Evaluation of Societal Interaction
Case of Strategic Research Funding in Finland

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Major challenges transcend ministry boundaries

Solution-oriented research, evidence-based policy

Strategic research

Multidisciplinary and phenomenon-based research, cross-administrative collaboration

Relevance, impact and scientific quality

Open calls – all research organisations can apply

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Scientific research for and with policy-makers and end-users

As the research starts and progresses	Through programme activities	After the research has ended

- Special focus on the **interaction** between researchers and end-users

  - Interaction as dialogue

- Emphasis on the researchers' active role

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Planning interaction

- Applications for SRC Funding include research and interaction plans.

- In the interaction plan, the applicant

    - recognises relevant stakeholders,

    - states objectives for interaction activities,

    - describes the means of interaction and

    - gives a schedule and a budget for their implementation.

- All consortia funded by SRC name a person responsible for interaction, often someone with a professional background in communications.

Funding decisions based on peer-review

- Evaluation of research plans business-as-usual for AF

  - Panel review

  - Panels according to research fields, with targeted and specific expertise

  - Conventions of peer review well-established

- Evaluation of interaction plans is a different matter

  - Who is the expert?

  - What exactly to assess?

  - How to combine different areas of evaluation in the final funding decisions?

Dual Evaluation

Relevance panel

- Assesses the societal relevance and impact of the projects, the quality of the interaction plans and how well the applications match the programme objectives.
- Composed of Finnish and foreign experts in research, research funding and evidence-based policy.

Scientific panel

- Composed of non-Finnish experts in the fields concerned.
- In selecting the reviewers, experience of working on multidisciplinary review panels is emphasized.

Review questions: societal relevance and interaction (2016)

➤ Project's relevance to the programme
- ❑ Societal relevance of the project
- ❑ Match with the programme

➤ Project's interaction with and impact on society
- ❑ Attaining stakeholders, networks and support to decision-making

➤ Implementation/feasibility
- ❑ Contents and implementation societally
- ❑ Competence and expertise of consortium and other collaboration

➤ Final rating: 1–6

Rating scale: relevance

6 = extremely significant

of crucial relevance to users, an extremely significant contribution to policy or practice is likely; demonstrates exceptional novelty and innovation; addresses an important problem or a critical barrier

5 = very significant

of very high relevance to users, a very significant contribution to policy or practice is likely; addresses an important problem or a critical barrier

4 = significant

of high relevance to users, a significant contribution to policy or practice is likely

3 = moderate

of relevance to users, a moderate contribution to policy or practice is likely

2 = limited

might not be of sufficient relevance or urgency to influence policy or practice; low potential for societal impact.

1 = poor

not considered relevant; in need of substantial modification or improvement

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Looking for Quality and Impact

- SRC selects consortia to be included in Strategic Research Programmes
- Selection based on review panels' statements
- In order to get funding, a proposal must be strong both in terms of scientific quality and of societal relevance, thus having reasonable expectation of considerable impact

Prof. Per Mickwitz, SRC Chair (May 2016):

*"The emphasis in the SRC's funding decisions is on projects that can forge new kinds of collaborations between science and societal interaction. SRC calls involve two key factors that influence the success of individual research teams: the project's size and how well the different parts of the project work together. **Simply gathering together actors from different fields does not guarantee success**."*

More information

- Read more about the funding for strategic research and about the funded projects: www.aka.fi/src

- Join us on **LinkedIn**: Groups > **Strategisen tutkimuksen neuvosto**

- The discussion continues on Twitter: **#strateginentutkimus**