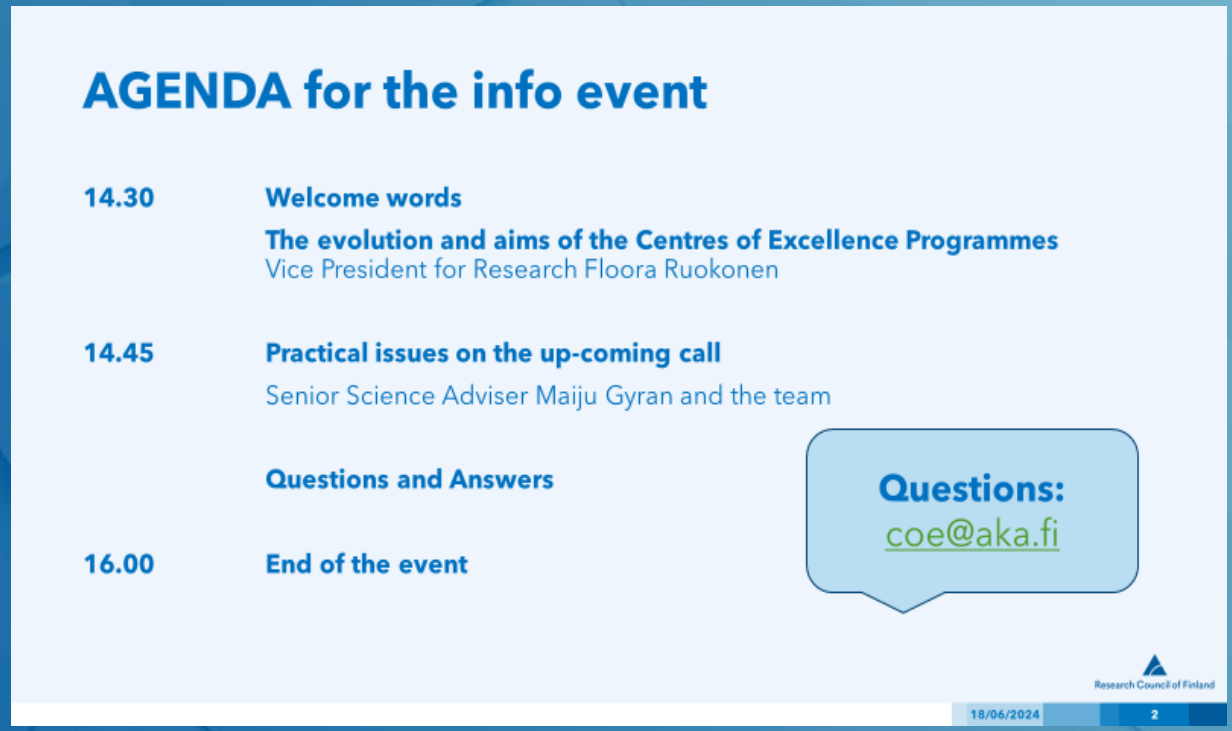
Welcome !

CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE
IN RESEARCH

CoE 2026-2033 Programme

18th June 2024



Research Council of Finland

CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE
IN RESEARCH

The evolution and aims of the Centres of Excellence Programmes

Vice President for Research Floora Ruokonen

Research Council of Finland

Quality, impact, renewal

In line with our strategy, we promote **high-quality**, **responsible** and **high-impact** research and strengthen scientific renewal and the utilisation of research and the expertise arising from it.

Our funding is granted based on the quality and impact of research and on scientific renewal.

We constantly develop our funding opportunities and review and decision-making processes to identify the best research projects.

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Vision 2030

Bold research for Finland and the world

In the workplace we are inspired, and we grow and develop collectively

Better and higher-impact skills and competence

Capacity of research for renewal and reform

Mission
To open up new avenues for excellent, responsible and high-impact research

Values
- Openness
- Transparency
- Reliability
- Equality
- Nondiscrimination

Our organisation is modern and up-to-date

New scientific breakthroughs and solutions for the benefit of whole society

We will continue to develop our practices and procedures

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Research Council of Finland funding in 2023 by funding opportunity

Research Council of Finland offers a variety of funding opportunities. There are schemes for both individual researchers, research teams and research organisations. Our funding is aimed at supporting high-quality and responsible research and the development of research environments, such as research infrastructures.

2023 in total
€511 million

€215 million

Funding of research teams

€152 million

Funding for research environments and clusters

€108 million

Funding of researchers

€37 million

Other funding

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Research Council's funding for research environments and clusters

Centre of Excellence programme (currently 23 CoEs, first call 2000)

- Focus on fostering science and increase excellence

Research infrastructures (First call 2014)

- Support for the acquisition, establishment or strengthening of nationally and internationally significant research infrastructures that promote scientific research

Competitive funding to strengthen university research profiles (8th call, first call 2015)

- Support and speed up the strategic profiling of Finnish universities in order to improve the quality of research

The Finnish Flagship programme (currently 14 Flagships, first call 2017)

- Large competence clusters within ecosystems
- Both scientific excellence as well as economic and/or societal impact

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Centres of Excellence and Competence Clusters

- Basic idea of a Centre of Excellence has been in different countries to focus on fostering science and increase excellence.

