

Global Evidence Policy Units

FINLAND:

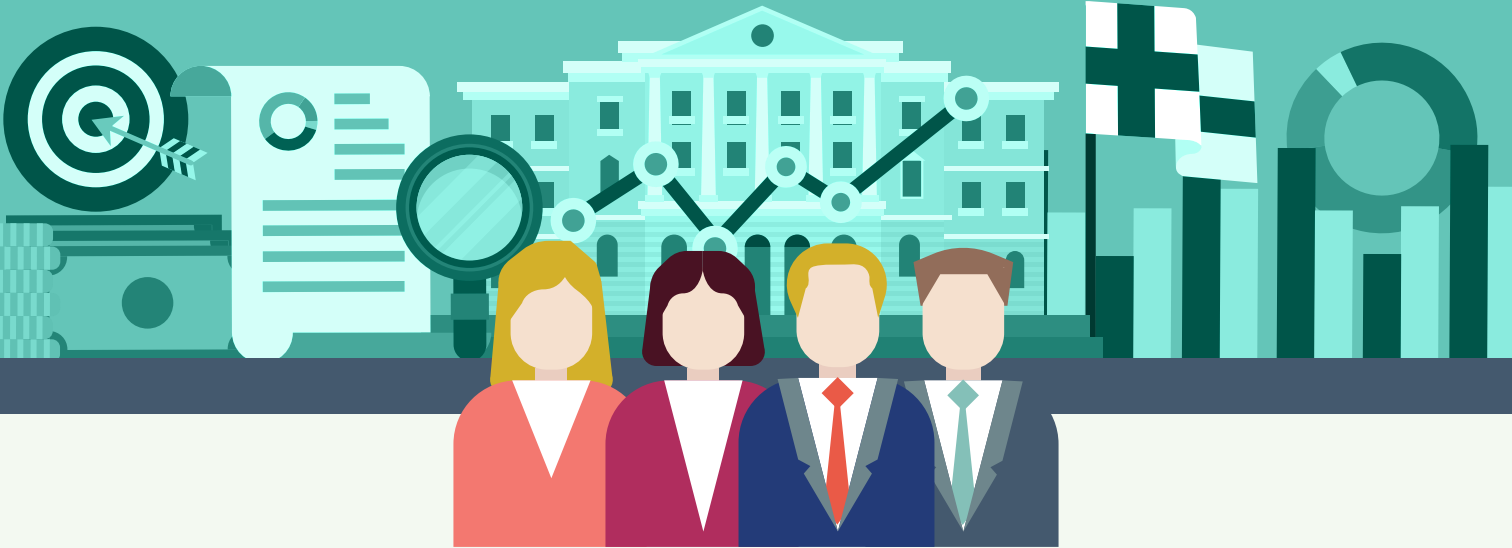
Government Policy Analysis Unit
Politiikka-analyysiyksikkö



"The Government Policy Analysis Unit creates knowledge for short-term strategic research decisions that serve the Finnish Cabinet and ministries."



