



PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE
FINLAND

Strategic Policy Making in Finland - link with Strategic Foresight

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Sirpa Kekkonen

Head of Government Strategy Secretariat

Prime Minister's Office, Finland



Structure of the presentation

1. Cornerstones of Strategic Policymaking
2. Components of the Finnish Government's Futures work
3. Assessments, challenges and lessons learned

GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGY WORK

Concerns behind the reform of Policymaking system: the world has changed!

- Policy coherence and consistency is society's success factor
- Efficient vertical administration fulfilled its task in the world where problems were "simple" ,there was less knowledge and it was easier to access.
- In the present world problems are complex, knowledge is "everywhere" and media requires quick reactions from politics

Challenge of today is to master and live in **"the whole"**, not the siloes

Governance challenges in Finland- international cooperation and comparisons as a mirror

- **Being strategic**
 - Ability to prioritize: cannot do everything at the same time
 - Foresight capacity: what is behind the corner – longer perspective
- **Coordination and horizontal policymaking**
 - Complex and interconnected questions: wicked problems - solving one problem causes another problem elsewhere
 - Overcoming gaps: the Centre of Government and sectoral ministries; the state and the people; politicians and civil servants, the past, present and future....
- **Evidence-based policymaking**
 - Knowledge is the connecting key between civil servants and politicians
 - Civil servants have lost their monopoly in knowledge production

OHRA 2013-2015 – from decisions to changes

- Project started as managerial > turned into reform of policymaking
- "Everything starts with the Government Programme" > from over 900 policy objectives to 3-5 prioritized policy goals
- Have one shared strategy, avoid separate "growth packs" etc.
- Clear objectives → processes to support them → the change takes place
- Strategic Gnt Programme = vision, strategic goals for the Gnt term AND ten years, key projects

Vision: Finland 2025 - built up together

Skills and education

Employment and competitiveness

Wellbeing and health

REFORMS

Bioeconomy and clean solutions

Digitisation, experimentation, regulation

Government programme and activities strategic implementation plan

**Common agenda:
WHAT?**

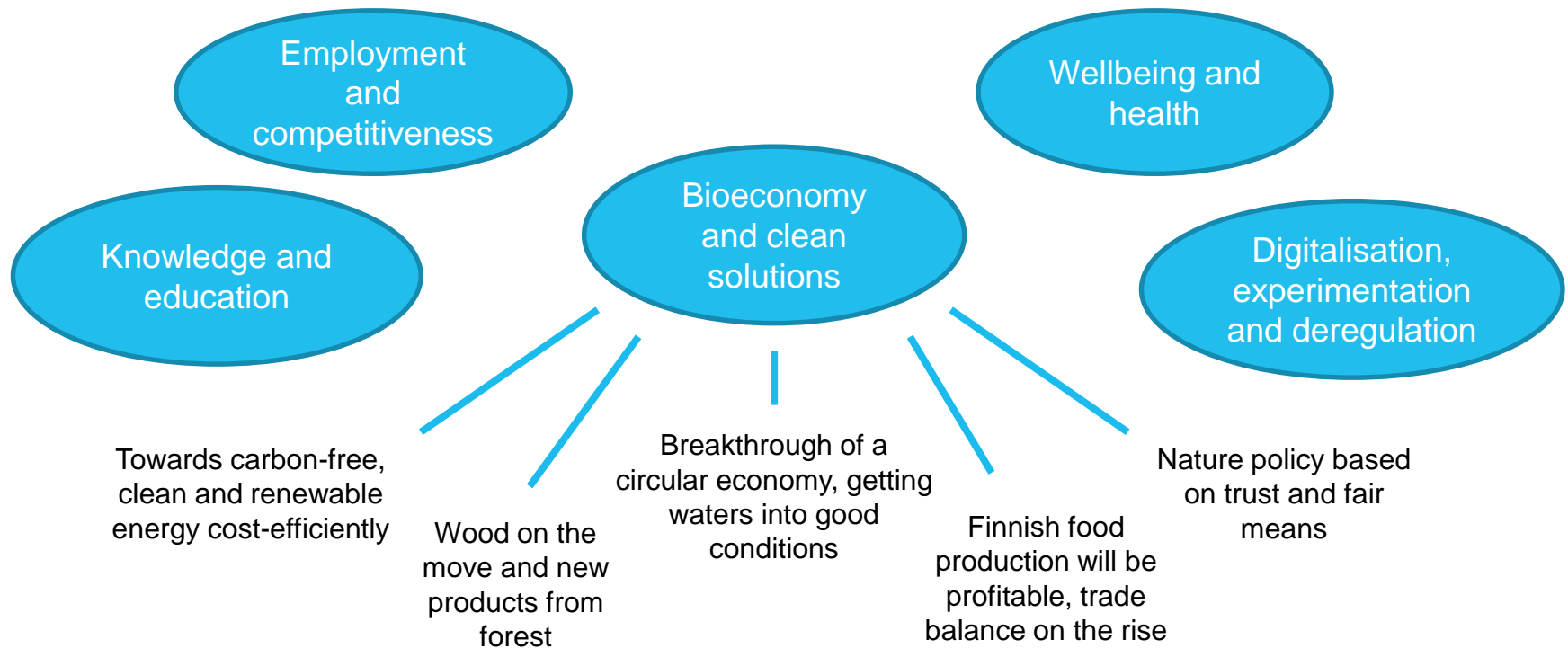
Common knowledge base: WHY?

