

Sustainability and Academic Research 4.6.2021**Introductory talk****Director of Development Riitta Mustonen, University of Turku**

Ladies and gentlemen, dear audience and participants

I have the privilege to warmly welcome you all to this event Sustainability and Academic Research.

The topic is important and timely.

University of Turku has a new strategy for 2021–2030. It was written in an open planning process during 2019. This was a joint effort of the entire University community.

Our goal is to build in a responsible manner cultural and social well-being and a sustainable future during the decade.

Our strategy is based on the University's basic missions in research, education, and societal interaction as well as on how we wish to impact the changing world around us. Sustainability is one of the cross-cutting themes in the strategy.

Today's event is organized by Turku Institute for Advanced Studies (TIAS), Turku Collegium for Science, Medicine and Technology (TCSMT) and the Cultural Memory and Social Change Network. The programme will pay special attention to the social and cultural aspects of sustainability.

When we think about sustainable development, it is easy to remember social, ecological and economic sustainability. However, we should not forget the importance of the fourth pillar – Cultural sustainability.

I'm sure that the entire academic community share the view that universities have a special role to preserve cultural sustainability in society. This topic has been brought up in different occasions and discussions. So it is clear, that cultural dimensions should be considered when talking about sustainability. Wellbeing, solidarity and equality, prosperous and stable societies and a healthy environment are common ideals for the sciences and scholarship across disciplines.

But should we also consider the United Nations agenda 2030 somehow critically? When one topic is high, there is always a risk – we should not allow the tail to wag the dog! Sustainability should come from our realistic and genuine objectives. Rather than fulfilling a certain – expected – agenda.

This means, that aiming at sustainability can be a good guideline when exploring new research topics or when describing outcomes and results of research – but – we should not bind ourselves to some political idea or ideology.

The term of sustainable development was launched globally already in the late 80s. It has been taken into the spotlight because of the climate change discussion. Now is the time to emphasize a more comprehensive and a more open approach to cover different perspectives of sustainability.

Universities have a role in producing information, increasing knowledge and competence as well as in upholding creative and critical thinking. We want to strengthen the trust in science and increase the impact of research for society. Social changes and global megatrends, such as digitalization, and ageing population and climate change among others, challenge us when we carry global responsibility.

For us, inspiration comes from doing things together, from enthusiasm and encouragement. We believe, that our work has significant impact and relevance in the changing world. And of course, we always want to act according to our values and with a visionary mindset.

With these words, I wish you a very nice afternoon and a lot of fruitful discussions!

Thank you for your attention!