

# Finnish Academy of Science and Letters as communicative organisation

Greeting from the Secretary General

**The Finnish Academy** of Science and Letters, as it is today, is in large extent a communicative organization. If we expand this idea further, you could say that all the activities of the Academy have a communicative dimension. In addition to actual communication activities, such as external communication and, say, website maintenance and PR, communication is present everywhere: meetings and events, publications, science and decision-making and grants are all to a large extent communicative actions or closely linked to communication.

It was long thought that communication of different communities is linear transfer of information from a sender to a receiver. Many communication models were and still are based on this underlying premise. The key is to be able to identify and distinguish between the stages of the communication process and to clarify the role and input of the different stages in the process as a whole. The idea of straightforward communication with

impact is also present in the science communication of our time. Scientists are expected to communicate scientific facts to a less-informed audience with the effect that the level of knowledge of this receiving group improves, leading to better-informed decisions, for example. According to this way of thinking, science provides input to society through its communication, and these are seen as two separate entities.

Other models, also for science communication, have developed alongside this straightforward way of thinking. They pay attention to the two-way, communal nature of communication. Communication is seen as dialogue and a tool for building community. This thought is reflected in the work of Professor Esa Väliverronen, among others. He has stated that the traditional view of science communication as a way to inform and educate lay people is now being challenged by science communication that emphasizes dialogue between the different parties. Here, science appears



more as a part of society, similarly to many other institutions that uphold society.

## It is important to realize that communication is not a miracle worker

Therefore, the communication of the Academy is not, and cannot be, something that only takes place within our community or between us and our stakeholders or wider society. Our communication is thereby not only the transfer or exchange of information, let alone knowledge, between different parties. Instead, our communication approach underlines the idea that an organization is constructed by its communication and that communication is the force that both maintains and changes an organization. This approach also extends to how we see our stakeholders and other cooperation parties. These relationships are built (and broken) through communication, and maintaining them is one of the key tasks of communication. To exaggerate only slightly, the communication of the Academy plays a crucial role in keeping our community not only alive, but also thriving.

These are the foundations on which we can build our guiding communication principles. Our communication allows us to *be present* in various public arenas, such as different events or social media. Communication helps us *constitute* the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters and the topics that the Academy and science consider important at the time *visible*. We believe that communication always affects the parties of the relationship, even if the strength and direction of this impact is difficult to predict. That is why we see communication not only as activities that *maintain* things, but especially as a *way to make a difference and achieve change*. However, we have not abandoned the principles of enlightenment. Communication continues to have a place in delivering scientific knowledge and sparking discussion and curiosity.

It is important to realize that communication is not a miracle worker. As with all organizations, the fundamental tasks of the Academy must be in sufficiently good condition before communication can be set free to do its job. The Academy must continue to remain an independent, credible and reliable organization and partner before it can publicly and openly declare itself as such. Everyone communicates, but good, effective communication is a skill.

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