Common implementation: HOW?

- *Foresight activities*
- *Programme review*
- *Impact assessments*
- *Research, policy briefs, evaluation studies, etc.*

*Budget resourcing
Performance management, etc.*

Five key areas with 26 key projects and several big reforms



- Reform of social welfare and health care; cutting local government costs; regional administration reform; central administration reform

The Government strategy process 2015-19

Spring
2015

- Government programme 2015-19

Autumn
2015

- Government Action Plan
- Government Fiscal Plan for the Gnt term

Annual
check
points

- Gnt retreat to evaluate strategy (early spring)
- Action Plan and Fiscal Plan (spring) reviewed

The fora for the strategy work



Fora to
share and
use
foresight
information!

Political level

- Government Strategy sessions biweekly
- Ministerial working groups for each of the strategic priority area, one for reforms

Civil servant level

- Meetings of the permanent secretaries
- Coordination groups (communities of interest)

Government Strategy Secretariat

- "Owner" of the Gnt strategy process, managing the process as a whole
- Support to Government Strategy work

Main concerns now

- How to keep the Gnt Strategy Process as a whole
 - Risk of separation of political (strategic) and budget processes and new policy processes being established to live their own life
 - Risk of Key projects becoming siloed
- How to extend the political interest to the implementation of policies and their results
 - "Prioritizing the priorities" – must win policies
 - The role and resources of the Government Strategy secretariat
 - Innovating new ways for the horizontal policy making and coordination

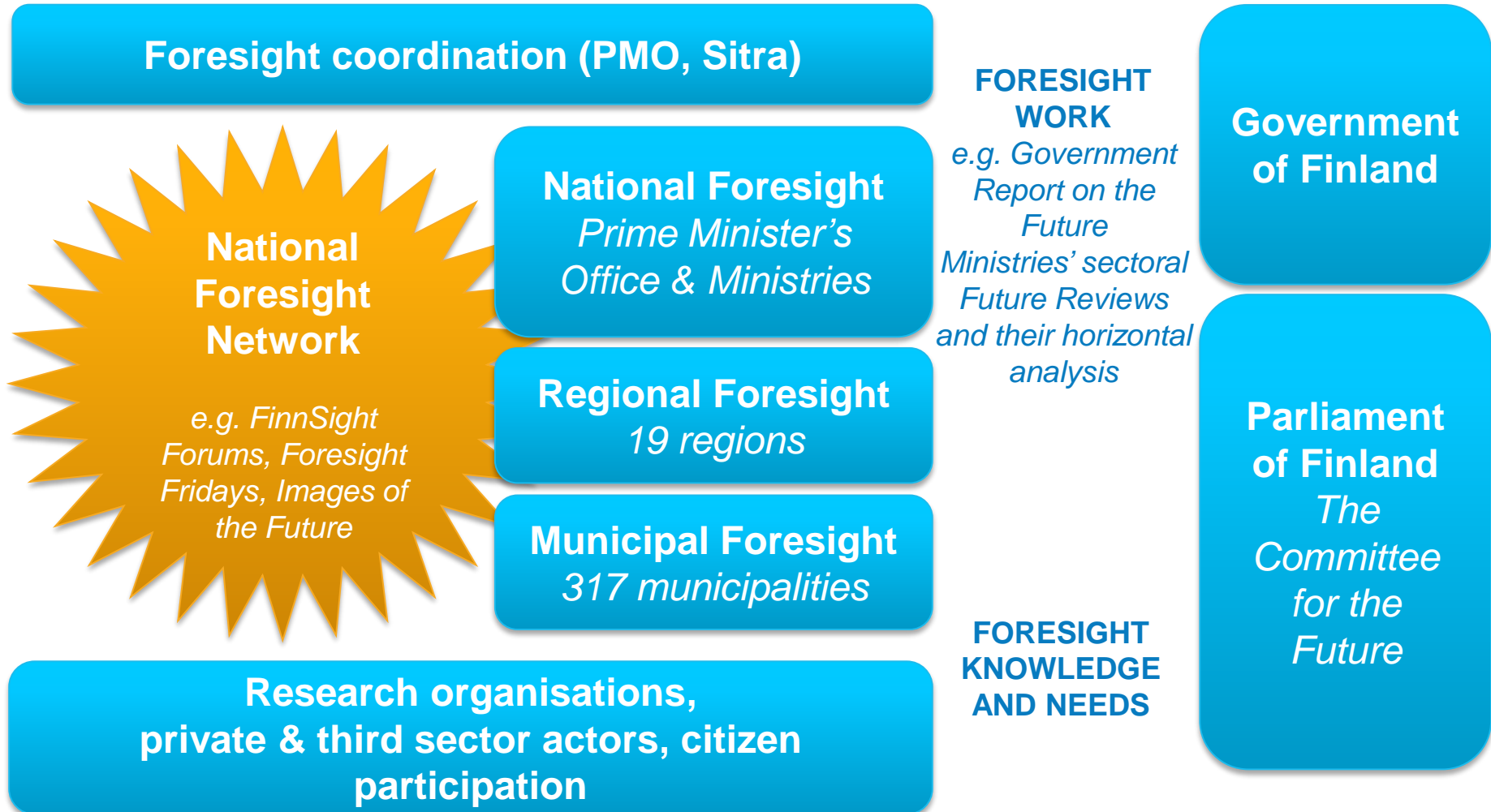
STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Foresight, horizon scanning, preparedness, situation awareness...