KEY FACTS

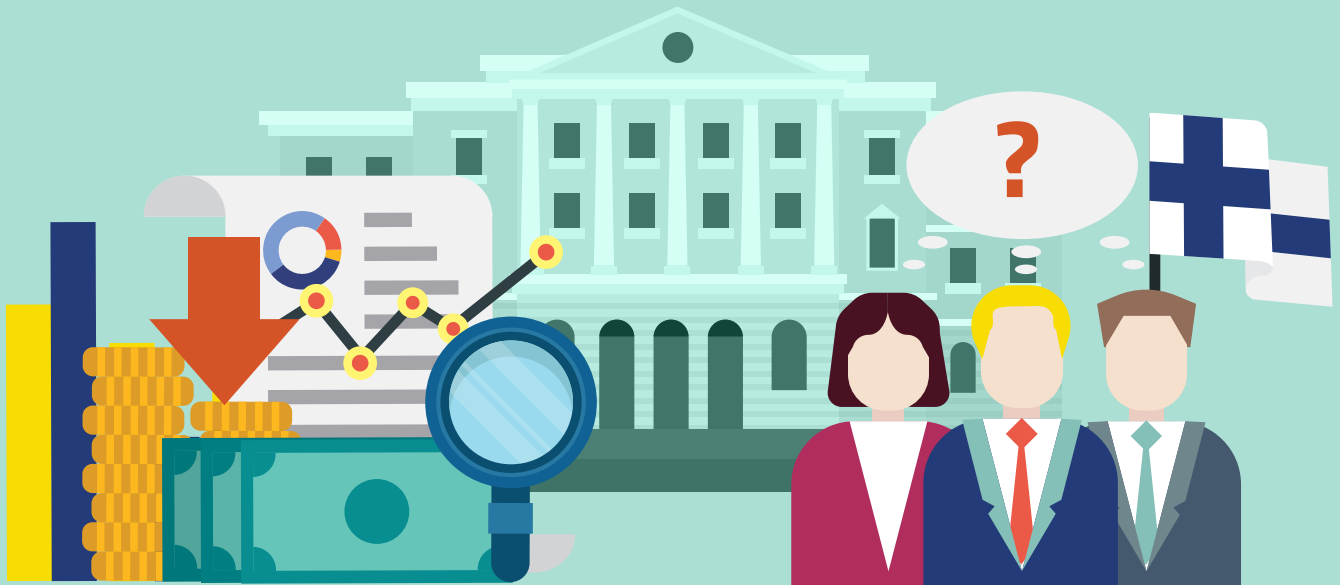


- The Government Policy Analysis Unit (Politiikka-analyysiyksikkö) is a Finnish research funding unit.
- The unit was set up in 2004, but reformed in 2014. It sits in the Office of the Prime Minister.
- The aim of the unit is to commission research projects and present evidence to support the Government's decisions on future strategic and economic policy.
- The research projects look across existing research and undertake situational analysis for strategic decision making. They also evaluate policy decisions and costs incurred.
- The unit also leads Findicator, a public platform showcasing the latest data on key social indicators.

HOW WAS THE UNIT SET UP?

While Finland has had a strong evidence culture for decades, there have been some challenges in ensuring the use of research in decision making. Previously, each of the 12 ministries had its own state research unit and budget. However, the units would often focus on one sector, which created coordination issues, particularly with multi-sectoral research, such as climate change or employment and social security. Evidence use by the ministries was also heavily dependent on their in-house budget and whether they could fund their own research. Research units with smaller budgets were often not represented in central government research or policy decisions.

The Prime Minister's Office report, Development Project for Monitoring the Government Programme (2011), found that ministries were not using evaluation data systematically. The Research and Innovation Council also concluded that insufficient research was being used in decision making.



HOW WAS THE UNIT SET UP?

In 2013, the Prime Minister's Office passed a resolution to reform state research institutes and funding. The goal was to finance long-term problem- and policy-oriented research to find solutions to the challenges facing society. Reforms included:



Strengthening multi-disciplinary, high-level research for greater impact in society



Ensuring open research funding incorporates policy-oriented, multi-disciplinary research



Making research more effective and relevant to policy



Securing and strengthening the strategic direction of research at government level



Allocating research funding in line with government policy priorities



Deepening cooperation between research institutes and higher education institutions



Merging state ministerial research institutes into larger state research organisations

HOW WAS THE UNIT SET UP?

To further strengthen the use of knowledge in policy and practice, the reforms redistributed funding from the state ministry research units to create two new instruments:



The Strategic Research Council

Focuses on long-term, multi-disciplinary research across multiple ministries. It aims to reinforce a systemic approach to achieving the Government's long-term goals on social policy. The Council is led by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Prime Minister's Office. Funding is competitive, with €70 million made available in 2017. State research institutes, think tanks and other research agencies can all bid for research projects.

The Government Policy Analysis Unit

Focuses on short-term strategic research decisions that serve the Cabinet and ministries. The unit seeks to:



Develop and use a broad base of research, data and analyses for decision-making within government



Foster joint research, foresight and assessment activities and report work from within and across ministries



Enhance the quality of governmental research by ensuring clarity, openness, transparency and a systematic approach

