



**FORTE:**

Swedish Research Council for  
Health, Working Life and Welfare

HEALTH, WORKINGLIFE AND WELFARE

# RESEARCH MEETS SOCIETY

Forte's proposal to the national research policy  
2017-2027



FORTE, the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare, funds and initiates research that promotes people's health, working life and welfare.

Forste allocates SEK 570 million in research funding each year. Other key activities include analysis and evaluation, work on increasing national and international exchanges, and communication. Forste is a government agency under the Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs.

# Research meets society

## - Forte's submission to the Government's research policy 2017-2027

FORTE IS ONE of six state research funding bodies appointed by the Swedish Government. The Agency's tasks include financing and promoting research of the highest quality within health, working life and welfare and meeting the research needs of society in these sectors. Forte also evaluates research and identifies future research needs. Collaboration with the research community, government agencies and other relevant community stakeholders is also an important task of the Agency.

Forte's vision is to pave the way for sustainable social development through research of the highest scientific quality, with a view to achieving:

- Good and equal health
- Inclusive and sustainable working life
- High and constantly improving welfare

Forte's areas overlap with and impact each other. The research issues included in Forte's government mandate are often multi- and cross-disciplinary and impact on a number of societal sectors. It is important that research results in long-term, evidence-based progress for the individual and for society as a whole. Forte wants to create an environment where research can better respond to the needs of society. Important perspectives to be considered in research are: integration, gender equality, participation and sustainability.

Forte's submission to the Government's research policy 2017-2027 identifies five megatrends – globalisation, mi-

gration, urbanisation, climate change and digitalisation and new technologies. These megatrends affect our society and present major challenges for Sweden and the world. Forte wants to contribute to finding solutions for these challenges and highlights in its submission five strategic research areas which need to be strengthened in order to meet these challenges:

- Demographic developments and trends
- Transformation of working life
- Quality, organisation and processes of welfare systems
- Migration and ethnic relations
- Equal living conditions

Forte's submission presents a total of ten recommendations for how our research can better benefit society. Forte aims to halve the time between the production of research results and their application in policy and practice.

Stockholm december 2015



*Martin Ingvar*  
Chair of the Board



*Ewa Stålldal*  
Director General

# Ten recommendations for increased social benefit

Forte has a unique responsibility to support the entire research chain from basic and needs-driven research to practical implementation. Forte recommends in its submission to the Government ten initiatives that will improve the prospects for future research policy:

1. Five strategic research areas to meet future challenges, including demographic development and trends, transformation of working life, welfare systems' quality, organisation and processes, migration and ethnic relations and equal living conditions
2. Research on the effects of interventions
3. Research on implementation
4. Broadening of the strategic innovation areas with a focus on welfare and health
5. More effective national coordination of research
6. Increased support for infrastructure and access to databases and registries
7. Strengthened international collaboration and mobility
8. Improved career opportunities for researchers and increased opportunities for combined employment forms
9. Increased gender equality within academia and research
10. Increased collaboration and more active communication



## STRATEGIC RESEARCH AREAS

Based on new and complex megatrends, societal challenges and the increased need for evidence-based knowledge, Forte recommends a gradual build up over the next decade of five long-term, strategic and cross-sector research programs within the framework of flexible support forms.

Forte proposes strengthening the following research areas:

### Demographic development and trends

Sweden is facing a demographic challenge with an increasing proportion of older people in the population. This affects both welfare policy and how the welfare system is designed.

The focus of research should therefore be on active and healthy ageing. Development of welfare technology and sustainable urban planning are other important perspectives. Research is needed on how to redesign the welfare system when the workforce needs to support a larger proportion of older people and people are living longer with chronic diseases.

### Transformation of working life

Swedish working life is undergoing rapid and profound change. Globalisation, digitalisation, demographic change and migration all influence this change, as well as new forms of employment and organisation and management systems.

