

# Finland has a New National Declaration for Open Science and Research – and the Keyword is Community

*Henriikka Mustajoki & Jonni Karlsson*

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## **Abstract**

Finland's 2025 revision of the National Declaration for Open Science and Research demonstrates a community-driven approach to policy-making. The research community led by over 400 experts from diverse research organisations contributed through workshops, public hearings, and ongoing expert panels. By emphasising co-creation, the process strengthened academic freedom, fostered shared ownership, and produced a Declaration focused on active commitments, guiding principles, and contemporary challenges such as research security and responsible openness. Finland's model shows how structured coordination can turn broad participation into robust, actionable, and widely supported open science policy.

## **Keywords**

Open Science, research policy, co-creation, community engagement, coordination

## **Co-creation as a value**

The Finnish Declaration for Open Science and Research was revised in 2025. Following the principles of openness, the process itself was shaped by broad and inclusive collaboration and participation across the Finnish research community. The revision process shows that community-driven co-creation is well worth the Doodle polls.

What does collaboration and co-creation really mean when it comes to national policymaking? At its heart, the co-creative process enables the research community to self-regulate, exercising its autonomy by setting its own goals and defining the policies that guide opening science.

Democracy is facing substantial threats and the academic space is increasingly constrained by external political or economic agendas. In this context, the ability of the

research community to set its own policies is not only exercising autonomy; it is an act of safeguarding academic freedom. The co-creative model ensures that no single actor dominates the agenda. Further, policy directions emerge from collective deliberation rather than top-down imposition. The coordination's open structures are therefore not only a tool for more efficient open science policy, but also a quiet but persistent defence of democratic values.

## **The Finnish model for co-creating research policy**

Coordination helps create policy through broad participation. It ensures many perspectives are included and the results are trusted. The National Coordination for Open Science and Research (AVOTT) brings together over 400 open research experts from Finnish research organisations to develop national policy. The coordination has an ongoing open call to join the expert panels, inviting new and diverse voices into the national conversation. This openness is a deliberate commitment to democratic practice within the research community.

The relevance of open science policies stems from the active engagement of community members in expert panels that also serve as important hubs for peer support, mutual learning, and collaboration among those committed to advancing open research.

The coordination is led by a steering group composed of executive-level representatives from research organisations and supported by a dedicated secretariat.

AVOTT has played a central role in facilitating co-creation—not only in drafting the revised Declaration, but also in developing over 20 national policy documents that range from overarching principles to practical implementation guidelines. The current model was formalised in 2018, when the Ministry of Education and Culture transferred responsibility for open science policy to the research community itself, leading to the establishment of the coordination to support self-regulation.

## **How to engage the research community on policy writing?**

Co-creating policy is not a quick and easy fix to anything. But what we win by slow and thorough process is invested organisations and high-quality outcomes. The revision process for the declaration began in 2023 with a workshop involving the expert community. The goal was to identify what still worked in the original declaration from 2020, and where revisions were necessary.

In the fast-paced world of research policy, five years is a long time. Since the first drafts were written in 2019, some priorities had shifted, others had become outdated, and entirely new concerns had emerged. Back then, few could have predicted the rapid rise of generative AI, the growing financial strain of pay-to-publish open access models, or the pressing need to consider research security alongside openness. By 2023, the community had also matured in its thinking: the push for immediate open access “at any cost” was giving way to calls for more financially sustainable solutions. (Looking at you, Diamond Open Access!)

Building on the 2023 workshop, the secretariat of the national coordination continued the revision in early 2024, using the workshop results and identified gaps as the foundation. The work was also informed by key international frameworks, including the *UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science* (2021) and the *CoARA Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment* (2022, which provided important global reference points. Domestically, the *Open Science and Research Reference Architecture* (2024) offered a shared structural lens for aligning policy with practice.

In October 2024, the first draft of the revised declaration was subjected to a public hearing from all the members of the research community. A total of 42 organisations, including universities, research institutes, funders and other stakeholders in the research community participated with suggestions for improvement and feedback proposing changes to the draft. The process resulted in thorough abbreviation and increased robustness in the declaration.

