

EVALUATION OF THE
RESEARCH PROGRAMME
FOR RUSSIA AND
EASTERN EUROPE
1995-2000
PANEL REPORT

Academy of Finland in brief

The Academy of Finland is an expert organisation on research funding. The Academy seeks to enhance the high standard of Finnish research by long-term research funding, by science and sciencepolicy expertise, and by strengthening the status of science in society at large.

The main focus of the Academy's development activities is placed on improving professional research career opportunities, providing preconditions for high-quality research environments and utilising international opportunities in all fields of research, research funding and science policy.

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Preface

In 1994, the Academy of Finland launched a research programme for Russia and Eastern Europe. The political changes that took place in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s can be seen as a background of the programme. They opened up new opportunities for cooperation with research communities in the former socialist countries. Also knowledge of the neighbouring regions was recognised as being of growing importance from the point of view of providing new opportunities for cooperation. The main aim of the programme was to reinforce research in the humanities and social sciences. The programme comprised 28 research projects carried out in universities and research institutes during 1995–2000.

In autumn 2000, the Research Council for Culture and Society of the Academy of Finland carried out an international scientific evaluation of the Research Programme on Russia and Eastern Europe. The evaluation group consisted of five foreign and one Finnish experts representing different disciplines. This report is a result of the analysis based on written material and personal observations by the panel members during their visit to Finland in November 2000. The panel members met stakeholders as well as the steering committee of the programme and had the opportunity to meet and discuss with projects.

On the behalf of the Academy of Finland I thank the invited experts of the panel for their valuable work: Professor Michael Branch (School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London, Chair), Professor Alexander Etkind (European University, St. Petersburg), Professor Philip Hanson (Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Birmingham), Professor Seppo Hentilä (Department of Political History, University of Helsinki), Professor Susan Senior Nello (Department of Political Economy, University of Siena) and Professor Klaus Segbers (Institute for East European Studies, Free University of Berlin).

A good knowledge of Russian history, culture and society as well as of the economic and political structures is essential for the promotion of fruitful interaction in these fields. The Academy of Finland continues the allocation of funds to research in this area. In 2000 and 2001, for example, the Academy has allocated special funds to Russian and East-European studies in connection with the general round of applications for research funds.

Helsinki, August 9, 2001

Liisa Savunen
Secretary General
Culture and Social Science Research Unit

Executive Summary

For the six years 1995/2000 the Academy of Finland ran a research programme on Russia and Eastern Europe with a total budget Finn marks 33,159,800. Twenty-eight projects received funding under the programme which was focused on politics, culture and society, and economics.

The evaluation was conducted by an international panel of specialists in Russian, Central, East and South-East European Studies over a period of some nine months in 2000. The process involved study of the published outcomes, scrutiny of project proposals and project self-assessments (in so far as the latter were made available to the panel), meetings in Finland between panel members and representatives of most of the projects), and additional information gathered after the meetings.

The evaluation is in five sections: Introduction (pp. 2-4); Aims and Objectives of the Research Programme (pp. 4-6); Themes, Subjects and Projects (pp. 6-10); Evaluation (Timeliness (pp. 11-12); Scope of the research (pp. 12-13); Suitability for purpose of the research programme (pp. 13-16); Outcomes and their dissemination (pp. 16-19); Sustainability and capacity-building (p. 19); Project management (pp. 19-20); Recommendations (pp. 20-21)

Summary of Recommendations

Policy

- 1 Continuation of the present research programme
- 2 Review of priorities for allocation of funding for research in this area (e.g. balance of needs-driven and curiosity-led research, collaborative projects, centres of excellence, lone scholars)

Strategy

- 3 Establishment of critical research mass in specific research areas and disciplines in which Finland already has demonstrable strengths, or foresees a need for such strengths
- 4 Redefinition of the research region in the light of needs
- 5 Adjustment of approach and methodologies in line with international developments (e.g. from area studies to multi- and interdisciplinary studies)
- 6 Development of denser international co-operation (i.e. increased emphasis on international partners, including those from third countries) to be integrated more deeply into projects (e.g. by making greater use of Distance Teaching and Learning technologies) and exchange of researchers

