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University Professors and University Researchers and Teachers: The Government Programme will harm universities and research

The Government Programme promises rough times for universities and research. The university index is to be frozen and a third semester is to be implemented with dwindling resources. The Academy of Finland's funding authorisation will be cut by 10 million euro starting next year. Altogether, education, science and culture are to lose 681 million.

The Finnish Union of University Professors and the Finnish Union of University Researchers and Teachers feel that the goals and the methods of the Government Programme are in serious conflict.

"The aim of the government term is to increase the quality and impact of research and innovation activities. How can this be achieved with reduced resources and with less time left for research?" asks Petri Koikkalainen, President of the Finnish Union of University Researchers and Teachers.

The Government plans to implement a third semester for universities. The Finnish Union of University Researchers and Teachers and the Finnish Union of University Professors feel that this requires considerable additional funding. In representing the Government Programme, the future Prime Minister Juha Sipilä (Centre Party) mentioned the third semester as part of the key project Learning. Hopefully this means that the additional education will also receive additional funding.

During Wednesday's press conference, the Minister of Finance-to-be Alexander Stubb (National Coalition) commented on the third semester: "If, in the past, a professor had three reasons to be a professor – June, July and August – this will no longer be the case in the future."

"That was a rather incomprehensible quip and an insult to all professors. The annual working time of professors is hundreds of hours longer than that of employees in general. For professors and several other university researchers, summer has been the only time that has allowed for an exclusive focus on research. Students already have the option of studying throughout the year, if they so wish. This has become more popular in recent times. However, the time that remains for professors to conduct their research has been constantly declining," says Kaarle Hämeri, Chair of the Finnish Union of University Professors.

The Government Programme also seeks to make lower university degrees more oriented towards working life. The aim is to have a significant portion of students moving directly into the labour market after receiving their bachelor's degree. However, the Finnish labour market has not yet shown a willingness to employ bachelors.

The list of cuts also includes giving up the separate funding of the Universities of Helsinki and Eastern Finland (30Me) and the additional funding of Aalto University. These will require changes in the Universities Act.

According to information received earlier, the Government plans to implement tuition fees for students from outside the EU/EEA. This is estimated to have zero impact on public finances.



FURTHER INFORMATION:

Kaarle Hämeri, Chair of the Finnish Union of University Professors, +358 (0) 40 568 4487,

Petri Koikkalainen, President of the Finnish Union of University Researchers and Teachers, +358 (0) 50 544 7442