- Competence clusters, such as the Flagships in Finland, are more complex systems and usually aim to achieve broader goals including both scientific excellence as well as economic and/or societal impact.

- Networking and collaboration are essential for the success.

The CoE Programmes have evolved over time

- In early 2000 the intention was to nominate many CoEs to give boost to different areas of science.
- Nowadays the intention is to nominate less and give better funding for the nominated ones.

- The target has changed from
  - at close or at the top of the research field-> at the top -> at the close or at the top

- CoEs are **always been co-funded** by the Academy and the research organizations - the research organisations play an important role

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Programme for Centres of Excellence in Research

- Based on competition, covers all disciplines, bottom-up
- Funding cooperation with host institutions
- The national CoE strategy 1997, amendment 2009, amendment 2015

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Success rates in CoE Programmes

Programme	Plans of Intent	Full proposals	Nominated as CoEs
2000–2005	166	51 (31%)	26 (16%)
2002–2007	105	30 (29%)	16 (15%)
2006–2011	143	53 (37%)	23 (16%)
2008–2013	113	44 (39%)	18 (16%)
2012–2017	135	36 (27%)	15 (11%)
2014–2019	128	34 (25%)	14 (11%)
2018–2025	179	34 (19%)	12 (7%)
2022–2029	184	34 (18%)	11 (6%)

The Centres of Excellence

- Centres of Excellence (CoE) are at close or at the very cutting edge of science in their fields.

- CoEs carve out new avenues for research, develop creative research environments and train new talented researchers for the Finnish research system and for Finnish business and industry.

- CoE consists of one or more research teams
- CoEs have common research objectives and management

- **Key words: raise the quality of research, renewal of science, broader impact and added value**

Centres of Excellence programmes still important

- Collaboration is increasingly important in the research process.
- Multiple researchers or units are often needed to run a project and its various sub-components
- The complexity and interdisciplinary nature of new scientific questions strengthens this need for collaboration
- The increase of scientific and technological competition worldwide
- Grand and global challenges need to find solutions supported by the science and research
- Research Council of Finland's survey and discussions with researchers and research organisations on the development of the CoE- and Academy Professor funding forms.
  - We learned that although both target to the highest quality research, the function for researchers is different. Thus, this year both a CoE- and AP –calls, separately.

Thank you!

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THE CALL INFO FOR CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAMME 2026-2033

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CoE team in Research Council

- Research environment
  - Maiju Gyran and Ritva Helle
- Social sciences and humanities
  - Satu Huuha-Cissokho and Rose-Marie Peake
- Natural sciences and engineering
  - Samuli Hemming and Kati Sulonen
- Biosciences, health and the environment
  - Suvi Broholm and Anni Kleino

- firstname.lastname@aka.fi or coe@aka.fi

CoE Programme for the years 2026-2033, Evaluation and selection process

Call for proposals Opens
4 June 2024

DL 25 September

Plans of Intent, international remote peer review evaluation
Oct 2024-Jan 2025

Internal preparatory group
March 2025

Academy Board Sub-Committee
- Selection of the CoE to be invited to the 2nd evaluation stage

April 2025

Full applications
DL 11 June 2025,
Int. peer review evaluation panels with interviews
September 2025

Internal preparatory group
Sept-October 2025

Academy Board Sub-Committee
- Selection of the CoEs

October 2025
Funding Negotiations
December 2025

Funding period starts 1.1.2026

Call text

Finnish Centres of Excellence in Research 2026–2033 (two-stage call)

Call opens: 4 Sep 2024 **Call closes:** 25 Sep 2024 at 16.15 Finnish time

Funding: up to €65m for 1st five-year period

Funding period: 1 Jan 2026–31 Dec 2030 (period 1), 1 Jan 2031–31 Dec 2033 (period 2)

State: Upcoming

- Background and objectives
- Who can apply?
- Letter of intent (first call stage)
- Full application (second call stage)
- Funding to be applied for and funding period
- How applications are submitted and become pending, publicity of applications
- How the application is reviewed
- Funding Decisions
- Contacts

https://www.aka.fi/coe26-33call

About application

- The plan of intent and full application are filled in and submitted in the online service (SARA)
  - Tabs and appendices
- Consortium application already in plan of intent stage
- If selected for the 2nd stage evaluation, all information filled in the 1st stage will be copied to the 2nd stage application

- **TEST CALL in the online service** will be open 14th August -3rd September 2024

Online application

- **Personal details**
- **General information:** Topic, keywords and scientific disciplines of the CoE candidate, and details on the site of research
- **Consortium parties:** In the consortium application, the consortium PI names the team leaders.
- **Abstract**
- **Public project description**
- **Funding and commitment by site of research**.
- **2nd stage Research costs.** On this tab, fill in the funding of all parties with the funding sources for the first five-year CoE period from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2030.
- **Salary costs of principal investigator**
- **Collaborators:** list of collaborators
- **Affiliation** to research infrastructures, Centres of Excellence and Finnish Flagships
- **2nd stage Short data management plan**
- **Research ethics**
- **2nd stage Progress report** on all Research Council of Finland-funded projects that have not yet submitted final reports
- **Most relevant publications and other outputs:** the ten most project-relevant publications or other research outputs. Detailed instructions available on the application form.