Management

- 7 Adoption of international good practice regarding accountability of researchers to the funding body, underpinned by explicit terms of contract (e.g. by imposition of penalties on researchers and their home institutions for failure to comply with reporting and delivery commitments)
- 8 Placement of datasets in the public domain as appropriate
- 9 Action to increase inter-project synergy
- 10 Introduction of specific training programmes for young researchers

1 Introduction

In March 2000 the Academy of Finland established a panel of six experts to conduct an evaluation of research on Russia and Eastern Europe which had been supported wholly, or in part, by Academy funding over the six years 1995-2000. The membership of the evaluation panel was:

- Professor Michael Branch, Director, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London (Chair)
- Professor Alexander Etkind, European University, St Petersburg
- Professor Philip Hanson, Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Birmingham
- Professor Seppo Hentilä, Department of Political History, University of Helsinki
- Professor Susan Senior Nello, Department of Political Economy, University of Siena
- Professor Klaus Segbers, Institute for East European Studies, Free University of Berlin

Organisational support was provided by Dr Markku Kangaspuro (Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki) in advance of the evaluation meetings and by Dr Sari Hanhinen (Department of Sociology, University of Helsinki) during the evaluation meetings.

All evaluation panel members are active researchers internationally in their own fields and have had substantial experience of international collaboration in the conduct of research, in the management and deployment of research resources, and as advisors on the development of research policy, in some cases at governmental level. The evaluation panel members formulated their report on the basis of:

- the Academy of Finland's publication *The Research Programme for Russia and Eastern Europe 1995-2000* [in Finnish and English] (Helsinki, 90 pp.), which outlines twenty-eight supported projects
- the self-evaluation reports of twenty-four of those projects
- a reading by evaluation panel members of selected published project outcomes in their respective specialist fields
- face-to-face meetings with thirty-five researchers representing twenty-two projects
- additional information acquired by a questionnaire distributed by the evaluation panel after the face-to-face meetings
- briefing by officials of the Academy of Finland
- briefing by a university rector

The evaluation process included a five-day visit to Finland (22-26 November 2000) when the evaluation panel members were briefed by officials of the Academy of Finland, visited one university outside Helsinki (where they met two project teams and were briefed by the rector about the state of Russian Studies in his institution), and held face-to-face meetings over two full days in Helsinki with representatives of projects. After completion of the visit, the evaluation panel chair produced an individual report on each of the projects for which there was a face-to-face meeting. The final project reports were compiled from the project proposals, the researchers' self-evaluation statements, discussion at the face-to-face sessions and additional information acquired through the evaluation panel's own questionnaire. The data thus assembled were correlated under the following heads:

- Aims and Objectives
- Project: interest of core idea, project viability, project networks, non-academy funding
- Outcomes: articles and chapters, monographs and edited volumes, conference presentations, ongoing networks (in each case data were categorised into home and abroad), new research questions
- Impacts: published reviews of outcomes, citations, invitations to participate in new projects, commissioned work, incorporation of results in teaching programmes (in the first four categories data were categorised into home and abroad)
- Response outside academe: government, business, media
- Institutionalisation/Sustainability: training of junior scholars, next destination of those engaged on project work, embedding of research in an institution, follow-up programmes
- Recommendations: to the Academy of Finland, to project teams, to home institutions, to other bodies (as appropriate)
- Summary Qualitative Assessment: outcomes, recommendations (as appropriate)

2 Aims and Objectives of the Research Programme

The Russia and Eastern Europe Research Programme has to be seen in the wider context of a Finnish government policy for the improvement of resources, skills, knowledge and understanding of Russia and Eastern Europe, incorporated in a Finnish government decision of June 1993. This policy included measures aimed at facilitating:

- improvement of the position of the teaching of Russian language and culture in Finnish secondary, further, vocational and higher education
- wider coverage of the humanities, especially in interdisciplinary contexts, in higher education and other research institutions (with specific recommendations for particular institutions)
- provision of education and training abroad through co-operation with appropriate institutions
- enhancement of bilateral research co-operation with institutions in Russia
- enhancement of teaching and research in the framework of EU programmes
- establishment of a Russian Studies information service, and
- various activities under the auspices of the Academy of Finland including a research programme in Russian and East European Studies

In response to these proposals the Central Board of the Research Council of the Academy of Finland established a working party to consult widely and prepare a research programme which was approved by the Central Board in May 1994. The programme was implemented through grants over three funding periods (1995/97, 1995/2000, 1997/2000) and amounting to a total of Finn marks 33,159,800. The aims and objectives of the Academy's *Programme for Russia and Eastern Europe 1995-1998* are set out in Sections 1.4 and 5 of the *Programme for Russia and Eastern Europe*. As context for the present evaluation we draw attention in particular to the following aims and objectives:

from Section 1.4: 'Goals of the research programme'

... to concentrate more on supporting large research entities of a high standard and to channel research towards fields of scientific importance in which there is a research deficit. Research programmes have proved to be a flexible means of furthering research and post-graduate education and, in particular, of generating and furthering research fields of scientific importance with potential for development.