Final review was performed by the coordination steering group in December 2024 and January 2025. The steering group proposed a stronger emphasis on broader global trends such as the geopolitical situation and what it means for research, accessibility of research results and researcher’s freedom of expression.

Incentives for signing the declaration were also discussed in the steering group meetings, which led to reconceptualising what signing the declaration entails. The essential ethos of the new declaration is that it is based on active commitments, instead of agreeing on strategic goals. In the new declaration, organisations **commit** to its vision, principles and the goals of four national policies for open science, while considering their own specific characteristics. The Declaration was published in May 2025 during the Annual Open Science and Research Summer Conference.

## What changed during the revision process?

The [2020–2025 Declaration](#) focused on setting high-level strategic goals for advancing openness in Finnish science. It outlined a shared vision and values for openness, provided broad policy directions, and was primarily a statement of intent. The declaration emphasised open access, open data, open research methods, and open education as key thematic areas. While it marked an important step in aligning national efforts, it remained general in tone and functioned more as a symbolic roadmap than an operational instrument. Signing the declaration signified support for open science principles but did not require concrete institutional commitments.

In contrast, [the 2025–2030 Declaration](#) represents a shift from strategic intent to active commitment. It introduces clear guiding principles, requires institutions to make practical, context-sensitive commitments, and places stronger emphasis on responsible openness, research security, and academic freedom. The new declaration is more concise, action-oriented, and aligned with global frameworks such as UNESCO’s Recommendation on Open Science. It also strengthens the link between open science and societal impact, imagining a future where openness is the default in research

culture. The updated declaration reflects a more mature, community-informed perspective, developed through a participatory process that ensures alignment between vision and implementation.

Research communities consist of a wide variety of autonomous organisations, each with its own mission, structure, and context. The revised declaration aims, both with its content and the community-led development process, to unite these diverse organisations around a shared commitment to responsible openness practices, while fully acknowledging their differences.

Signing the declaration is voluntary. By signing the declaration, organisations endorse its vision, guiding principles, and the objectives of Finland's four national open science policies, all while adapting them to their own specific circumstances. The previous declaration gathered support from all major research organisations in Finland. The process of securing signatories for this has been updated, and an even more ambitious version is now underway. Thanks to the community-driven development, the signatory process and implementation begins on a solid foundation.

## **Community, co-creation and collaboration – Lessons learnt**

While the revision process was broadly successful, it was not without its obstacles. Challenges came in from two directions: participatory coverage and contextual recognition.

One of the key challenges in a community-driven policy process is that not all voices are equally represented in the dialogue. Despite open invitations and transparent structures, there are always perspectives that remain unheard, whether because individuals are too busy to participate, uncertain that their contributions will matter, or unaware of how to engage. Some may lack confidence in the value of their views, while others may not feel included in the communication channels used. This highlights the importance of continuous outreach, active facilitation, and targeted support to lower the threshold for participation and ensure that policy truly reflects the diversity of the research community. We believe we have addressed this challenge adequately during this process, but not perfectly. There are voices that were quiet or even missing, despite our efforts to invite and encourage participation.

Another important lesson from the revision process was recognising the balance between unifying national goals and the diverse contexts of individual research organisations. If the Declaration were to present its objectives as entirely context-dependent, it would risk losing its coherence and normative power. On the other hand, ignoring the organisational diversity, differences in size, structure, mission, and resources, would render the commitments too rigid and difficult to implement meaningfully across the system. This tension was addressed through careful wording, most notably in the sentence: *“The signatories of the declaration commit to the following objectives, while taking into account their own specific characteristics.”* This formulation was the result of collaborative work in the steering group, supported by organisational legal experts. Earlier versions of this sentence would have made it difficult for some organisations to sign the declaration. While this created tension during the drafting

process, it was positive tension which led to a more inclusive final wording in the Declaration.

This collaborative achievement does not happen by chance. The coordination structure, with its steering group, secretariat, and expert panels, provides the steady framework needed to turn diverse views through dialogue into concrete policy. Coordination ensures that the process remains transparent, inclusive, and responsive to both emerging challenges and community feedback. Without dedicated coordination, the broad consensus, shared commitment and community participation that underpin the declaration would have been far more difficult—if not impossible—to achieve.

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