

Research Programme 2018-2021

Introduction

Research at the Åland Islands Peace Institute is led by a Research Council and it forms a central part of the institute's activities, along with information, education, and seminar activities. The Åland Islands Peace Institute was founded in 1992 and is a member of several networks of organisations and institutions working on closely related issues. .

The special status of Åland in international law is the point of departure for the research themes pursued by the institute. Such research has therefore focused mainly on three central components: the position of minorities, autonomy questions, as well as demilitarisation and neutralisation.

The institute's homepage, a large number of books and reports, along with the report series and the Journal of Autonomy and Security Studies which was launched in 2017, make up the main platforms for the spread of research results and information about ongoing projects and seminars.

Focus areas of the research

The original idea of the institute about working within the interface field between security, autonomy arrangements and the position of minorities remains scientifically relevant and important. It can be illustrated as in the figure below.





Thematic emphasis for the research during the period 2018 – 2021

Globalisation and democratisation have farsighted and far reaching effects on our societies. They affect both societal institutions as well as the identities of individuals and groups. They change the conditions for politics, for the rule of law and for private persons.

The following thematic – and non-exclusive – areas have been identified as specifically interesting perspectives for research:

- Peace promotion and conflict resolution, for example the use and relevance of the Åland Example and para-diplomacy;
- Autonomy, multilevel governance and internationalisation;
- Militarisation, demilitarisation, armament and disarmament as phenomena in modern society, in particular from a Nordic perspective;
- Comparative studies of islands societies;
- Participation, democracy and sustainable development from a peace perspective.

Purpose and work models of the research

The purpose of the research is to promote deepening of knowledge and objective discussion that contribute to peaceful societal development. Research activities are supported and complemented by the institute's other areas of activity, in particular its efforts to spread knowledge through seminars and other educational and information activities. In this context, the newly started electronic publication Journal of Autonomy and Security Studies constitutes an important platform for research activities. At the same time, it creates valuable contacts to the institute as well as contributions to the institute's own research.

The research and seminar activities of the institute are based on the following premises:

- Research, as well as the activities of the institute as a whole, shall contribute to the prevention of conflicts, peaceful societal development and conflict resolution;
- The institute initiates own research and takes part in external co-operation projects;
- Åland, the Nordic region and the Baltic Sea region constitute given and core reference points both for the research and for the activities of the institute as a whole. In research, examples and comparisons can be made with other regions in the world. This is particularly the case concerning questions about forms of autonomy, demilitarisation, language and cultural protection, and the importance of civil society for democracy.

The Åland Islands Peace Institute organises regularly seminars for researchers with interest in the thematic areas of the institute. In order to institutionalise further the research of the institute, research will as far as resources allow, make up a part of the daily work tasks of certain staff at the Institute. This is so in order to maintain competence and networks independently of how individual projects develop at the institute.



Interdisciplinarity and research networks

Openness to interdisciplinary meetings and projects is already an important hallmark of the work of the Åland Islands Peace Institute and has been a source of deepened knowledge and inspiration in most of the institute's projects in recent years. Interdisciplinary work generally requires a longer time perspective, as different scientific methods need to be coordinated, and theoretical and conceptual frameworks need to evolve. The institute will continue to give priority to interdisciplinary meetings and environments. The institute will also continue its efforts to forge contacts with senior researchers in specific projects, as well as junior researchers, who are offered the opportunity to spend a few weeks or months on Åland to do research and write.

The institute has several established institutional contacts and take part in several networks with other research organisations and other organisations in the Nordic region and in Europe. The Institute has consultative status in the UN Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC. During its more than 25 years of activity, the Åland Islands Peace Institute has built a broad network of partner organisations working on peace issues or in specialised areas of the institute's activities (such as autonomy and minority issues, mediation both locally as well as internationally, peace and security questions etc.).

Research results

In line with the increased use of digital tools, the institute has reshaped its publication series to a digital product and created the aforementioned publication Journal of Autonomy and Security Studies (JASS). Furthermore, for a comparatively small institute the global electronic networks are of decisive importance for contacts with other research environments in different parts of the world. These contacts are in practice another tool for the spreading of research about Åland and of research in general from the institute. To this, one can add the publications, articles and other contributions to the international scientific discussion that are regularly published by the institute. The consolidation of JASS and the Report Series and the inclusion of these publications in e-journal databases will be prioritised in the coming years.

The most accessible information about research, seminars and projects at the Åland Islands Peace Institute is available at the homepage of the Institute, www.peace.ax.

