



Eesti Teadusagentuur
Estonian Research Council

Estonian Research Council DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2027



Estonian Research Council is the pillar of Estonian research



APPROVED

by the decision of the supervisory board of the Estonian Research Council
of 27 November 2020

Introduction

The Estonian Research Council (Eesti Teadusagentuur, ETAg) is a state foundation established in the public interest to support the implementation of national research policies, and is working to promote the development and welfare of Estonia.

The Estonian Research Council Development Plan 2027 describes the organisation's objectives and lines of action for the years 2021–2027. This is the second development plan for ETAg, which was established in 2012. In the eight years of operation, the professionalism and thus the capabilities of the council have reached a good level. ETAg has become a reputable organisation capable of development, which in cooperation with its partners, helps develop long-term strategic research policies (e.g., the new concept for

key research funding instruments) and finds solutions in situations requiring urgent action (e.g., organising studies related to the COVID-19 pandemic). In carrying out its main tasks, ETAg has achieved a stable quality of work and good cooperation with its partners. During the period of the new development plan, the achievements made so far must be maintained, but more than ever, attention must be paid on increasing the social and economic impact of science and on demonstrating the value and impact of science.

In the development plan, strategic goals are set and lines of action are planned based on the tasks set out in the articles of association and on the goals and priorities set out in the following development documents:

- National long-term development strategy “**Estonia 2035**”;
- Estonian Research and Development, Innovation and Entrepreneurship (TAIE, *teadus- ja arendustegevus, innovatsioon ning ettevõtetus*) Development Plan 2021–2035;
- Principles of the Ministry of Education and Research for the Internationalization of Higher Education and Research until 2035;
- Estonian Science Communication Strategy 2020–2035 “**Estonia knows**”;
- **Estonian Foreign Policy Strategy 2030**;
- **Priorities of the European Research Area**;
- UN Declaration “**Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**”.

This development plan was prepared in cooperation with the employees, partners and supervisory board of ETAg. The development plan has been approved by the supervisory board of ETAg.

The development plan is implemented in collaboration with partners, including strategic partners (Ministry of Education and Research, research institutions, Estonian Academy of Sciences, Enterprise Estonia (EAS) and sectoral ministries). The division of duties with the EAS is generally based on the principle that ETAg undertakes the activities where the direct beneficiary is a

researcher, research institution or the public sector, and EAS undertakes the activities where the direct beneficiary is a company.

The development plan outlines new activities or activities that require significant development, and this is used as a basis for preparing the annual detailed activity plan of ETAg. When preparing the activity plan, the relevance of the development plan in a changing society is assessed and, if necessary, the development plan is corrected. The implementation of the development plan is assessed by means of feedback from target groups and employees.

Mission

Estonian Research Council is the pillar of Estonian research

To fulfil the mission, we are

- coordinating and organising the funding of scientific research projects;
- developing and conducting assessments on the quality, impact and value of research;
- supporting the development and implementation of research and innovation policies, and consolidating and analysing the information needed for this purpose. We advise policy makers and promote collaboration between politicians, researchers and entrepreneurs;
- supporting international research cooperation. We advise and train researchers, entrepreneurs and other interested parties, and create opportunities for participating in international research cooperation;
- introducing and popularising Estonian research at home as well as abroad. We promote science communication and help promote scientific thinking;
- transforming the Estonian Research Information System (Eesti Teadusinfosüsteem, ETIS) into a modern and comprehensive information and work platform for research institutions, projects and activities as well as researchers;
- promoting and supporting compliance with good research practices and the principles of open science in Estonia;
- implementing other courses of action agreed with ministries.

Values

Reliability

Our financing decisions are independent and our actions impartial. Our decisions are comprehensible, transparent and consistent with good international practices. We keep to our agreements and promises.

Expertise

We rely on thorough knowledge and skills in all areas of activity. We are continually learning and improving ourselves.

Efficiency

We use resources carefully, economically and responsibly. Our work is efficient and of high quality.

Openness and cooperation

We are open to innovation. We value our cooperation with our partners and we work as a unified team.