EVOLUTION OF THE UNIT

ANNUAL RESEARCH PLAN

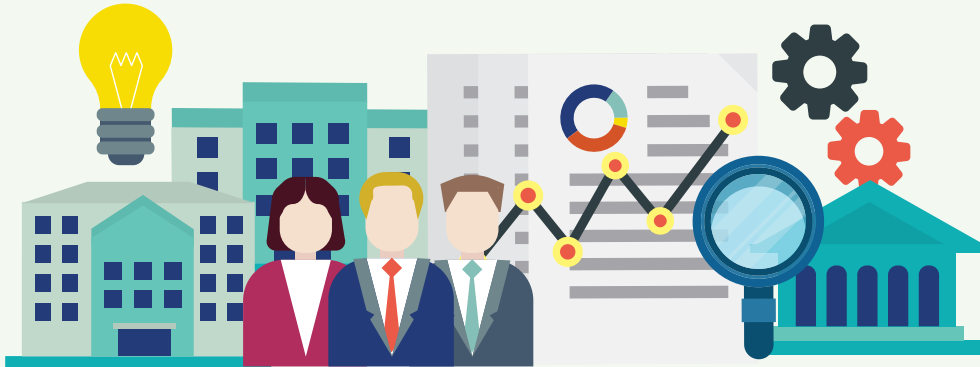


The research commissioned by the Government's Policy Analysis Unit is based on the needs of the Government's strategic national program and annual priorities. The unit is supported by a joint-research commissioning group, under the leadership of the Prime Minister's Office and experts from government administrative branches. Together they create an annual research plan that allocates research funding and is approved by Cabinet in a government plenary session.

The most recent 2016 research plan aligns with the five strategic priorities in the Government's program: 1) employment and competitiveness, 2) knowledge and education, 3) wellbeing and health, 4) bio-economy and clean solutions, 5) digitisation, experimentation and deregulation.

EVOLUTION OF THE UNIT

RESEARCH PROJECTS



The research is commissioned through an open procurement process. This allows a range of applicants, including universities, think tanks and private consultancy firms to bid. Consortia can apply, but the lead applicant must be Swedish or Finnish.

Research projects are conducted over a period of one to three years. The unit oversees each project, assigning responsibility for preparation, implementation, steering and evaluation within government ministries. A lead ministry will oversee the relevant research project, but will involve secondary or tertiary ministries as required. For example, if the research is multi-disciplinary then ministries work together. A steering group is often created to support the implementation of the research and oversee the budget.

EVOLUTION OF THE UNIT

LEADERSHIP



FUNDING



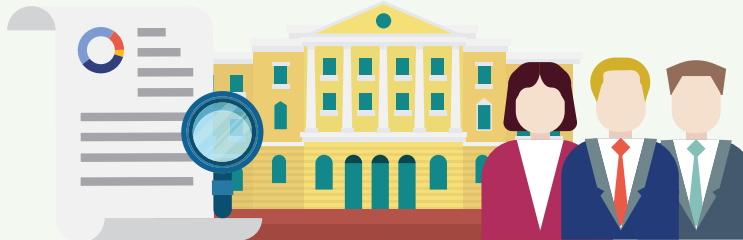
The unit promotes a culture of self-reporting and partnership among the relevant ministries and agencies. Research projects are expected to be transparent and results to be as widely applicable as possible. The unit does not control the development and implementation of ministerial responses however it does have strategic oversight to co-ordinate ministerial collaboration to implement the Government's agenda. The Office of the Prime Minister is also deliberately removed from the work of the unit.

The Government Policy Analysis Unit was established with an initial three-year budget of €11.7 million. In 2016, €10.4 million of the budget was used for approximately 56 research projects. The remaining €1.3 million is allocated for staff salaries and operating costs over the three-year cycle.

Each research question is allocated approximately €150,000 of funding, while €700,000 is reserved for urgent analysis and research needs as determined at a later stage. A further €100,000 is used for information needs related to the Government's strategic plan.

EVOLUTION OF THE UNIT

STAFFING & RECRUITMENT



There are currently five staff members who coordinate research procurement and organise the process with ministries. Recruitment is by open call, but generally prioritises those with a civil service and/or research background.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING & COMMUNICATIONS