Online application appendices

- **1st stage:**
- You must use **templates** for the following appendices: Template for plan of intent and Curriculum vitae
- Other appendices: The full list of publications

- **2nd stage:**
- You must use **templates** for the following appendices: Template for research plan and Curriculum vitae
- Other appendices: The full list of publications and if necessary, a letters of collaboration

Templates; plan of intent and research plan

1st stage	2nd stage
Plan of intent, 9 pages	**Research plan, 22 pages:** **•Background and significance** •Significance of research project in relation to current knowledge, research-based starting points. •Research questions and/or hypotheses. **•Impact** •Outcomes and impacts of research within academia. •Effects, impact and interaction beyond academia. **•Implementation** •Work plan and schedule. •Research data and material, methods, and research environment. •Risk assessment and alternative implementation strategies. •Project personnel and their project-relevant key merits. •Collaborators. •Responsible science. **•References**

Criteria for Evaluation

1 Quality of research		2 Implementation		3 (Review panel's) summary assessment of proposal	
1.1 Scientific quality, novelty and innovativeness of research	1.2 Comments on aspects of societal effects and impact of the project	2.1 Feasibility of plan	2.2 Expertise, human resources, and collaborations	3.1.1 Main strengths and their justifications	3.1.2 Main weaknesses and their justifications

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Review forms 1/3

1.1 Scientific quality, novelty and innovativeness of research **Subrating (1–6)**

- scientific quality and significance of project's objectives and hypotheses
- ambitiousness and state of the art of objectives, including possible novel concepts and approaches or development across disciplines
- scientific added value of consortium for attainment of research objectives
- impact of research within academia
- potential for breakthroughs or exceptionally significant outcomes including possible high-risk, high-gain research
- project's potential to generate new knowledge, new methods, new technology or new practices

1.2 Comments on aspects of societal effects and impact of project

(no numerical rating)

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Review forms 2/3

2.1 Feasibility of research plan, including aspects of responsible science Subrating (1–6)

- feasibility of project, taking into account extent to which proposed research may include high risks
- materials, research data and methods
- working arrangements and management of research tasks
- research environment including research infrastructures
- identified potential scientific or methodological problem areas and mitigation plan
- consideration of research ethics, open access to research publications and data, data management, promotion of equality and nondiscrimination in society at large, and sustainable development within in the project

2.2 Expertise, human resources, and collaborations, including aspects of responsible science Subrating (1–6)

- competence and scientific expertise of applicants (and in case of consortium: all applicants) in terms of project implementation
- complementary expertise of team, who are directly working for/funded in the project, including appropriateness and sufficiency for proposed project
- adequateness of human resources for project implementation, with attention to promoting equality and nondiscrimination within project
- contribution of both national and international research collaborators, who are engaged with their own funding, and impact of their environment on project's potential success
- significance of mobility for implementation of research plan and researcher training

Review forms 3/3

3.1 Main strengths and weaknesses of proposal and their justifications; possible other remarks

- **3.1.1 Main strengths and their justifications (no numerical rating)**
- Summary assessment of the application's (and interview's) main strengths with justifications

- **3.1.2 Main weaknesses and their justifications (no numerical rating)**
- Summary assessment of the application's (and interview's) main weaknesses with justifications

- **3.1.3 Other remarks (if any):**

4 Overall rating

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Rating scale

Rating scale	Description
6 (outstanding)	Demonstrates extremely high novelty and/or innovation; has potential to substantially advance science at global level; presents a high-gain plan that may include risks
5 (excellent)	Is very good in international comparison – contains no significant elements to be improved
4 (good)	Is in general sound but contains some elements that should be improved
3 (fair)	Is in general sound but contains important elements that should be improved
2 (poor)	Contains flaws and needs substantial modification or improvement
1 (insufficient)	Contains severe flaws that are intrinsic to the proposed project or the application

- Ranking in 2nd Stage

Restrictions

- If you have CoE funding already (CoE 2022-2029)
- If you are member of Scientific Councils, Strategic Research Council (SRC) or Board of the Research Council
- If you are director of the Flagship
- If you are director of the consortium funded by SRC, on-going in 2025
  - Rules as they are in SRC calls -> can be team leader in CoE application
- ONLY one application/researcher already in plan of intent phase
  - The PI of the application (i.e. the CoE director, vice director or team leader) cannot be changed while the application is being processed (after the call has closed but before the decision).

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FAQs

- International collaboration: The funding **is granted to a Finnish site of research** (usually a university or research institute) through which the funding is paid.
- **The PI of the funded project must have a close connection with Finland** to support the implementation of a multi-year project. The funded researchers may, however, spend time working abroad during their funding period.
- …the long-term funding provided **in collaboration with CoE host organisations**…(employment relationship)
- **Funding:** In CoE22-29 62M€/11 CoEs /5y= averige 5.6M€/CoE/5y, range 4.2-6.9M€/5y

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Thank you!