The goal of the research programme into Russia and Eastern Europe is to strengthen research in Finland directed at these areas, primarily in the social sciences and the humanities.

The disintegration of the political, economic and cultural system of the Soviet Union and the emergence of new forms call for comparative study from the point of view of many disciplines. The changes have ideological, political, economic and cultural dimensions that are among both the causes and the consequences of these changes.

The programme report is divided into three sections; 1) politics, 2) culture and society, and 3) economics. The research field and the main research problems will be outlined below. The list is not, however, an exhaustive one, and research projects dealing with other subjects may also be granted funds. The programme aims in particular to support research in fields for which Finland does, in view of its historical and geographical position, have extremely strong prerequisites and an established expert basis. One of the objectives of the programme is to further cooperation between researchers, both internationally and between scholars both from the countries covered by the research and from neighbouring countries. It will thus be possible to incorporate aspects supplementing the Finnish perspective.

The programme will initially be directed at the former Soviet Union, the emphasis being on Russia and Finland's close neighbours (Karelia, the Kola Peninsula, St Petersburg, Estonia). Research into the former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe may also be included in the research.

from Section 5: 'Execution of the programme'

The research programme aims to promote research in Finland into Russia and Eastern Europe and to support the formation of research teams at a high level. This is the most natural forum for post-graduate educational and international relations.

Projects may also be granted funds for visits by researchers, postgraduate courses and joint seminars with scholars in the target area.

The programme is to be carried out in collaboration with researchers in the target areas. Cooperation with other foreign researchers is also recommended.

/.../

A coordination team will be appointed for research projects accepted for the programme, its tasks including the organisation of seminars for research teams accepted for the programme.

3 Themes, Subjects and Projects

The Academy's programme outlines in some detail the areas of research covered under the three heads ('themes') of politics, culture and society, and economics. Each of the three thematic sections concludes with a list of 'subjects for study'. A summary of the research themes and the list of guide 'subjects' within each thematic group is given below. All the projects funded by the Russia and Eastern Europe Research Programme are also listed under the relevant head together with the amount of funding awarded, and the funding period, in order to demonstrate how the projects mapped on to the strategy. It should be noted here that – in keeping with the Academy's overall strategic guidance on interdisciplinarity – some projects combine thematic features and subject combinations that fit under more than one thematic head. Likewise there are some areas of overlap between 'subjects' under more than one thematic head. Thus the thematic location of projects listed below is a convenient approximation.

3.1 Politics

Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union

Changes in the political systems of Russia and Eastern Europe

Nationality policy

Russian foreign policy and changes in the international political balance of power

Subjects

- relationship between the central administration and regions in Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union and modern Russia
- politics of the Stalinist regime: collectivisations, terror
- trends in Soviet policy 1945-1990
- Soviet and Finnish Communist Parties
- political organisation in present-day Russia, ideologies, extremist movements
- federal agreement and federal state legislation
- change in the role of the state and reform of local administration
- change in the role of citizens
- political organisation, political culture and dynamics
- mass media in a changing political environment
- Russia's peripheral area policy
- northern regions of Russia
- border state policy of Russia
- nationality policy
- Finland and Russia/Soviet Union
- Soviet Union and the Nordic countries
- effects of the disintegration of the Soviet Union on the international political balance of power
- trade relations between Finland and the Soviet Union in Soviet foreign policy

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Funded projects:

National statehood in North-West Russia in the post-revolutionary period up to 1940. A comparison of the lines of development between Karelia, Komi and Finland (Fm 1,625,200; 1995/97)

People and power: continuity and change in Russia in the 20th century (Fm 799,800; 1997/99)

