

SUMMARY

BENDING, BUT NOT BREAKING

From the coronavirus pandemic to strengthening Finland's crisis resilience

THE FINNISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCE AND LETTERS convened a multidisciplinary group of experts to present their views on Finland's crisis resilience based on the lessons learned from the coronavirus pandemic crisis, with the goal of a strong and resilient Finland. The statement looks further into the future, rather than focusing on the short-term recovery from the current crisis.

The current crisis may overshadow longer-term crises lurking in the background. Amid the challenges presented by the pandemic crisis, concerns about climate and the environment have received less attention, even though they are by no means disconnected from the current events. Extensive global changes in the environment and in the habitats of different species also expose people to the spread of viruses. Halting climate and environmental change is essential for the well-being of humans, the economy and nature. We must reduce emissions and increase carbon sinks until carbon neutrality is achieved and keep reducing emissions further thereafter.

The solid standard of education of the Finnish society and trust between the Finnish people allowed Finland to navigate the pandemic crisis relatively successfully. It is always worthwhile to invest in maintaining these characteristics. It is essential to encourage equality and equal opportunity in

society, which also means that the citizens must feel that they are being kept up to date and getting heard. Much has already been done in Finland to ensure material security of supply. But ensuring mental security of supply is equally important. The securing of people's mental well-being makes crisis management easier, and education and the arts play a significant role in this. They act as a foundation that hope about a better future can be built upon. The experiencing and creation of art cultivates the creativity of both individuals and the society, which is important for a vibrant economy that recovers quickly from crises.

Communication plays a key role in crisis resilience: the information must reach large numbers of citizens, be clear and, above all, be understood. Interaction is essential for the people's sense of inclusion and participation. The environment we communicate in has undergone rapid changes, and the changes can be expected to continue. Communication needs to be designed with these facts in mind. Special measures are needed to eradicate disinformation and maintain confidence in researched, evidence-based information.

THE STATEMENT represents the perspective of the scientific community. The independent scientific community has a key role in understanding

crises, surviving them and rebuilding society. During the pandemic crisis, cooperation between the scientific community and the state has been successful in many ways, but fast-paced co-operation between scientific advisors and decision-makers, in particular, needs to be improved to prepare for unexpected situations.

It is essential to keep up strong basic research across a wide range of disciplines, as there are a wide variety of potential crises and we cannot predict what kind of information will be the most important when the time comes. What we do know for sure is that up-to-date, reliable and research-based information is needed, whatever the crisis. This time, vaccine research was invested in quickly and generously, through international collaboration. Still, the pandemic crisis has once again shown that understanding human and community behaviour is essential to the management

of any crisis, which means that the humanities and, more generally, versatile research, form the basis for controlled and effective decision-making.

The scientific community is international by nature, and it has demonstrated the strengths this brings by finding solutions to the global pandemic crisis. The world is tightly intertwined – economically, politically and environmentally – and these factors, in turn, are closely interconnected. Finland must take a more active role in international collaborations and boost its profile as a facilitator of co-operation. Because there are many types of crises, they all cannot be managed according to a single model. Instead, the most sustainable solution is a society that is adaptable and able to strengthen its creative potential through the joint efforts of science, government and industry, all working towards the goals of sustainable development. ■

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The covid-19 expert group: Anna Mauranen (chair), Eva-Mari Aro, Riitta Hari, Sirpa Jalkanen, Markku Kulmala, Arto Mustajoki, Risto Nieminen, Ilkka Niiniluoto, Kari Raivio, Jorma Sipilä and Kirsi Tirri

The secretaries of the covid-19 expert group: Pekka Aula, Jaakko Kuosmanen and Rosa Rantanen

The statement can be downloaded at www.acadsci.fi/statement2021.pdf



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