

Parliamentary advisory board recommendations for promoting new approaches over the next government term

The current Government set a target in its mid-term review to make Finland the world's best environment for innovation and experiments by 2025. The **Research and Innovation Council's vision** is that Finland will become the most attractive and competent environment for experimenting and innovation by 2030. Experimenting and innovations go hand in hand with long-term objectives, and the recommendations of the parliamentary advisory board serve the same purpose.

Under the Strategic Programme of the Government, piloting and experimenting has aimed to create innovative solutions to help advance society and services, encourage independent initiative and entrepreneurship, and strengthen local and regional cooperation by exploiting citizen-centred operating practices. The culture of experimentation in the Government Programme has been unique on the world scene and has received much international attention.

Thanks to the work carried out over this government term, the culture for piloting and experimenting has taken on a stronger role and it takes place actively in different parts of the country. It is important to make sure that the culture of piloting and experimenting and new approaches continue after a new government has been appointed, and that successes, lessons and results can be amassed and that piloting and experimenting become an established way of developing and responding to change.

With the world around us becoming increasingly complex, problems cannot be resolved sitting behind a desk and persistent planning does not necessarily guarantee solutions that are successful. Piloting and experimenting, characterised by hands-on testing and learning from the testing, make it possible to achieve more agile results of better quality by democratic means.

Recommendations:

1. Harnessing results more effectively

Harnessing the results of pilots and experiments more effectively should be the next key objectives. Piloting and experimenting, which have been launched successfully, should be tied in with broader development work and long-term innovation processes. Pilots and experiments should be used more effectively as a knowledge base in decision-making. A more systematic structure for harnessing the results of pilots and experiments and the longer-term effectiveness of pilots and experiments need to be created.

2. Experiments at various levels

It is worthwhile carrying out pilots and experiments at different levels in the future too. It should be borne in mind that different types of pilots and experiments have different needs, aims and areas of improvement. The Finnish model combines strategic and research-based experiments stemming from the Government agenda, thematic pooled pilots and small-scale grassroots experiments. Research and behavioural science trials have generated significant potential for strengthening the knowledge base used to support decision-making and for creating new societal instruments. Thematic pooled pilots are a useful tool for example in developing given topics or sectors, in promoting innovation and in identifying bottlenecks caused by legislative provisions. Grassroots experiments play a part especially in encouraging a participatory effect, whereby citizens and organisations can bring their competence into play when solving common problems.

3. Funding

The potential in piloting and experimenting still demands active support and funding. It is proposed that a given share of appropriations of Government analysis, assessment and research activities, R&D appropriations of organisations and possible future key projects be earmarked for piloting and experimenting. The existing financial forms in research and development activities should make stronger provision for elements that enable piloting and experimenting. The role of the private sector, foundations and other organisations in potentially funding piloting and experimenting activities should be supported. The role played by the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA) in enabling pilots and experiments is deemed particularly important as well as in expanding development and potential for participation. More coherent procedures for funding piloting and experimenting in central government is called for. While the basic principles in the culture of experimenting are already well established in activities, it remains important to continue encouraging to strengthen competence in piloting and experimenting within government organisations.

4. Place to Experiment as a platform for learning

To accelerate common learning, the 'Place to Experiment' platform as a digital platform needs to be used more actively to disseminate the results of small-scale experiments and to identify and develop potential innovations.

5. Guide for drafters of experimentation legislation

A guide published in October 2018 for drafting legislation enabling experimentation projects should be used actively in situations where a need to draft separate legislation to enable experimentation projects is necessary. Public authorities must not deviate from the requirements of the law in any of their activities, which means that it is often necessary to draft legislation on executing experimentation. The guide takes into account in part the established interpretation practices on experimentation legislation of the Constitutional Law Committee of Parliament, supported by example cases.

6. Pilots and experiments as a policy instrument

In the future, piloting and experimenting will need to be used as an instrument of regenerative policy. The aim is to link pilots and experiments to broader changes and development processes in society. The reform work being carried out in social security, for example, should harness piloting and experimenting to test the viability and effectiveness of new solutions. It is recommended that piloting and experimenting be applied in the context of the contents identified in the futures reviews of the ministries, such as resource wisdom, low carbon approaches, transport markets, energy technology and digitalisation and artificial intelligence. Once piloting and experimenting have become an integral part of decision-making processes systematically, the viability and effectiveness of reforms can be tested flexibly, while also learning and changing course where necessary before implementing any solutions. The end result is better-quality and more innovative solutions that we know will work.