The national idea: Russian nationalism and ultranationalism in the 1990s (Fm 1,415,200)

In the shadow and the light: official and unofficial communication. Contacts between Finland and Estonia from the 19th century until 1991 (Fm 458,100; 1995/97)

Russian foreign policy from the perspective of international relations theories (Fm 1,112,600; 1995/97)

Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Finland (Fm 2,835,800; 1994/99)

Breaking or remaking the Europe in between? Europe between Germany and Russia on the threshold of the 21st century from geocultural, political and social viewpoints (Fm 800,700; 1996/99)

3.2 Culture and Society

Civil society and ideas

Culture

Churches and religions

The Finno-Ugrian peoples

The environment

Subjects

- changes in social structures, survival strategies in everyday life
- forms of collective activity, mass movements
- division of labour between the sexes and its various manifestations
- development of social policy
- changes in rural and regional development
- crime in Russia
- Russian ideas and philosophical trends
- Russian culture and identity; Russian-European-Asian/socialist, the new rise of Eurasianism
- Russian language
- Russian literature, the relationship between new literature and Russian modernism, underground, samizdat and émigré literature
- visual arts
- religions, their status, influence and significance, beliefs
- Orthodox church and Orthodox thinking
- Finno-Ugrian peoples, languages, cultures and identities
- other indigenous peoples of the former Soviet Union, their languages and cultures
- Russian-Finnish cultural relations
- impact of the environment on living conditions
- legal questions of environmental protection
- man-made environment and the cultural environment

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Funded projects:

Finno-Ugric substratum nomenclature of Central Russia (Fm 872,400; 1995/97)

Syntactic structures in the contacts between Russian and Finno-Ugrian languages (Fm 800,900; 1997/2000)

Cultural inertia and social change in Russia (Fm 1,528,100; 1995/97)

Social changes in Eastern and Central Europe: migration pressure and social integration (Fm 1,954,400; 1995/97)

East Karelian family system (Fm 681,900; 1998/2000)

Border crossings in language contacts (Fm 750,800; 1995/97)

Youth and social change in Karelia (Fm 1,254,800; 1995/97)

Language and education in intercultural context (Fm 690,600; 1997/99)

Religion and Church during the transition periods of national identity in the Baltic countries and Eastern Europe (Fm 2,360,000; 1995/99)

Religion and values in Russia (Fm 1,657,200; 1995/99)

Norms, values and deviation in Soviet society and culture in the 1920s-1950s (Fm 899,800; 1997/99)

Modernism and postmodernism in Russian literature and culture (Fm 2,539,900; 1995/2002)

Models of self: Russian women's autobiographical texts 1800-2000 (Fm 656,800; 1998/2000)

New risks and emerging needs in transitional Russia: class, gender and welfare provision in St Petersburg (Fm 722, 800; 1998/2000)

Rural survival strategies in transitional countries (Fm 600,800; 1997/99)

3.3 Economics

Processes of change in the economy

The economic significance of the neighbouring areas and their potential for Finland

Subjects

- process of change in the national economies of the CIS countries; banking system, privatisation, structure and system of production, enterprise, taxation, legislative changes
- changes in trade relations and the adaptation of enterprise to changes (e.g. joint ventures, foreign trade and marketing)
- means of survival of ordinary citizens, and income distribution
- Finland's economic relations with Russia and nearby areas; opportunities for and forms of foreign trade
- choice of enterprise location and its effect on the economics of Finland and Russia
- functional links with areas important to Finland (e.g. St Petersburg, Karelia, Archangel, Estonia), the significance of the borders to economic relations
- environmental aspects in the development of economic life in the nearby areas and cooperation with Finland
- migration to Finland, its impacts on the labour markets

Funded projects:

Finland and its nearby regions: economic potential and the adjustment pressure (Fm 410,000; 1995/97)

Development of foreign economic relations in Russia and the Baltic countries (Fm 910,900; 1995/97)

Legal foundations of Russian economy (Fm 871,700; 1995/97)

Institutional change in the Russian economy (Fm 2,186,400; 1995/2000)

Opening-up of Russia and Central-East European economies (Fm 900,000; 1997/99)

R&D and production systems in transition: a study of Russia and the St Petersburg region (Fm 812,200; 1998/2000) [a second project, belonging to the 'Culture and society' category, was embedded in this project]