Vision

**Estonian Research Council is the best support,
partner and competence centre
for research-rich Estonia.**

Strategic goals and lines of action for realising the vision

1. Estonia's research¹ funding system is comprehensive and coherent, and supports the growth of Estonian social welfare

- An important prerequisite for a high level and strong impact of research is a purposeful and functioning research funding system. Funding instruments must support high-level, multidisciplinary research in all three pillars of science – basic and applied research and experimental development –, focus on the different stages of a research career, promote the sectoral and international mobility of researchers and the growth and use of research potential for the benefit of Estonia's development and economic growth. The role of ETAg is to support the integrated development and operation of this system and to ensure that research funding (grants) meet the rapidly changing needs.
- 1.1 Development of the grant system for supporting high-level research and for increasing the societal impact in all fields of research**
 - We strengthen the consideration of the value and impact of research projects, research ethics, aspects of equality and the principles of open science when applying for grants, implementing research projects and evaluating their effectiveness.

1 In this development plan, the term *research* designates all research and development activity, i.e., basic research, applied research and experimental development. The term *researcher* is used on the basis of the Statistics Estonia definition as “scientists and engineers”.

- We create new types of grants aimed at solving the challenges facing society (e.g., targeted grants) and complement career level grants (e.g., for young researchers).
- We improve the quality of the evaluation of grant applications.
- We offer consulting and training services to researchers for preparing grant applications and reports.

1.2 Development of funding instruments for socio-economic purposes

- We support the development of sectoral research programmes and implement them.
- We promote cooperation between research institutions and companies, including the cross-sectoral mobility of researchers and the development of a system of development advisers for professional associations.
- On the basis of the Estonian research infrastructure roadmap, we support the development and provision of core infra-

structure services.

1.3 Improving the assessment of research quality

- We improve the evaluation of research, including the development of the instruments for assessing the socio-economic value and impact of research.
- We increase the analysis and monitoring capacity of ETAg.

1.4 Development of a comprehensive research funding system

- We actively participate in the development of the research funding system, including initiating discussions on research funding with policy makers, partners, target groups and the public.
- We collect, analyse and present information on research funding, including information on relevant international developments and initiatives.
- We cooperate with Science Europe and other international organisations in order to develop the funding system.

2. Estonia is active in international scientific cooperation and has a prominent place in the Baltic and Nordic research area

In order to solve the complex socio-economic issues of Estonia and the world and to remain at the forefront of the rapidly developing research, it is essential to participate in international research cooperation. For this, the priorities of foreign research cooperation based on the objectives of Estonia's research, foreign, defence, environmental and economic policies must be agreed on with Estonian ministries, research institutions, entrepreneurs and Enterprise Estonia. The role of ETAg is, primarily, to encourage

and create opportunities for researchers to collaborate internationally and to support the participation of researchers in research networks, infrastructures and programmes through advice, information and funding.

2.1 Supporting international research cooperation to solve global societal problems

- In cooperation with ministries, we select the partnership programmes and

research infrastructures that we support Estonian researchers to participate in.

- We monitor and analyse the success and impact of participation in partnership programmes and infrastructures.

2.2 Increasing the impact of the European Union Framework Programme for Research and Innovation in Estonia

- In addition to research institutions, we involve more companies, local governments, non-profit associations and professional associations in the activities of the framework programme than before.
- We help shape Estonia's positions in the framework programme, based on the proposals of broad-based expert groups bringing together different target groups.
- With the support of the ETAg's Estonian Liaison Office for EU RTD in Brussels, we provide partners with information on European Union institutions and the

framework programme.

- We support Estonian organisations that want to take a leading role in the framework programme as consortium formers and project coordinators.

2.3 Promoting research cooperation with the Baltic and Nordic countries

- We help design regional calls for proposals and provide financial support to successful research teams participating in them.

2.4 Strengthening cooperation with third countries in accordance with Estonia's strategic priorities

- We implement bilateral mobility programmes.
- We coordinate international research cooperation with third countries based on the strategic framework agreed on with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research.

3. In Estonia, science is visible and valued

Scientific communication helps to shape the good reputation of science in Estonian society, increase the impact of science and achieve wider societal support for researchers and science. In order to promote effective scientific communication, we need the awareness and cooperation of all interested parties – researchers, communication specialists and journalists. The task of ETAg is to create conditions for introducing the value of science and the importance of scientific achievements in Estonian society, and to help the scientific worldview and science to be valued and generally understood in society.

3.1 Introducing the results of Estonian and internationally funded research projects to the Estonian public

- We support the dissemination of science news and develop web platforms used for this purpose (e.g., Novaator and ETIS).
- We introduce research funded by ETAg with methods suitable for different target groups.
- We encourage the publication of scientific information in Estonian.
- We introduce research projects that Estonian researchers have participated in to the public.

