



ACADEMY OF FINLAND

Interdisciplinarity in Finnish Research Programmes

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- **The Academy of Finland** is a public funding agency for scientific research
- Provides funding for scientific research, researcher training and the improvement of research capacities
- In 2014 funding budget totalled EUR 316.8 million
- Four research councils:
 - Research Council for Biosciences and Environment
 - Research Council for Culture and Society
 - Research Council for Natural Sciences and Engineering
 - Research Council for Health
- Finnish Research Infrastructure Committee (FIRI Committee)
- Strategic Research Council (SRC)
- Administration office employs ca. 140 people



According to the Academy of Finland strategy:

“To enhance the quality and impact of research, we are committed to [...] supporting the renewal of research, **multidisciplinarity**, new approaches and potential scientific breakthroughs.”

In general, the national research system in Finland supports ID research and tries to remove its obstacles.



In policy documents, the Academy of Finland has used the following (ESF originated) definition for interdisciplinarity:

“Interdisciplinarity is concerned with the study of a research topic within multiple disciplines, and with the transfer of methods from one discipline to another. The research topic integrates different disciplinary approaches and methods.”

Academy Research Programmes

In principle, the Academy of Finland promotes interdisciplinarity with all its funding instruments. There is no specific funding allocated to ID research.

Thematic funding instrument “Academy Research Programmes”, which aims at generating substantial added value when compared to funding projects in the general call.

- For example “The Future of Living and Housing” (2013-2016)

Academy Research Programmes are composed of closely related projects in the same field of research or addressing a specified theme. They aim:

- to establish and strengthen the knowledge base within the field concerned
- to raise the overall quality of research
- to **promote interdisciplinarity** and international cooperation
- to promote research careers and networking among researchers
- to intensify researcher training



Strategic Research Council's Programmes

“Strategy is about employing whatever resources are available to achieve the best outcome in situations that are both dynamic and contested.”

(Sir Lawrence Freedman)

In SRC, strategic research refers to long-term, problem-focused and high-quality research that informs public policy and the development of societal activities and that ultimately is aimed at finding solutions to the challenges and problems facing society. Many grand societal challenges cannot be resolved by tools from one single policy domain.

SRC funding is intended:

- to support interaction between researchers and society
- to **advance** diversity and **interdisciplinarity**
- to promote research addressing current major challenges in society

SRC funding contributes to high-impact and high-quality research that has important benefits for society as a whole.



Strategic Research Council's Themes

SRC themes are proposed by the SRC and decided by the Finnish Government.

Themes for 2015:

- Disruptive Technologies and Changing Institutions
- A Climate-Neutral and Resource-Scarce Finland
- Equality in Society

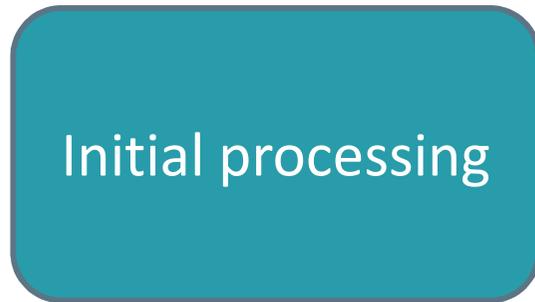
Themes for 2016:

- Knowledge, Know-How and the Changing Working Life
- Health and Changing of Lifestyles
- Global Security in a Finnish Context
- Dynamics of Urbanisation
- **Immigration** as a key focus area cutting across all 2016 research themes.



Processing of applications

1.



2.



3.



- Submission of applications
- Pre-screening of applications and eligibility check
- Selection of reviewers

- Peer review
- Draft statement
- Panel statements

- Preparatory meetings
- DECISION



Criteria used in application review

- Scientific quality and innovativeness of the research plan
- Competence of the applicant/research team
- Feasibility of the research plan
- Quality and strengthening of the research environment
- International and national collaborative contacts as well as researcher mobility
- Academy Programmes: Relevance to the programme
- **No specific guidance for interdisciplinary proposals**





Factors influencing funding decisions

Assessment of scientific quality (i.e. results of peer review)

The Academy's objectives for research policy:

- **foster multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research**
- concentrate research into larger programmes
- contribute to the internationalisation of research
- advance the research careers of women and young people
- promote gender equality in research
- boost research relevant to Strategic Centres for Science, Technology and Innovation

Instrument-specific objectives:

- consider special objectives of research programmes
- support the establishment of Finnish Centres of Excellence

Other factors:

- applicant's ability to direct a research project and manage research funds
- good scientific practice a must (incl. ethical aspects and IPR issues)
- open access



All in all, finding answers to the society's major challenges requires multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary cooperation.

Fruitful interdisciplinary research calls for open-mindedness, good will for the best of research, and readiness for cooperation with different researchers, methods, and disciplines.

Obstacles in the way of ID research:

- Fixed and rigid traditions both in research and administration
- Possible silo effect within departments and disciplines

A possible challenge for the AF decision makers:

- Crossing the disciplinary boundaries between the four Research Councils (which, together, cover all research fields). Even though there is good cooperation in between the Councils, and in their intersections (e.g. **interdisciplinary evaluation panels**).