4 Evaluation

4.1 Timeliness

First, the members of the review panel wish to express their appreciation of the Academy's foresight and initiative in establishing the Russia and East Europe Research Programme. It was established at a time when funding bodies in many parts of the west believed that the collapse of the Soviet Union had reduced the need for funding of the volume that had been deployed for teaching and research during the Cold War and subsequent decades. The Research Programme recognises the fact that in the aftermath of 1991, study of the former Soviet Union moved into a new era and had to adapt rapidly to new circumstances. In place of the centralised Soviet Union, it became necessary to deal separately and individually with the three Baltic Republics and the Commonwealth of twelve Independent States. The former Czechoslovakia divided into two states; the component parts of the former Yugoslavia are still settling into a new configuration. Each of the new states is now conducting its affairs in its own language. The leaders of the new states are engaged in re-arranging economic, political, security, social and cultural affairs in their own regional and global interests and choose their partners accordingly. In its conception the research programme represented a significant response to this challenge.

In most parts of the west the study of the new states has not kept abreast of these developments. The assumption that the collapse of communism removed the problem has led funders to ignore the basic reality that the disappearance of one problem has opened the way to a flood of new and pressing research issues. Many of these problems are welcome (e.g. the diversification and increased complexity characteristic of open societies), others less so (e.g. persecution of social and ethnic minorities). In the United Kingdom, for example, the number of specialists on Russia and Eastern Europe is today slightly lower than it was ten years ago despite the greater needs of many sectors for knowledge, information and expertise. The situation is worse in many other countries. The message is stark. As needs increase, international collective expertise declines and the information deficit vis-à-vis Russia, Central and Eastern Europe grows.¹ It is against this background that we welcome the Academy's initiative and the related measures.

The outcome is already a substantive body of new information and knowledge, some of which is available to foreign scholars through the medium of Russian and English. In some areas, this research has also contributed insights into theory and methodology. In respect of human capital, new networks have been developed and existing ones strengthened.

4.2 Scope of the research

The scope of the research plan is in part transparent, reflecting the needs and criteria prevalent in the first half of the 1990s in Finland. There is an understandable emphasis on the Russia that is close at hand – St Petersburg, Karelia, the Kola Peninsula – and in Estonia. The study of these regions represents a long-standing continuity across many disciplines of

¹ See *European Union Enlargement, Third Report* (Foreign Affairs Committee, House of Commons, London, 1999, pp. 26-29)

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the Finnish research tradition. Another aspect of continuity in the programme is the study of peoples who speak Finno-Ugric languages located in Russia, Estonia and Hungary, although it is significant that the researchers who worked on this aspect did so within a clear disciplinary framework (linguistics and onomastics respectively) rather than as part of traditional Finno-Ugric studies. Less transparent is the reference, *en passant*, to 'the former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe' which 'may also be included in the research'. The discipline parameters are again laudably transparent in their reference to the social sciences and humanities the encouragement to develop multi- and interdisciplinary approaches is essential. In terms of participation, researchers were mandated to collaborate with scholars in the countries of study, and encouraged to cooperate with foreign scholars elsewhere who work on the discipline and region in question.

Aspects of the guidelines require comment. The structure of the research programme reflects a set of needs articulated by a well-informed group of specialists. As shown above, needs are embodied in a set of themes articulated by a list of subjects. What remained unclear to the evaluation panel were all the criteria by which projects were selected within that framework. Some projects are obviously needs-driven, comprising 'large research entities' and working towards a clear goal, while others seem much more to be curiosity-led by an individual scholar working either alone or as part of a small team. While we welcome a variety of approaches, we found it difficult to correlate certain projects with the 'needs' imperative. We believe that this ambiguity arises partly from a lack of clear guidance in certain aspects of the programme (e.g. research on Central and Eastern Europe). Partly, too, it arises from the fact that 'area studies', which much of the research funded by the Academy represents, has itself been undergoing changes in ethos and methodology over the period covered by the research programme with greater emphasis now being placed on collaborative and carefully co-ordinated approaches by teams, whose members represent individual discipline strengths.

