Research knowledge for the benefit of society – Finnish Academy of Science and Letters as a forerunner

The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters has in recent years been profiled as a national forerunner in promoting evidence-informed policy-making. The year 2023 was particularly significant in this respect: collaboration with the Prime Minister's Office further intensified and the new knowledge brokering models developed by the Academy were widely commended.
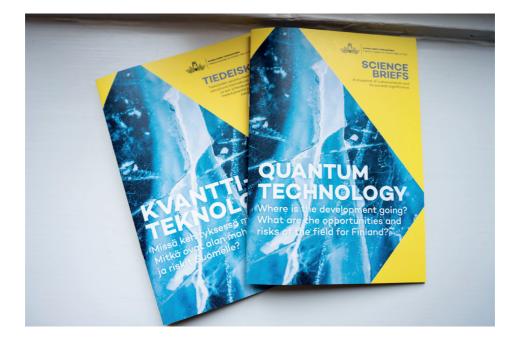
GLOBAL LEADER IN EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY-MAKING

More scientific knowledge is constantly available to inform policy-making, but the abundance of knowledge makes it challenging to find and utilize relevant information. In addition, policy-making often involves dealing with complex themes, and policy-makers need support to form an overall view of the science underlying issues.

The statutory function of the Academy is to promote evidence-informed policy-making. The vision is to position Finland as the global leader in evidence-informed policy-making.

The Academy strengthened its competence in curating and synthesising knowledge through new recruitments in 2023. Two permanent employees now work in the Science and Policy team. In addition to them, three specialists were recruited for the Phenomenon maps project, funded by the Jane and Aatos Erkko Foundation.

SIMPLER, FASTER, MORE INTERACTIVE

In 2023, the efforts to strengthen the knowledge base for policy-making aimed to address changes identified in the operating environment and to make research knowledge available to policy-makers in ways that are even faster, simpler and more interactive than before. This has

The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters brings together in Science Briefs a general scientific view on areas that are expected to have a major impact on the development of society. The Quantum Technology Science Brief unpacked the importance and potential of quantum technology.

required new approaches and close cooperation with both researchers and policy-makers.

Over the course of the year, the Academy produced a total of seven knowledge syntheses on topics ranging from the ageing society to quantum technology. The syntheses were produced using systematic knowledge compilation methods, which have been actively developed. Reliable knowledge for knowledge syntheses can be compiled in just one week.

The production of knowledge syntheses has required the careful identification and specification of knowledge needs. For this purpose, new approaches have been built and existing ones, such as *Science sparring*, have been further developed. As the aim is to compile knowledge that serves the needs of policy-making as well as possible, facilitating a closer dialogue between researchers and policy-makers can be tremendously useful.

Different types of knowledge have also been highlighted in new ways in the production of knowledge syntheses. The aim of the scientific overviews has been to combine, for example, peer-reviewed research, expert reviews and statistical data. Combining several types of knowledge enables the utilization of the full scope of researchers' expertise in policy-making.

COLLABORATION WITH PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE PLAYS A KEY ROLE

One of the key partners in strengthening the knowledge base for policy-making at the Academy has been the Prime Minister's Office. In spring 2023, a multidisciplinary overview of the effects of Russia's attack on Ukraine on the Finnish society was produced at the request of the Prime Minister's Office to support the government negotiations. This knowledge synthesis was a good example of a work related to the rapidly changing developments in society that required not only peer-reviewed research and statistics, but also forward-looking expert knowledge from researchers.

The formulation of knowledge in the overview of the effects of Russia's offensive war was widely commended, and the structuring of knowledge types has been further developed in subsequent works.

In autumn 2023, relations with the Prime Minister's Office further intensified as the Academy signed a two-year framework agreement with the Office on research compilations produced for the Prime Minister. As a result of this agreement, the Academy consolidated its position as a trusted knowledge partner of the Prime Minister's Office. The close cooperation can be seen in practice in the form of new knowledge requests where the experts at the Academy compiled research knowledge directly for the needs of the Prime Minister's Office.

Towards the end of 2023, a brief knowledge synthesis was produced within a short timeframe for the Prime Minister's Office on the position and well-being of people with an immigrant background in Finland. Data collection and structuring methods and interaction regarding the clarification of knowledge needs were further developed as part of the work under the concept *Tiedettä tiiviisti (Science in Brief)*.

A digital knowledge matrix was also tested in 2023 as an alternative to traditional report formats. Continuous development and new openings also ensure that the Academy will remain a forerunner in Finland in evidence-informed policy-making in the years to come.

TOWARDS AN EVEN GREATER IMPACT

The work of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters to promote evidence-informed policy-making will continue to the same extent by means of funding from the Jane and Aatos Erkko Foundation until the year 2026.

In the near future, knowledge brokerage models will be developed by the Science and Policy team, for example by utilizing artificial intelligence and by including even broader multidisciplinary research collectives in the production of knowledge. The goal is to adhere to an experimental and innovative approach while also strengthening the impact of operations.

The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters' October event discussed the precondi-
tions for healthy ageing and the societal issues related to increasing longevity in
connection with the discussion paper Terve vanhuus ("Healthy ageing"). Discussants
were Professor Teppo Kroeger, Associate Professor Leena Forma and Professor Esa
Jämsen.