



Risto Nieminen

Greeting from the President

ACADEMIES ARE societies of scholars at the pinnacle of the global research community. We are engaged in building knowledge and understanding by virtue of a scientific approach based on the well-established principles of reproducibility and falsifiability, openness and peer review, integrity, responsibility and ethics. Successful research needs passion and freedom: passion for finding things out and freedom to think differently and freedom to fail. Science has brought enormous benefits to mankind in the form of longer and healthier lives as well as material wealth in a rapidly shrinking, interconnected world, but more than ever we need science to address the threats to climate and to reverse the decline in biodiversity. We also need the social sciences and humanities

more than ever to facilitate the implementation and acceptance of new solutions to the complex challenges that mankind faces. The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters aims at encouraging and facilitating discourse and the exchange of ideas across disciplinary boundaries and between traditions.

Societal decision-making involves values and political goals, but it should be based on the best scientific knowledge available. Thus the quest for “science-inspired” or “evidence-based” decision-making is an important part of the academies’ quest for impact. This brings up the question of the trustworthiness of science in the minds of ordinary citizens. We scientists often emphasize our competence and the solidity of our tested techniques, but it is also important to be

Academician Risto Nieminen began his term of office as President of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters in January 2018.

able to explain the hierarchy of the steps taken to reach scientific consensus and conclusions.

The trustworthiness of science is fragile, even when our research competence is resilient. Building trustworthiness requires warmth and compassion, and trustworthiness can also be easily destroyed, especially in the present era of lightning-rapid communication and ubiquitous information. The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters is engaged in promoting constructive dialogue between scientists and society at large, for better utilization of scientific knowledge in decision-making.

Openness and the sharing of information are fundamental to the progress of science and the effective functioning of research endeavours. Open science aims to ensure the free availability and usability of scholarly publications, research data and research methodologies, and the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters endorses open science and recognizes the many benefits arising from it, including faster and more inclusive dissemination of knowledge, broader participation, more effective use of resources, improved performance in research tasks, the ability to address new questions and improved rigour and reliability.