A third factor that impacted on the efficacy of the programme is a concept of 'Finno-Ugric Studies' which is fast becoming outmoded. While we understand the historical (and possibly political) wish to include 'Finno-Ugric Studies' in such a programme, we believe that an approach rooted in a now outdated nineteenth-century ethnic concept is out of place today (except in the study of the history of political perceptions) and has the potential to skew academic direction through its inherent selective and therefore exclusive nature. Paradoxically, in the years following the formulation of the research programme, there has been much debate about the nature and validity of this area of study. Like 'Indo-European Studies' in its day, Finno-Ugric Studies have now started to come more into line with practice elsewhere in the world by looking at such phenomena through a relevant discipline (e.g. linguistics, cultural studies) or in the context of endangered cultures and minorities. It should be noted that this was the approach adopted by the two projects whose work clearly fell into the more modern category.

4.3 Suitability for purpose of the research programme

Details of the funded projects have already been given above as part of the exposition of the research programme. The table below gives an overview of the regions covered by the funded projects and the disciplines applied to the research. The extent of comparativity and interdisciplinarity in the research carried out is indicated by

The table shows that the Academy's requirement for the main concentration of research to be directed at the former Soviet Union with the emphasis on 'Russia and Finland's closest neighbours (Karelia, the Kola Peninsula, St Petersburg, Estonia)' has for the most part been met. Twenty-four projects focus on North-Western Russia, especially Karelia and St Petersburg, combining various multidisciplinary approaches drawn from a total of some fifteen disciplines. In most cases the projects have been richly interdisciplinary and many of them have been comparative. In the case of the Kola Peninsula, with hindsight, the broader concentration on North-Western Russia reflects an academic judgement, with which we agree, that this was a more satisfactory approach in the light of changing circumstances in the region.

Relatively little research, however, has focused specifically on Estonia. Estonia formed part of two multi-regional projects (church history, social change) and was the subject of a comparative Finnish-Estonian project on which we cannot comment for lack of material. Consideration was also given to Estonia in the wider Baltic region in respect of political historical, economic and political matters. Coverage of this kind, however, does not amount to a coherent research strategy. In the case of Estonia, it can be argued persuasively that the research deficit is relatively smaller in view of the special relationship between the two countries and the high degree of transparency between the cultures and social systems of Estonia and Finland. This is an example of what the evaluation panel experienced as the tension between needs-driven and curiosity-led research.

The part of the research programme dedicated to 'Eastern Europe' (also called 'Central and Eastern Europe') is small and in most cases functions as a component, or comparator, in large multi-regional and multi-disciplinary projects. The 'East European' regions in question are Latvia, Romania (church history), Hungary (geography), the Czech Republic and Slovakia (economics, geography), and the Balkans (history, politics). The choice of these countries as subjects of research suggests a curiosity-led (or even serendipitous) approach. This comment is reinforced by a glance at the regions which are not included in the 'East European' part of the research programme. The absence of any research on Lithuania and, in particular, on Poland raises serious questions about the research priorities in respect of 'Eastern Europe', especially from the 'needs-driven' point of view.

An analysis of the work stimulated by the research programme indicates that in terms of outcomes it is essentially a programme on North-Western Russia. The reference to 'Eastern Europe' in the programme title is therefore misleading and the Academy should reconsider this factor in any continuation of the programme. The Academy has to ask whether (a) it should henceforth concentrate on developing Finnish research strengths, which are the study of the neighbouring regions, or (b) continue with an 'East European' programme. In the latter case, we recommend the Academy to establish very clearly what the research needs would be (along the lines of its Russia programme) taking into account relevant political, economic and social developments that have occurred during the span of the present programme and which continue (e.g. NATO and EU Enlargement). We strongly recommend that, in this context, special attention be paid to Poland in view of its rapidly increasing role in the Baltic region. In the latter respect, Finnish research on Estonia could be of particular value internationally, bearing in mind the close links between the two countries.

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In view of the international importance of research programmes on Russia and Eastern Europe, in view of the relatively limited human resource around the world and in view of the importance of international co-operation both in planning and conducting such research, the Academy of Finland may wish to consider inviting comment from one of the major international academic organisations on Russia and Eastern Europe at the planning stage of any future programmes in this field of study.

4.4 Outcomes and their dissemination

In assessing the strengths of the research programme the evaluation team was prevented from forming a full assessment by the refusal of four research teams to meet the evaluation panel and by the refusal of two of those teams to submit self-evaluation reports despite repeated requests for these from the chair of the evaluation panel. We wish to record that we found this refusal to co-operate with the evaluation panel unacceptable. In effect, this means that we cannot have an opinion of the quality of the research funded by 14.2% of the research budget. This is a matter of regret which we recommend the Academy to address in the management of any future programme of this kind.