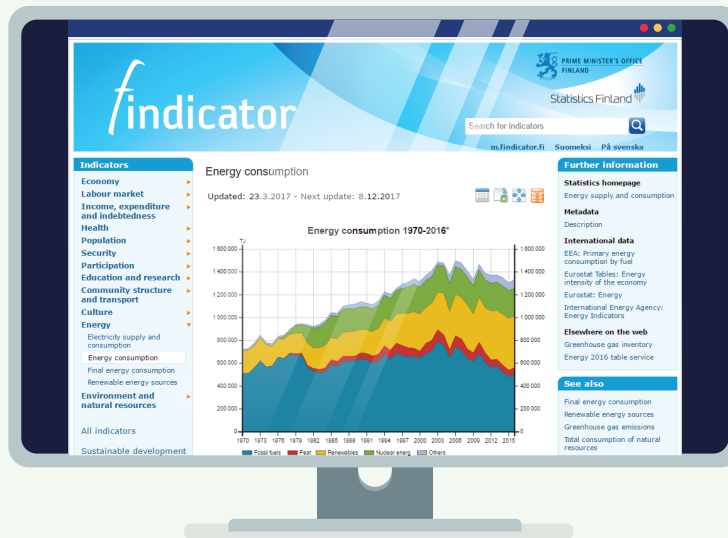


The unit publishes all research on its website and studies are frequently published by the respective ministries. This is chiefly through videos, blogs, policy briefs, newsletters and research reports. A press release is also issued by the relevant ministry.

Research data is published through the Findicator. The platform provides up-to-date information on key social indicators such as population levels, energy consumption and national economic trends.

EVOLUTION OF THE UNIT

Results are made available to both public administration and the public. Government performance is communicated in a way that is accessible to citizens and encourages external pressure for government to improve performance and to innovate.



The unit also trains researchers on how to communicate research results to make them as accessible as possible to politicians and decision makers. This includes how to write policy briefs, as well as creating multimedia outputs such as infographics.

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Interview with Sari Löytökorpi, Project Manager of the Government Policy Analysis Unit, February 2017.

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Knowledge Sector Initiative

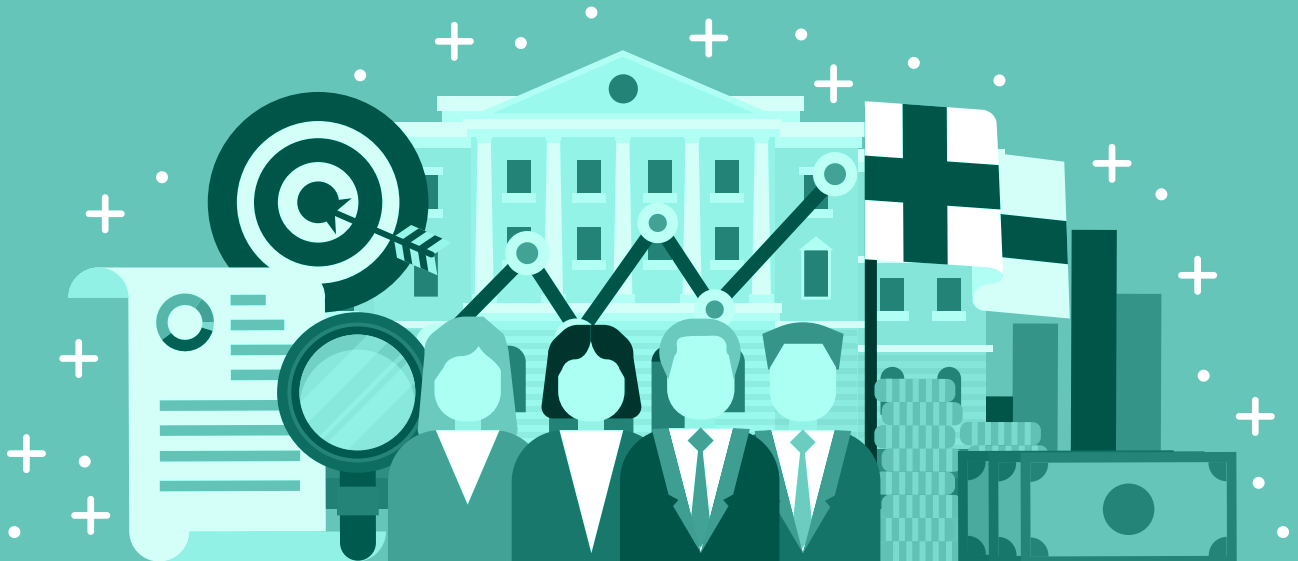
www.ksi-indonesia.org

The Knowledge Sector Initiative (KSI) is a joint program between the Governments of Indonesia and Australia that seeks to improve the lives of the Indonesian people through better quality public policies that make better use of research, analysis and evidence.

KSI is a consortium led by RTI International and in partnership with Australian National University (ANU), Nossal Institute for Global Health, and Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

This series is written by Caroline Cassidy and Josephine Tsui from the Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) programme at ODI.

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