



**WE CREATE FINNISH WELFARE AND  
COMPETITIVENESS  
– USER-ORIENTED RDI IS OUR STRENGTH**

## RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION AT UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES

The opinion of the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences ARENE ry. (ARENE) is that RDI should be an integrated part of the mission of universities of applied sciences (UAS) in order to achieve excellence in education and regional development. Universities of applied sciences strive towards ethically, socially, financially and environmentally sustainable development through their innovation activities.

It is therefore important to manifest the significance of RDI as an inseparable part of the core activities of universities of applied sciences. It is as crucial to underline the importance of RDI at universities of applied sciences as a part of the national chain of research, development, and innovation.

The link between competence, innovation, and environment, which forms the basis for the Government Communication on Finland's National Innovation Strategy to the Parliament (2008) (Figure 1), is also the basis for RDI at universities of applied sciences. The four basic aspects discussed in the strategy are: innovation in a world without borders; demand and user orientation; innovative individuals and communities; and a systemic approach. These dimensions correlate with the *Mode 2* type of research conducted at universities of applied sciences, a kind of applied research, which is based on the applicability of the research.



Figure 1. Basic aspects and key development areas for the innovation strategy (The Government Report on Innovation Policy, 2008)

### 1. RDI at Universities of Applied Sciences

The mission of universities of applied sciences is to create innovation and expertise for the needs of the labour market. Expertise and development of the labour market requires up-to-date, high-quality, sector specific knowledge. To achieve this, and enrich both education and development and innovation, expert teaching staff must be involved in effective RDI activities. Global networks guarantee that RDI at universities of applied sciences is of high quality and that it has a regional impact. The strength of universities of applied sciences is the intense cooperation with business and industry, which guarantees that results from research are rapidly put to use and implemented in practice.

#### Proposed Common Principles:

- Each university of applied science clearly states in its strategy that **RDI activity is an essential prerequisite for the legitimate operation of a university of applied sciences.**
- Each university of applied sciences decides on its own areas of strategic competencies. The RDI activity pursued in these areas is what defines the **competence profile** of the UAS.
- The universities of applied sciences state in their internal policies that the **credibility of the institution requires high-quality RDI based on the needs of the region where the UAS operates.**

### 2. Universities of Applied Sciences Warrant Competitiveness

Universities of applied sciences are significant actors in the Finnish innovation system. By developing cooperation between business and industry, research, and education, the universities of applied sciences constitute the country's most extensive innovation network – a network encompassing all of Finland. The RDI at universities of applied sciences is by its nature problem-based and interdisciplinary. Research is conducted in close collaboration with the end users. In order to ensure Finland's competitiveness, RDI at universities of applied sciences is therefore required to be used as efficiently as possible. Through their links with business and industry, universities of applied sciences are particularly well placed to contribute towards putting innovations arising from research at higher education institutions into commercial use.

#### Proposed Measures:

- ARENE and the Ministry of Education undertake to develop a **national research and innovation strategy for universities of applied sciences.**
- Based on the strategy, the operational models and indicators used for **assessing and reporting the results** of RDI at universities of applied sciences are updated.

### 3. Universities of Applied Sciences as Research Institutions

The Finnish higher education system – universities of applied sciences and universities – together with the sectoral research institutions form our national network of research institutions. RDI at universities of applied sciences should therefore be seen as long-term strategic activity and not as a patchwork of individual projects.

#### Proposed Common Principles:

- The universities of applied sciences engage in all aspects of the **development of the national network of research institutions.**
- The universities of applied sciences define their own strategic areas of expertise and independently, from their own personnel, nominate **competence teams** that reflect these areas.
- The universities of applied sciences see their competence areas as parts of the national structure of expertise and are prepared to **transfer** competence teams and areas as well as **swap these either with other universities of applied sciences or with universities.**
- The collective employment agreements are developed in order to support a **competence and research based operational model** alongside the prevailing one, which emphasizes teaching.

### 4. Measures within the Government's Science and Innovation Administration

The Government (The Ministry of Education, The Ministry of Employment and the Economy, The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, etc.) strengthens the universities of applied sciences as research environments that serve as a basis for business and industry centred research activities. The sectoral ministries develop models for financing, for cooperation and for research careers that promote exchange of expertise as well as harmonized development between universities of applied sciences and the public, private and non-profit sectors, including Tekes and the EU Structural Funds.

#### Proposed Measures:

- ARENE suggests to The Ministry of Education that the Research Councils of the **Academy of Finland** are strengthened through inclusion of **representatives of universities of applied sciences.**
- ARENE suggests to the Government's science and innovation administration that the sectoral ministries and state institutions utilize **the research networks of the universities of applied sciences as subcontractors and partners.**
- ARENE suggests to The Ministry of Education that **the system of graduate schools** is developed to enable doctoral students to carry out **thesis work as a part of the RDI activities at a university of applied sciences.** Thereby, the **research service and project skills** from the so-called "developers' school" previously suggested by the universities of applied sciences, would be integrated into the competence profile of doctoral students. Universities are responsible for scientific tutoring as well as for reviewing the doctoral thesis.
- ARENE proposes that the **RDI competence of universities of applied sciences**, and how this competence can be utilized within sectoral research, is considered when reorganizing the operations of the **sectoral research institutions.**





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