The correlation above of thematic heads, subjects and projects shows the relationship of outcomes to aims and objectives and confirms that the researchers were able to cover a wide number of the guide 'subjects', often covering aspects of several subjects within a single project. In this respect, the research programme has met its aims and objectives. As we point out elsewhere, we have placed on record qualitative assessments of all the projects for which we had the necessary material. These views were formed on the one hand by evaluation panel members reading work within their respective areas of competence and discussing matters arising from these works face-to-face with project representatives, and on the other hand by correlation of other quality and esteem indicators (e.g. publications, conference presentations, networks, public response).

All the research we saw represented a contribution to knowledge and understanding. Under the 'Culture and Society' and 'Economics' heads we identified several pieces of research (in economics, sociology, politics, language and literature) that met standards of international excellence. These works not only filled information gaps, but they also offered new insights at the disciplinary and generic levels which scholars outside Finland in related disciplines could apply in research on other regions. Some of this work is already appearing in international refereed journals and book series, and is being cited. Its authors belong to prestigious international networks, and are invited to travel and lecture abroad. We welcome this development and also urge more Finnish scholars to test their research by offering it to internationally-prestigious journals with all that this implies for the achievement of international standards of research.

A substantial body of material reached levels of national excellence. The published outcomes of work in this category fill important information gaps. However, their treatment of conceptual and theoretical issues was less strong, or lacking, and they were therefore less likely to attract attention outside the target countries (Finland, Russia).

Characteristic of such publications was an emphasis on narrative, rather than analysis; some work in this category showed only slight evidence of awareness of the theoretical discourse and methodological approaches current in the international arena. Frequently, such research also appeared in in-house or local publications rather than in the international publications series and journals which provide the main disciplinary forum for the research in question. To some extent such an approach may perhaps have been fostered by the criterion in the research programme that research teams *must* collaborate with colleagues in the research target country (i.e. Russia) but are *encouraged* to look for partners further afield. We understand the reasons for this advice at the time the programme was drafted. We recommend, however, that in any future programme, increased priority be given to international collaboration with researchers on the region in question but outside it, and to the importance of publishing some of the research, at least, in international series and journals where the critical response is likely to be more diverse.

A very small number of the projects were judged to be weak. Characteristic of these projects was unrealistic targets coupled with regional overstretch. The research ideas were not adequately underpinned by an adequate command of the relevant international literature in respect of either region or theory.

While the main source of dissemination was the printed word, we found some evidence of other outlets. Participants on a small number of projects have been able to incorporate research outcomes in undergraduate and masters level courses; others have given guest lectures to various audiences. On the basis of the evidence we have seen, impacts through this route have been small.

Consultations and advising for local and regional government, business and commerce, and the media have made use of research outcomes particularly in the fields of economics and politics. Certain projects in the arts have also found an outlet through the media.

We also wish to draw attention to the network-building which resulted from the research. Membership of a network can be a useful indicator of quality, effectiveness and information dissemination. Unfortunately, it was clear from the information on networks published in the *The Research Programme for Russia and Eastern Europe* that a certain amount of inflation had taken place. Careful scrutiny of the published lists of collaborators with the evaluation materials gave a more accurate picture and reflected the pattern of other indicators: the best projects usually had tightly structured networks which included established researchers from outside the region who were able to introduce a wider variety of constructive critical views, especially in respect of the comparative dimension.

During the course of our evaluation we noted that a number of datasets had been generated as part of research projects. Provided there is no legal obstacle we recommend that such datasets be placed in the public domain as soon as may be reasonable after the completion of a project (cf. the convention of the United Kingdom Economic and Social Research Council model).

