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Member of the Finnish Parliament and Chair of the Committee for the Future

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Committee for the Future is one of a kind

We wanted to create our vision. It is:

The Committee for the Future is well known for its work in collating opportunities, threats and weak signals relating to the future. We have produced concrete openings for forthcoming Programmers for Government.

We work openly, changing the working methods of the entire Eduskunta and using the means that citizen participation, crowdsourcing and new technology make available.

We are more visible as a committee in the public eye and we serve as a respected link between research and decision making.

We have made bold and concrete openings, which have prompted a broad civic discourse and our parliamentarians' awareness of the future has improved.

Our image is one of people who take delight in getting things done, producing good ideas and passing them on to the other committees.

We publish an extensive range of material.

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The Committee for the Future is unique in the world.

The Eduskunta, the parliament of Finland, has 16 standing committees, of which the Committee for the Future is one. Unlike the others, the Committee for the Future does not gener-

ally deal with legislative proposals, but it has the same high status as the other standing committees.

Our Committee has 17 members, who are all members of the Eduskunta and represent political parties from both the governing coalition and the opposition.

The Prime Minister is the corresponding minister, who also chairs the Research and Innovation Council, is the corresponding cabinet member.

We work with the Finland Futures Research Centre in Turku University, because we have the same motivation: to develop a national foresight system. Both of us recognize the importance of science, technology and creation of new concepts and ideas as well as revitalisation of institutions and also the ability to recognise what will be permanent in the future and what ought to be.

Our task is to follow and use the results of futures research, but our goal is not to do research ourselves; it is to make policy on the future.

The idea of this kind of committee was conceived during the recession in the early 1990s. Legislators felt they needed a national foresight system.

The committee should be an active and initiative-generating dialogue with the Government on major future problems and means of solving them. Our other traditional committees can not study this kind of future challenges through traditional parliamentary procedures and work methods.

The Committee for the Future was established in 1993. We will have our 20th birthday very soon.

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Our current tasks are

- (1) to prepare material to be submitted to the Eduskunta, such as government reports on the future,
- (2) to make submissions on future-related long-term issues to other standing committees,
- (3) to debate issues relating to future development factors and development models,
- (4) to undertake analyses pertaining to future-related research and IT methodology,
- (5) to function as a parliamentary body for assessing technological development and its consequences for society.

I think it is an honour to play a part in creating something new for politics.

FINDING TOPICS

The Committee for the Future has the power set its own agenda. All topics are »own« except the so called »Future report« of the Government, which the Prime Minister's Office submits to the Eduskunta once in every 4-year parliamentary term.

Our projects in the period 2011-15 are:

Sustainable Growth

The Sustainable Growth project will seek concrete openings from the sector of sustainable growth. Its objective is to produce ten concrete proposals for measures by means of which economic growth will be increased at the same time as the problems of sustainable development will be resolved.

An Inspired Society

The An inspired Society project will examine the relationship between the social environment and enterprise and growth entrepreneurialism.

The study will be conducted in three stages: The first will involve seeking out areas where entrepreneurship is active and inviting pilot companies and entrepreneur to participate in the project. In the second, there will be an examination of these networks of regions, companies and entrepreneurs as well as the social structures and processes in the operating environment. The final stage will involve reporting on best practices as well as recommending measures.

The study will generate new perspectives and proposals for measures to be considered when drafting Finland's policy on growth entrepreneurship and innovation.

Acquiring New Knowledge

The purpose of the Acquiring New Knowledge project is to examine what achieving this objective demands. It will mean studying what the world will be like in 20 years' time, what kinds of skills and knowledge young people will need to have when they have completed their schooling. The report will support the Government's goal of making the Finns the world's most competent people by 2020.

To conclude, we shall evaluate implementation of the themes in the present educational system and present proposals for measures by means of which acquisition of new knowledge can be promoted

Can the Welfare Society Endure?

Can the Welfare Society Endure? The objective set for the Can the Welfare Society Endure? project was that of understanding the causes and consequences of wellbeing and malaise in society and defining the welfare state of the future: What would the best possible welfare state be like if we could plan it from a blank slate?

Crowdsourcing

Crowdsourcing means opening up formerly closed decision-making processes within a network in a way that enables everyone with access to the network to participate in open tasks. That way, people's competence, knowledge, skills and and experience are brought together. It is called collective intelligence. People obtain information about political decision making, which increases the transparency of decision making and the credibility of politics. By providing information and skills, citizens mediate their values to serve as a foundation for decision making and new kinds of solutions emerge at the same time. The process not only produces better decision making, but also fosters a sense of affinity between citizens and decision makers.

The Black Swans

The project will be implemented as a writing competition in the course of 2012. In futures research, Black Swans refer to rare, improbable, surprising and unanticipated events that have very major effects when they happen. These effects can be either negative or positive. What the Committee is looking for through the writing competition are ideas, views and visions regarding what could be events, actions or matters – positive or negative – that would change everything or at least very much? What would the world and life be like in the future if a Black Swan comes to pass?

In the Black Swans project we are combining art and science: for example, science fiction and similar genres could be used as means of producing bolder and more interesting utopias and dystopias.

Radical Technologies

The study will collect together the future pictures for technology and weak signals that have been detected in the other projects and studies. In addition, small-scale preliminary studies focusing on the future of technology and the technology of the future can be implemented. The themes are chosen from the Committee's interests, but also to create a readiness to respond to the Government's report on the future. These reports facilitate a long-term general analysis for Finland and prepare a futures map/roadmap for use in a global, unpredictably changing world that contains new and multidimensional uncertainties.

The Government issues a report on long-term future prospects and the Government's targets. This period the report will handle:

The Finnish sustainable development growth model in a changing world.

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What that is new have we invented?

We have had plenary sessions, as a topical debate on the basis of our reports.

We have given legislative proposals. Our ideas have found their way into Programmes for Government.

Now we want to create a pool of professor-level experts both from the Finland Futures Research Centre and other universities, too.

The Committee will support and participate if the Eduskunta makes a policy decision to hear the views of citizens on, for example, important major legislative projects. Modern media will be used as much as possible. It will be possible to arrange new kinds of citizen involvement.

Now we publish our reports on the Internet and most of them also as books, especially those which are deliberated in plenary session. Social media will be used in a totally new way during this period.

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New operational models are in many senses one of the Committee's most important themes. The Committee intends to utilise new technology and social media more intensively in its own activities. This objective has a significant role in promoting democracy and increasing and strengthening the legitimacy of politics. With the aid of new technology it is possible to engage new linkage groups flexibly in the Committee's activities and politics in general, and in the national discourse on the future. The measures proposed include:

New operational models to be used in conjunction with hearings and projects: for example, participation of citizens in the Committee's activities through social media as well as posting video recordings of expert hearings and seminars on the Internet.

Information systems should be utilised more effectively (as databases, models, simulations and future games) in a way that enables various linkage groups to study the principles underlying and impacts of decisions well as develop alternative scenarios.

Another of the Committee's goals is to hear the views of more international experts as well as to increase cooperation with the aid of, among other means, seminars and study trips.

1. In 2013 the Committee will host the annual conference of the European parliaments' technology assessment units (EPTA).
2. Festivities marking the Committee's 20th anniversary will be held in conjunction with the annual conference
3. In collaboration with the University of Turku's Futures Research Centre, an international meeting of experts in the field of futures research can be arranged in summer 2012. This is intended to generate a vision of the future of futures research – challenges facing humankind and the role of futures research in resolving them.

It is possible to produce high-quality English-language publications about all of these events and these can be used on visits by the Committee and given to delegations visiting us as gifts of the Eduskunta.