Therefore, the focus of research needs to be on what impact the changing conditions of the labour

market will have and how it affects the possibility of achieving a sustainable working life. Further research is needed on the interaction between the societal, workplace and individual spheres, power relations and the organisation and management of labour, as well as the positive and negative effects of digitalisation.

### **Quality, organisation and processes of welfare systems**

In the future, knowledge management will be key within the health and care sectors. Coordinated research on the welfare system is therefore important.

The focus of research needs to be governance, management, organisation and compensation within these sectors to be able to obtain an evidence base for decisions, and to improve quality and performance. Investments should support research close to practice and increase the utilisation of quality assured knowledge.

Improvements in the sector will be stimulated by research in areas such as leadership, economics, policy and innovation.

### **Migration and ethnic relations**

Research in the field of migration is more relevant than ever as Sweden and Europe face major social changes. Millions of people have fled their homes and many are arriving here.

Research that contributes to assessing and improving refugee policies and initiatives and to finding long-term, sustainable solutions is therefore of great importance.

Research on refugee streams and unaccompanied refugee minors is also significant, as well as how education, labour and health and care services can be designed to meet future needs.

### **Equal living conditions**

Inequalities between various groups in society are increasing based on factors such as childhood conditions, educational opportunities, integration, employment, health, and social and care services.

This is why we need research that considers the interaction between individuals and their environment. Accessibility, equality and levels of ability are other important areas where research is required. Research on poverty and class structures is also important. Living conditions for children, young peoples' entrance into the labour market, education and conditions for vulnerable children need to be studied with a broader perspective.

### **Forte's objectives are to:**

- develop new ways to finance grants
- support the development of good environments for research in the priority areas through improved cooperation between stakeholders
- support the development of research expertise within the priority areas
- create incentives and develop new modalities and opportunities for researchers to collaborate and communicate research
- together with other research funding bodies, identify other areas to accommodate additional research that reflect developments in society.

### **Forte recommends that the Government:**

- contributes funding to Forte for a new focus on the five strategic research areas mentioned above.

# 2

## RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTS OF INTERVENTIONS SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED

Forte's assessment is that there needs to be a specific investment in research on the effect of interventions within the sectors of care and social services, working life, social security systems and welfare organisations, as well as health and medical services.

Joint projects in collaboration with professionals and practitioners must be developed to contribute to evidence based policy and practice. Expertise must be increased and method development should be strengthened in order to carry out impact evaluations.

### Forte's objectives are to:

- support the long-term development of fertile research environments in order to facilitate research on the effects of interventions
- together with other stakeholders in the health, labour and welfare sectors, announce funding for new, joint projects within the welfare system.

### Forte recommends that the Government:

- increases Forte's funding for research on the effects of interventions in health, working life and welfare
- in its review of the Social Services Act, implement the corresponding provision regarding the joint collaboration of research funding already contained within the Health Care Act (HSL 26 b §).

# 3

## RESEARCH ON IMPLEMENTATION SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED

A greater investment in research on implementation is required. Both to understand what is required to use new evidence in policy and practice and to reduce the time between production of research results and their application. By 2027 Forte wants to have contributed to cutting implementation time in half.

### Forte's objectives are to:

- support the long-term build up of expertise within research on implementation and the capacity for sustainable change
- work together with the recipients of research results and issue new, joint projects within the welfare system
- aim to cut implementation time in half.

### Forte recommends that the Government:

- increases Forte's funding for research on implementation within the sectors of health, working life and welfare.



# 4

## STRATEGIC INNOVATION AREAS SHOULD BE BROADENED

Successful innovations are often the result of cooperation between several actors and expertise, for example private companies, universities and the public sector. Therefore, Forte proposes that research in the strategic innovation areas be expanded to welfare sectors where social innovation can contribute to social sustainability in the community.

Research programs should be based on cross-functional and cross-sectorial approaches and a mutual exchange between research within academia, industry and other community stakeholders. Forte wants to strengthen its position as an innovation catalyst in the areas of health, working life and welfare.

