

Adopted by the Åland Islands Peace Institute Research Council on the 6th of October 2021

Research Programme 2022-2025

The Åland Islands Peace Institute (ÅIPI) celebrates 30 years of activities in 2022. In accordance with the statutes of the Institute, the purpose of the Foundation is to promote peace and work with peace and conflict issues broadly, following a practical as well as a research-oriented approach, using Åland and its special status as a starting point.

The purpose of research as a part of the ÅIPI activities is to work towards a deepening of knowledge and knowledge-based discussions, in order to support peaceful societal development. Knowledge and dialogue are the ÅIPI watchwords and foremost tools.

The research activities are supported and complemented by the other areas of activity of the Institute, in particular knowledge dissemination through efforts of education, seminars and information, publications and profiling activities such as the Kastelholm Peace Talks.

Focal areas of research

The basic idea of the ÅIPI is to work within a triangle of issues and their multiple overlaps:

1. The rights and status of minorities;
2. Autonomy as an idea and practice;
3. Security and demilitarisation.

This basic idea is continued within the research programme for the years 2022-2025.

Context and themes

Questions pertaining to minorities, territorial arrangements including autonomies, and about local and regional security exist, and evolve within a broader context. Today, we notice contradictory tendencies both within countries and in inter-state and international relations. On the one hand, issues relating to diversity and the status of minorities have become a core part of democracy and development. On the other hand, we see how societies are polarised and challenged on many fronts.

The deepening of globalisation and internationalisation means that it becomes increasingly difficult to draw the borderline between internal and international issues.



This is clear not least in issues pertaining to human security and sustainability. This situation demands new working modes, to ensure the meaningfulness of democracy at several levels, from local realities to international cooperation and organisations.

Today, we live in a multipolar world, where new modes of cooperation are developed and new solutions must be put forward to face the global problems, from pandemics to food security, access to clean water, disarmament and a just distribution of actual and finite resources. We must honour already endorsed agreements, while at the same time, we need to negotiate new agreements and invent new working modalities.

The nature of armed conflicts has also changed during the last couple of decades. Civil and proxy wars, i.e. internationalised regional conflicts with a large range of states and actors involved, have become more common. Many such conflicts become long-term and difficult to solve in an acceptable way. Peace-promoting efforts demand even more long-sightedness, continuity and good collaborations between big and small actors. The ÅIPI expertise can here continue to contribute through specialised knowledge about the core issues that are included in the mandate and in the activities of the institute.

Åland is a Swedish-speaking autonomy in Finland and the Åland solution grew from a need to be affirmed and met as a minority, which lives under the special circumstances that prevail among islands and islets spread out in a closed sea between Finland and Sweden. The geopolitical interests were braided together a hundred years ago with the insight of the importance to handle minority issues with wisdom and humanity both nationally and internationally. There are many islands and regions in the world where this type of issues continues to be important and topical.

The celebration of the 100 years of the Åland solution gives good opportunity for afterthought and future-oriented discussions. The ÅIPI is an important part in this process too. The Institute has, in its research and other activities, amongst other things pointed to the democratic ambition that is realised in an autonomous area, both externally, in relation to the central state, the neighbouring region and the surrounding world, and internally, in the relations between the authorities and citizens as well as between the urban, rural and archipelago areas. How can we promote the resilience in democratic and public international law solutions involving autonomies and minorities? That is a question that continues to be included in the scope of work of the Institute.

As a particularly interesting perspective for further research and analysis during the coming years the following thematic areas have been identified, inter alia:

- Peace-promoting and conflict solution in issues concerning identity, language, religion and the position of minorities and regions in and between countries;
- Relations between neighbouring countries (sometimes called 'kin-states') in the handling of the above-mentioned issues;
- Autonomies and regions with a special status, e.g., in relation to regional cooperation and processes of internationalisation and through different theoretical approaches and



methods, including comparative studies, regionalisation, multilevel governance, legal analysis and paradiplomacy;

- Comparative studies of island regions, in particular autonomous islands, and with a special interest in sustainability issues in relation to islands;
- The role and status of civil society in autonomous areas;
- Local mediation and other forms of restorative justice;
- Disarmament and systems for weapons control.

Collaboration and knowledge dissemination

The ÅIPI initiates its own research and participates in external cooperative projects. Openness to interdisciplinary meetings and collaborations is an important feature of the ÅIPI work and has been a source of deepened knowledge and inspiration in many of the ÅIPI projects.

Research and knowledge dissemination should, as far as the resources allow, be included in the permanent working tasks for interested staff at the ÅIPI. This is to uphold a competence level and network independently of how specific projects are developed at the ÅIPI. External research funding is necessary for the development of the ÅIPI potential. During the period in question the Institute also aims to broaden the base for contributions to the Åland Islands Peace Fund, the means of which are used for, inter alia, the Åland Peace Fellow initiative. The goal is to be able to give the possibility to at least one Peace Fellow to visit the ÅIPI for a couple of weeks annually. The possibility to tie more doctoral students to the Institute and create a new form of association for 'research affiliates' will also be explored during the period.

During the coming programme period the dissemination of achieved research results and new publications will be a significant part of the activities. The processing and dissemination of these results can in turn contribute to the development of new research projects and collaborations for which funding is applied.

The ÅIPI publishes a report series <https://peace.ax/rapportserie/> where reports are published either in Swedish or in English. Since a couple of years, the Institute also publishes the English language e-journal *Journal of Autonomy and Security Studies* (JASS, <https://jass.ax/>). JASS is nowadays published through the global publication system Open Journal Systems (OJS) and is found in the database Directory of Open Access Journals (doaj.org). This adds to the possibilities for interested people to find the journal and our articles. On the ÅIPI home page there is a publications database <https://peace.ax/publikationsdatabas/>, which adds an easy way to the ÅIPI publishing. During the research period in question, JASS will be more closely tied to the research activities at the same time as the publication activities are developed in collaboration with publishers and editors in and outside of Åland. Apart from the inhouse publishing activities, the ÅIPI staff contributes to other publications and journals.

The Åland Islands Peace Institute has several established institutional contacts and is included in several networks with research institutes and other organisations especially in the Nordics and Europe. The Institute has consultative statues within the UN Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC

