



RESEARCH POLICY OF THE ALEKSANTERI INSTITUTE 2008 - 2011

(A modified and abbreviated version of the original research policy document, written in Finnish and approved by the Executive Board of the Aleksanteri Institute, February 8, 2008.)

The Aleksanteri Institute is a national centre of research, study and expertise pertaining to Russia and Eastern Europe. The Institute is dedicated to conducting high-quality, cutting edge research and providing higher education based on research, mostly in the fields of social and political sciences and humanities. By conducting applied research, cooperating with various actors in society and providing information services the Institute seeks practical, societally relevant applications for research results.

The Aleksanteri Institute coordinates two national study programmes, the masters and doctoral level programmes in Russian and East European studies. Within the University of Helsinki, it acts as a coordinator for the study programme on East Central European, the Balkan and Baltic Studies and the programme on Ukrainian studies.

The Aleksanteri Institute aims to increase understanding of the developments in Russia and Eastern Europe through research and expertise. High-quality academic research forms the basis and core for all the Institute's activities. The Institute looks for new, relevant directions for research and for interaction between the societies once divided by the Cold War front lines. For its staff, the Institute provides an opportunity to work in a creative and supportive work community.

The Aleksanteri Institute is a part of the University of Helsinki and shares its strategic values of criticism, quest for truth and knowledge, edification, creativity, well-being and autonomy. The Institute additionally relies on the principles of 1) multi- and interdisciplinarity, 2) dialogue with, 3) knowledge of the languages, and 4) understanding of the cultures of the countries within its research scope.

The goals of the Aleksanteri Institute are integrated with the common goals and principles defined in the University of Helsinki strategy for the years 2007 - 2009, and with the four policy programmes implementing the strategy: 1) Human resources policy 2) Research policy 3) Programme for development of teaching and studies and 4) Development programme for administration and support services.

The Institute's vision is that in 2015 the Aleksanteri Institute will have established its position as a major actor and centre of excellence in Russian and Eastern European studies both on the European and broader international level.

Focus points of research

The central principles of the Aleksanteri Institute's research are based on the research policy of the University of Helsinki. The Aleksanteri Institute has determined five focus areas for research for the coming few years. These have been selected on the basis of an analysis of fields of investigation needing further research and of the future challenges of those countries that fall within the Institute's research scope. They are partially based on a consideration of the expertise currently available within the Institute, with the intention of developing stronger expertise in each of the areas mentioned below. These themes have been approved by the Executive Board of the Aleksanteri Institute, and they constitute the areas that will be favoured when it comes to allocating resources for research. Each research focus is approached through wider, multidisciplinary research programmes consisting of one or more research projects.

1) Economic Diversification

Energy policy

Changing industrial and rural communities

The Cold War and its consequences

2) The Welfare Society

Welfare, gender and agency

Inequalities

Class and social structure

3) Democracy

The construction of "Europeanness" and the political use of history

Public administration

The media

Welfare, gender and agency

4) A European Dimension in Foreign Policy

Foreign policy and energy issues

Civil protection and crisis management

5) The Social Constitution of Culture

Rationality and the history of ideas

The sacred and the profane

Identities

Cultural encounters

Cultural centres and peripheries

The Institute coordinates and partners in joint research projects with an extensive network of researchers in Finland and abroad. One of the starting points for the Institute's research is a dialogue with the "object" of research. Consequently, a significant part of the research is carried out in cooperation with scholars from Russia, East Central and Eastern Europe.

Institutional resources

As stated in its rules and regulations approved by the University of Helsinki Senate, the Aleksanteri Institute is a national coordinator of research and higher education on Russia and Eastern Europe. Thus, while being part of the University of Helsinki, the Institute acts in cooperation with other Finnish universities. Likewise, it cooperates closely with public administration, business life and civil society. The Institute's frequent public seminars and lectures as well as its regular research seminars guarantee an intensive communication between researchers. The task of coordinating the doctoral programme involving most Finnish universities, the Finnish Graduate School for Russian and East European studies, facilitates forging links between ongoing research and systematic guidance of doctoral students.

The Aleksanteri Institute adheres to the principle of the University of Helsinki Strategy stating that "all teachers do research and all researchers teach". The Institute's researchers teach in the study programmes coordinated by the Institute and provide guidance to doctoral students. A work plan is agreed with each researcher, specifying the actual contribution to instruction and other activities in relation to research activities. The University of Helsinki has a four-level structure for the staff positions in research and teaching. The Aleksanteri Institute's research staff is represented in all the four categories; i.e., from research assistants, doctoral students and project researchers to post-doctoral and senior research fellows up to the level of (or equivalent of) professor.