Two main blocks of Government action:

1. Foresight work – providing the Government with **knowledge base** on future from a wide perspective
 2. **Comprehensive security approach** and preparedness – process that engages various social actors to safeguard the society's vital functions
- >>> both require special attention to the question: **how to link the work done to the Government's policymaking**

National Foresight Process in Finland



1. Once in a Government Term (time perspective 15-20 years)

- The report is **prepared** in the *Prime Minister's Office* (PMO), **adopted** at a Government plenary session, and **submitted** to *Parliament*.
- *The Parliamentary Committee for the Future* prepares Parliament's **response**. Finland has had this tradition last 20 years.
- Examples of the themes of the reports:
 - *Finland's Future Options* (1993)
 - *Finland and the Future of Europe* (Part I 1996)
Skill and fair play (Part II 1997)
 - *Finland for people of all ages* (2004); Focus: Finland's population policy and preparations for changes in the age structure
 - 2009: "Government Foresight Report on *Long-term Climate and Energy Policy: Towards a Low-carbon Finland*"
 - 2011-2015: Government Report on the Future: *well-being through sustainable growth*
 - 2015: Focus on the changing concept of work

2. Ministries Futures Reviews regularly before elections (ten years perspective, focus on the next electoral period)

- Since the electoral period 2003: Information to all political parties in a published and systematic manner
- Drafted by civil servants and co-ordinated in the Meeting of Permanent Secretaries
- Objective: increase transparency in the preparation of the Government Programme after elections
- Content: anticipated development of core issues and optional solutions
- The PMO identifies common trends underlying all sectoral reviews in a horizontal coordination process: latest process ended up in 'the brief on wicked problems' that was an improvement of the process as it offered a clearer and coordinated message

Characteristics of Finnish Foresight

- Widely shared view of the need for foresight
- Considerable acceptance within various levels of the government and broad engagement of stakeholders
- Widely involving citizens, civil society, business and other actors
- May result in immediate policy action or strategic orientation within the government
- The outcomes are available for informing a wider public debate, electoral campaigns and act as references for policy development
- **Major question: real use in policy-making > how to support**

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

Challenges

- Foresight: OECD Governance Review 2015:
 - Ensuring impact of the foresight work and integration to the Government's strategic decision-making processes
 - Improve institutional mechanisms to integrate various knowledge sources into ministries' decision-making processes
- Risk assessment, horizon scanning, preparedness
 - Horizon scanning: an academic interest rather than a systematized Government activity > the pragmatic Finns; lots of intellectual work unused

Summa summarum

- Information production: ok
- Organisational and institutional responsibilities in place – and even innovative
- Challenge is linking the information to political decision-making in real life
 - **what kind of information** is in the interest of politicians (short term "here and now"/long term); why don't we ask them?
 - how do we manage to present complex information so that it makes sense to politicians and they can absorb it - **visualisation**

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSIONS

1. *How does the Strategic policymaking and Foresight in your country compared with the Finnish approach*
2. *What would be your solution to the problem of underutilization of foresight and other evidence in policymaking?*



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Thank you for your attention!

Sirpa.kekkonen@vnk.fi