### Forte's objectives are to:

- participate in the development of a number of strategic innovation programs in Forte's areas of responsibility together with other research funding bodies.

## FORTES VISION

Through research of the highest scientific quality, we contribute to increased knowledge that paves the way for sustainable social development, with a view to achieving:

- Good and equal health
- Inclusive and sustainable working life
- High and constantly improving welfare

# 5

## **MORE EFFECTIVE NATIONAL COORDINATION OF RESEARCH**

Fortes national coordination role will lead to a strengthening of research within its respective areas. Forte will create networks of research funding bodies and other government agencies, as well as increase cooperation with recipients of research results. These collaborations will lead to the identification of new research needs and proposed measures.

Forte is currently responsible for the national coordination of social research on the areas of alcohol and narcotics; children and young people; international migration and ethnic relations; disability and functional impairment, as well as research on older people.

Forte proposes that in addition to these responsibilities, research on the areas of working life and health and care services, as well as the entire sector of alcohol, narcotics, doping, tobacco and gambling (ANDTG) are coordinated in a more effective manner.

### **Forte's objectives are to:**

- further develop the existing coordination role
- expand its areas of responsibility to include national coordination of research within the entire ANDTG-sector (rather than just alcohol and narcotics), as well as the two research areas of working life and health and care services
- further develop collaboration with actors in the labour market and government agencies in order to clarify roles and create synergies within their combined activities.

### **Forte recommends that the Government:**

- gives Forte the responsibility for national coordination of two new research areas, namely working life and health and care services, as well as expanding the responsibility for coordination of research within the entire ANDTG sector.



# 6

## **INCREASED SUPPORT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESS TO DATABASES AND REGISTRIES**

Sweden will remain a strong research nation and continue to strengthen and benefit from the expertise and tradition that has been built up in recent decades with the help of databases and registers.

### **Forte's objectives are to:**

- support the development of infrastructure and access to open data in collaboration with research councils
- work together with other research funding bodies – in particular the Council for Research Infrastructures (RFI) – to implement and monitor the new model of support for infrastructure
- work to ensure that the laws regarding personal data and register based research develop in a way that supports register based research, including monitoring this development in the EU.

# 7

## **STRENGTHENED INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION AND MOBILITY**

International collaboration is essential if Swedish research is to develop and maintain a high quality. Forte will contribute to increased international collaboration and mobility.

### **Forte's objectives are to:**

- enable more researchers to increase their participation in international collaborations and networks
- utilise and further develop the research partnerships established between universities and research groups in different countries
- encourage the continued participation of Swedish researchers in EU calls for proposals, and ensure that Swedish researchers are increasingly the coordinators of such joint projects
- increase its activities within the international research funding arena within the EU, and also with countries Sweden has bilateral agreements with
- continue to support early stage researchers by providing grants for postdoctoral and guest researcher positions.

# 8

## **IMPROVED CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESEARCHERS AND INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMBINED EMPLOYMENT FORMS**

Career paths and qualification opportunities need to be more defined and improved for the Swedish research sector to be more attractive in the international arena. There is also a need for increased mobility between academia and organisations that utilise research findings. Therefore, there is a need to improve incentives for increasing such mobility, for example through recruitment and qualification systems. There is also a need to develop combined forms of employment between educational institutions and other sectors such as the health, care and social services.

### **Forte's objectives are to:**

- promote increased mobility between academia, industry and the public sector by supporting and developing combined employment forms
- continue to support early stage researchers by providing grants to junior researchers
- contribute to increased contact between researchers and community stakeholders.

### **Forte recommends that the Government:**

- reassess the regulatory system in order to facilitate combined forms of employment.

# 9

## **INCREASED GENDER EQUALITY WITHIN ACADEMIA AND RESEARCH**

All researchers should be given the same opportunities regardless of gender. Educational institutions and research funding bodies should work against the differences between men's and women's opportunities to conduct research. They should contribute to equal access and opportunities for international qualifications, career development and gender equality amongst professors. Gender mainstreaming in research needs to be developed and strengthened.