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4.5 Sustainability and capacity-building

There is an inherent element of sustainability in that projects are in most cases based in higher-education institutions and allow academic staff to extend and develop the research component of their work. It is clear that without the project grants, however, their research would not have advanced so far in terms of breaking new ground and generating new knowledge. However, projects allow employment of supernumerary staff and facilitate greater diversity in the training of young researchers by linking their licentiate and doctoral research to a project. In assessing sustainability, therefore, an essential question is what happens to these categories of staff on completion of a project. The evidence which we were able to gather indicates that at least 47 researchers have obtained, or are about to obtain the PhD as a result of project-linked research (22 of these linked to one arts project), and 13 researchers the licentiate (8 of these linked to one arts project). The information given to us about subsequent employment of supernumerary and newly qualified staff is scant and probably not reliable: 6 to the private sector, 8 to the higher education sector, 1 unemployed.

The conclusion we draw from this data is the dependency of the higher-education sector on the Academy in order to sustain advanced research on Russia. Without Academy funding, the volume and quality of the research on Russia would fall back to the level of what could be done by existing university staff with less time to devote to research once they return to their normal duties and without the support of supernumerary staff. The investment has given Finland a relatively large number of trained people in an area of research in an area of fast-growing importance for both the public and private sectors. An inevitable consequence of a decline in research in would be the dissipation of much of the human capital which the research programme has produced.

4.6 Project management

In making the following comments, we note that the research programme refers to the importance of co-ordination of effort and that moves to strengthening co-ordination were introduced during the last two years of the programme. Several project representatives commented on this development which they had found helpful. We welcome this for several reasons, not least because it will foster greater cross-regional, cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary links between researchers. We would also expect this development to correct one weakness that we perceived to exist in the research programme: namely, a lack of synergy between individual projects. Our overall impression was that there was no systematic dialogue between representatives of different projects (e.g. compare programmes in some countries where the central organiser publishes a regular newsletter). We hope too that the internationalisation of such research, which is essential to the maintenance and enhancement of quality, would receive further impetus by having a regular Academy-organised forum for specific training programmes and the exchange of experience and ongoing discussion about research issues. We mention below three needs that came to our attention in the process of evaluation and which we believe would strengthen the research ethos both in terms of enhanced skills and experience, and greater awareness of research issues and methodologies, and in this way lead to greater inter-project synergy:

- Recognition of the importance of developing professional text-critical, style and language editing skills (especially in a foreign language) as part of the researcher's training. This is particularly important if project participants are to bring their work into the international domain. We regret that international appreciation of some of the work we saw was obstructed by inadequate language usage and overall presentation. The Academy may wish to stimulate such a development by establishing for a limited period a small fund ear-marked for hiring professional translators for projects which do not have personnel with adequate language skills.
- The need to review the research training skills required of young researchers engaged in Academy-funded projects with a view to providing, where necessary, training that meets the requirements of best international practice.
- A forum under Academy auspices for regular dialogue between researchers and end-users of their research (e.g. higher education, central and regional government, business and commerce, media).

5 Recommendations

We strongly recommend that the Academy's research programme continue. The first programme has proved to be a wise investment in knowledge and human capital at a time when many believed that the need for knowledge of Russia was in decline. Six years later, it is becoming evident in many quarters that the need for knowledge and understanding of Russia, in the context of political, economic and social change in Europe and Asia, is becoming greater than ever. Thus the Academy's research programme has laid the foundations for further development and has given it the possibility of being a major player in this area. The previous programme has also produced the human capital necessary to take on new research. In planning a further round of funding, therefore, we recommend the Academy to consider:

Policy

- 1 continuation of the present research programme
- 2 review of priorities for allocation of funding for research in this area (e.g. balance of needs-driven and curiosity-led research, collaborative projects, centres of excellence, lone scholars)

Strategy

- 3 establishment of critical research mass in specific research areas and disciplines in which Finland already has demonstrable strengths, or foresees a need for such strengths
- 4 redefinition of the research region in the light of needs
- 5 adjustment of approach and methodologies in line with international developments (e.g. from area studies to multi- and interdisciplinary studies)
- 6 development of denser international co-operation (i.e. increased emphasis on international partners, including those from third countries) to be integrated more deeply into projects (e.g. by making greater use of Distance Teaching and Learning technologies) and exchange of researchers

Management

- 7 adoption of international good practice regarding accountability of researchers to the funding body, underpinned by explicit terms of contract (e.g. by imposition of penalties on researchers and their home institutions for failure to comply with reporting and delivery commitments)
- 8 placement of datasets in the public domain as appropriate
- 9 action to increase inter-project synergy
- 10 introduction of specific training programmes for young researchers

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University College London, 3 May 2001