The core funding for the Aleksanteri Institute comes from the Ministry of Education and from the University of Helsinki. Additionally, the Institute receives funding from external sources. The Academy of Finland, European Union and Nordic research funding bodies are the main sources, while Finnish public administration organisations such as ministries also fund studies and applied research.

A central resource for the Institute's research is its international cooperation with institutes and individual researchers in the EU member states and outside the EU: in Russia, Eastern Europe, United States and Asia, as well as the ongoing cooperation with the network of Nordic researchers in post-graduate training. The Aleksanteri Institute is further strengthening its international networks by increasing researcher exchanges and by establishing an international Visiting Scholar Programme.

A further resource for the Institute's research is its staff involved in administration. Study programmes and research activities easily find joint ground and synergies, and the Institute's professional administrative staff provides support in planning, finances, human resource, information service and IT matters. Synergies between the Institute's fields of activity are strengthened by the fact that many of those responsible for administrative, and in particular for management tasks, are actively involved in research themselves. The University of Helsinki central administration has a variety of services on offer for research management, which facilitates undertaking research projects.

Societal interaction

The Aleksanteri Institute's impact on the Finnish society at large is based on strong academic research and the wide-ranging expertise that this creates. Together with its most important stakeholders, the Institute develops channels for using the expertise beyond the university sector. The main partners in this effort represent decision-makers, the public sector, economic life and civil society both in Finland and abroad.

The Institute actively endeavours to influence public debate and political decisions connected to its field. The Institute constantly develops its cooperation with ministries, political decision-makers, companies and non-governmental organisations. It also conducts commissioned research projects and analyses and gives policy recommendations. The Institute encourages its staff to participate in social debate and in other forms of societal activity. There is high demand of expertise on Russia and Eastern Europe in the press, television and radio, and Institute's staff members are frequently-seen commentators in the Finnish media. The tasks of societal interaction are taken into consideration also when recruiting scholars for positions on the two highest levels of the University of Helsinki's four-tier structure of research positions.

Applied Research

The projects in applied research transfer expertise produced in the academia to other parts of the society. The Institute participates in implementing development projects and commissioned research especially in the Institute's focus areas. The Institute pays attention to the potential of synergies between suggested projects and the Institute's research already at the early planning stage. This requires coordination in the project preparation phase as well as proper allocation of human and other resources. This also requires project skills from the researchers and other staff members—advancing of which will be further supported by the Institute.

The Aleksanteri Institute is involved in developing Finnish activities concerning Russia with ministries, the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra, regional councils and non-governmental organisations. The Institute will continue making reports, analyses, policy recommendations and development suggestions for expert organisations in public administration, including Parliament and the ministries.

Applied research conducted at the Institute follows the same guiding principles and values as does the Institute's basic research.

Research and Information services

The Institute's information service and publication activities make the results of Finnish research on Russia and Eastern Europe available for the public. The information service maintains and intensifies cooperation with other information providers in Finland and abroad in the Institute's field of study. The information service is being developed in cooperation with the research personnel both as a resource for research and as a channel for disseminating the research-based knowledge to the general public.

For this purpose, the information service develops and extends the content areas in the RUSSIAinfo portal <http://tatiana.aleksanteri.helsinki.fi/> with information about Russia and adds new technical applications. To increase the user base of the portal and to make it more international, the Institute develops customer relations and marketing. The

information service maintains and develops the Institute's web pages and the widely subscribed to Aleksanteri electronic mailing list, and participates actively in external communications.

The Institute's publishing activities are developed as a central channel of publishing European research on Russia and Eastern Europe. The current research on Russia and Eastern Europe will be also published in the Kikimora, Aleksanteri Series and Aleksanteri Papers series on a faster schedule than those of many international publishers.

Conferences and other events

The Aleksanteri Institute is actively organising scientific seminars and public events. This brings available the Institute's latest research results as well as the expertise of the Finnish and international research network for the use of the media, civil society, public administration, business, diplomatic corps and other audiences in addition to the scientific community.

The Aleksanteri Institute continues to develop the [Aleksanteri Conference](#) as a significant international annual conference in Russian and Eastern European studies. In addition, the Institute organises other conferences and continues its policy of frequently arranging seminars. The Institute reacts quickly to the changes in the societies and current issues in Russia and Eastern Europe by organising expert information events responding to the currently relevant needs for information. In order to enable the accumulation of the information collected in scientific and other events and to respond to the needs of the general public, the Institute will systematise the archiving and accessibility of this information as well as the external communication of its events as a part of developing its information service.