3.2 Shaping the scientific worldview and popularising science

- We support the consistent production of science programmes in the media.
- We support the emergence of the next generation of researchers through the popularisation of science and technology.
- We systematically support the spread of scientific thinking by involving non-scientific partners (e.g., with the initiative “How do you know that?”) and promoting citizen science.
- We conduct research on societal attitudes towards science.

3.3 Promoting communication and discussion between politicians, entrepreneurs and researchers, and coordinating and strengthening cooperation between the interested parties of scientific communication

- We initiate and sustain discussions on research policy.

- We coordinate cooperation between research institutions and journalists.
- We mediate collaboration and communication between researchers, policy makers and journalists in order to reach out to different sections of society through scientific communication and thereby achieve greater coherence.

3.4 Introducing Estonian research globally, and increasing the visibility of research and research-intensive entrepreneurship in the international image of Estonia

- In cooperation with Enterprise Estonia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we help shape Estonia’s reputation as an innovative country for research.
- In cooperation with research institutions, we organise the dissemination of Estonian science news through global science news platforms (e.g., EurekaAlert).

4. Estonian policy is based on science and evidence

Science- and evidence-based policy-making requires continuous collection and analysis of data, including international comparisons, and making the data conveniently available to interested parties of the research system and to politicians. The competence developed at ETAg allows to establish working groups shaping research policies and initiate public debates on research as well as to actively participate in them.

4.1 Compilation and analysis of data characterising research and ensuring its quality

- We introduce a system for ensuring the quality of scientific data, including the best possible division of labour between data enterers, analysts and users.
- We ensure that policy makers, parties interested in research policy and the public have quick and easy access to and ease of use of scientific information.

4.2 Updating ETIS according to user needs

- We increase the possibilities of aggregating, analysing and visualising the data on ETIS.

- We update the ETIS user interface and implement the possibilities of artificial intelligence and language technology for this purpose.
- We help ETIS gather as complete information as possible about research conducted in Estonia, and develop ETIS's compatibility with other platforms.
- We introduce and offer the possible applications of ETIS to ministries and other potential beneficiaries.

4.3 Supporting sectoral research activities of ministries

- We advise ministries in making knowledge-based decisions and support them in organising the necessary research.
- We develop a system of scientific advisers.
- We provide research project evaluation services to ministries and other organisations funding research.

4.4 Supporting the implementation of research ethics and open science policy

- We participate in the creation of a system of research ethics.
- We participate in the development and implementation of the country's open science policy.

4.5 Promoting cooperation with international networks and sister organisations

- In cooperating with international networks and sister organisations, we focus on areas of activity where ETAg can have an active contribution and where the benefits to Estonian research are clear.
- We improve the transmission in Estonia of information concerning the activities of international organisations funding research and the networks in which ETAg participates.

5. ETAg is an efficient organisation with a smart and dedicated team

The fulfilment of the goals of ETAg and the efficiency of its operation is ensured by dedicated and competent employees who value their organisation. Efficient and modern work processes help increase the satisfaction of ETAg target groups with our work and also promote employee satisfaction. We are socially responsible, including taking into account the environmental impact and the diversity of target groups in all our activities. ETAg develops its management system on the basis of the strengths and areas for improvement identified through regular internal and external evaluations.

5.1 Continuous improvement of processes and services as well as management quality

- When improving and planning services, we act on the basis of the needs and feedback of target groups.
- To assess and improve management quality, we develop a comprehensive feedback system.
- We apply modern information technology possibilities to improve work processes.
- We transfer all procedural processes of ETAg research projects to ETIS.

5.2 Ensuring the professional competence of ETAg staff

- We value professional competence in the selection of employees and creation of diverse development opportunities.

- We support team and personal development, including the development of management competencies.
- We create a favourable collaborative environment for the exchange of experience and information.

5.3 Developing the working environment and maintaining motivation

- We improve internal communication.
- We maintain and develop a healthy, environmentally friendly and supportive working environment.
- We regularly review the principles of employee benefits and remuneration and, if necessary, improve them as much as possible.

- We strengthen the value-based organisational culture.

5.4 Building reputation and promoting communication

- We form a positive image of our organisation and activities in Estonian society through comprehensive communication.
- We develop a unified visual identity.
- In order to create an international image, we define and apply the principles of sharing information in English.