### **Forte's objectives are to:**

- work to ensure that gender equality and gender perspectives are impacting on research
- ensure that there is a high level of expertise within equality and gender throughout the entire process of research funding
- further develop Forte's structures and processes for gender equality, diversity and equal treatment in all activities of the Agency
- regularly monitor outcomes, analyse and provide feedback to ensure continued improvement.

# 10

## INCREASED COLLABORATION AND MORE ACTIVE COMMUNICATION

Through active collaboration, Forte will contribute to dissemination of knowledge and a long-term expansion of knowledge. Forms of cooperation with other agencies will be established in order to identify new research needs, which will be based on a systematic examination of existing knowledge.

By involving and engaging our recipients, utilisation of research results will be increased. Clearer incentives and an expanded qualification system are needed in order to foster communication, cooperation and mobility.

### Forte's objectives are to:

- encourage and propose new forms of systematic cooperation between users and other stakeholders in order to achieve better developed and integrated research
- develop incentives and criteria for communication and utilisation of research in assessment procedures, as well as in the evaluation of research
- establish clear wording for implementation plans and knowledge transfer in strategies and program and proposal texts, where appropriate
- develop new forms and arenas for interactive communication, dialogue and collaboration of research results

- work with stakeholders to identify gaps in research knowledge and determine research needs from these.

### Forte recommends that the Government:

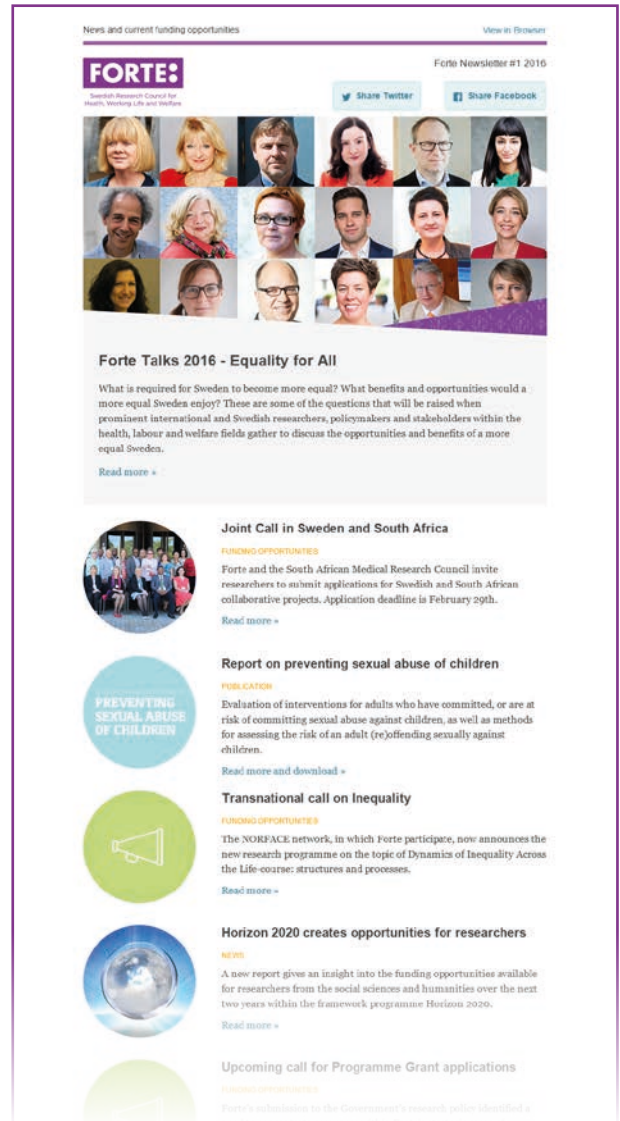
- reassess the incentive and merit system to promote greater communication and cooperation.



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