation of Finnish Learned Societies, and by its predecessor, the Delegation of Finnish Academies. Negotiations were begun in 2016 for the creation of a new joint body capable of representing all four academies: the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, the Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters, the Finnish Academy of Technology and the Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences in Finland. The purpose of the body would be to strengthen cooperation between the academies at the national level and make them more influential internationally. It was also hoped that this would provide intellectual and operational support for further cooperation between the academies concerned. A declaration of intent has now been signed at a ceremony at the Mariankatu offices on 12th May 2017 in the presence of the board members of all four academies and representatives of their principal collaborators: the Ministry

of Education, the Academy of Finland, the Delegation of Finnish Learned Societies and Technology Academy Finland. It is planned that the new joint body should begin functioning during 2017, the Centenary Year of Finnish Independence.

Throughout the year the Academy has placed a great deal of emphasis on young researchers, through the medium of the Academy Club for Young Scientists, which allows 16 talented young researchers to meet once a month to listen to and learn from each other. The Secretary General and members of the Governing Board were present at these gatherings, which were all recorded and are now available as videos on the Academy's web pages. In addition, the young researchers themselves received advice on how to make videos of their own work for publicity purposes. It is our intention to develop this work with young people further in 2017, especially since the Academy has received a donation of a million euros from the Emil Aaltonen Foundation for the creation of a Young Academy Finland. The obtaining of this donation was negotiated during 2016 and it was ceremonially received and signed for in conjunction with the Academy's Annual Meeting in April 2017. The intention is to commence activities within the Young Academy Finland in autumn 2017 with the aim of promoting the scientific and academic work of young researchers at the early stages in their careers. This innovation forms an important part of the Academy's strategy for the future.

At a personal level, I have been delighted with all the years for which I have been involved in supporting and developing science and the arts in Finland from the platform of the Governing Board of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters,

and I would like especially to thank the Vice President, Risto Nieminen, and the other board members with whom I have had the pleasure of working. The office staff have faithfully arranged numerous events by means of which the Academy has been able to make itself better known to the general public, and I am most grateful for this valuable support. I am also grateful to all the Academy members who have attended these events and provided active support for our efforts. I hope that still more members will be inspired to help in

this work in the future. The Secretary General will be happy to receive offers of voluntary help and suggestions regarding such activities in the future. I hope that the Governing Board will continue with the programme of reform, applying the same philosophy that I have studied and taught. We must be open to reforms in the academic world, ready to forge new contacts with society at large and unafraid in the face of disappointments or mistakes. Let us continue boldly with our work on behalf of science and letters!

Professor Kirsi Tirri began her term of office as the Academy's President in January 2016. She will occupy the position until December 2017.

