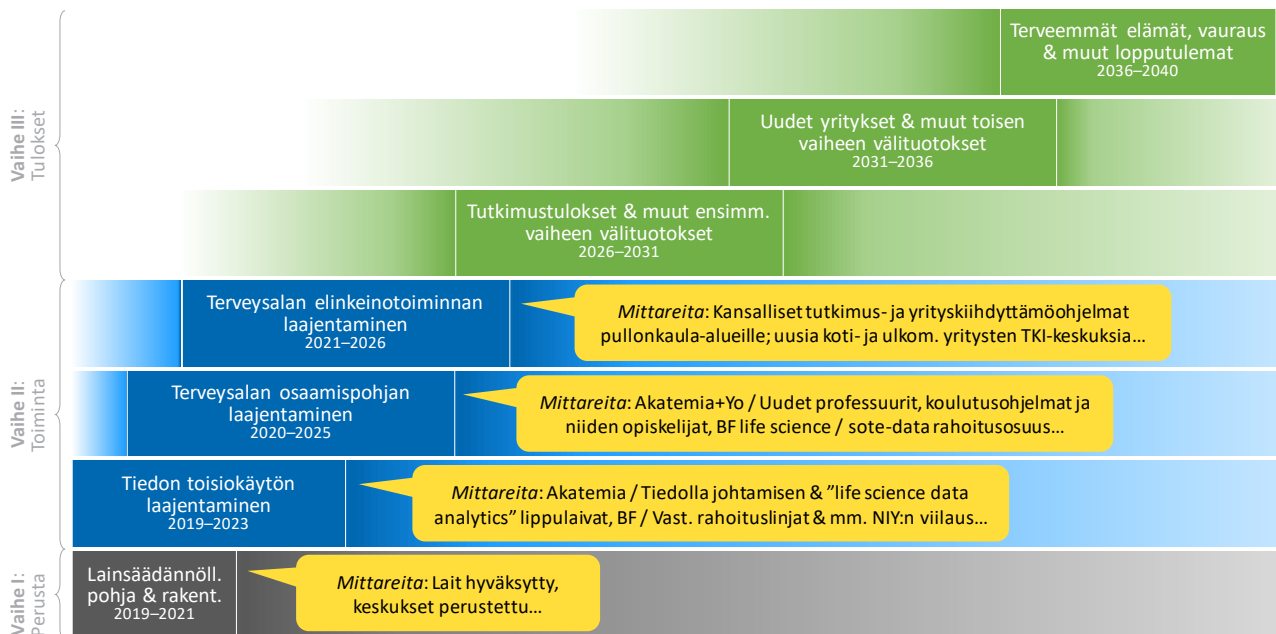


THE CONTINUED GROWTH OF THE FINNISH HEALTH SECTOR REQUIRES SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

R&D activities based on health and genomic data are currently undergoing a global transformation that provides vast opportunities for Finland. The prevention of diseases and new innovative treatments will in the future constitute the principal source of longer and better lives for patients. Investments in the research and innovation ecosystem have the potential of limiting the increase in costs of providing public healthcare services, creating thousands of new jobs and generating over time billions worth of export revenue. Thus, both health and industrial policy considerations argue for placing **research and innovation activities within the health sector** at the centre of Finland's national strategy.

The report “*Health Sector Innovation Ecosystem 2040 – How to Manage the Updated Health Sector Research and Innovation Growth Strategy with Data?*”, prepared by **Avance Economics and Policy**, provides a roadmap for developing the health sector innovation ecosystem through long-term initiatives by the Finnish Government, the relevant Ministries as well as key industry stakeholders. The Finnish social and health care system and the innovation ecosystem should be developed as a whole in order to achieve better coordination and synergies between these two systems. Such coordinated development is likely to lead to substantial benefits in the form of increased welfare for Finnish citizens as well as new jobs and economic activity in Finland. The phases of the proposed roadmap, extending up until 2040, are described in the following image (in Finnish):



As part of implementing the roadmap, the report proposes the following immediate actions:

- **Fixing the Legislative Framework.** The remaining actions proposed in the existing Health Sector Research and Growth Strategy published in 2014 should be implemented without undue delay. These actions include approving the revised Biobank Act and the new Genome Act.
- **Leadership of the Ecosystem.** A special office tasked with coordinating the development of the ecosystem, implementing the updated health sector growth strategy and steering key public players within the ecosystem needs to be set up within the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

- **Setting up Disease-Specific National Centres of Excellence.** The remaining national centres of excellence (especially the Finnish Neuro Centre, but also additional centres focusing on cardiovascular diseases and diabetes) need to be set up as soon as possible. In addition to coordinating activities, these new centres should be adequately resourced to conduct top of the class research within their respective fields.
- **The Act on the Secondary use of Health Data and Health Data Pools.** The future social and health care system will be largely based on the use of data. In order to complement the Act on the Secondary Use of Health and Social Data approved by the previous parliament, a data permit authority and a service operator need to be set up, while simultaneously safeguarding citizens' data protection rights. At the same time, it needs to be ensured that the use of the data generates new clinical research and increased economic activity in Finland as well as better health and welfare for Finnish patients.
- **Thousands of New Professionals Needed.** Finland will already in the near future need tens of thousands of new healthcare professionals. The Ministry of Education and Culture should ensure that the current degree structures and intake amounts of new students can adequately respond to this demand. New flagship research projects and increased internationalization of academic research are also needed.
- **Prioritizing the Health Sector within Industrial Policy.** The current Finnish industrial policy needs to focus more on the health sector and consider its special characteristics when formulating specific public policy instruments. From Business Finland, this necessitates a new program of targeted subsidies for the health sector.
- **Commercialization of Research Results.** Universities and other institutes of higher education need to focus more on the commercialization of research results – possibly by setting up a joint technology transfer function – together with the National Drug Development Centre. The different stages in the exploitation of research results, including the need to ensure market access for new products, need to be considered when developing the national ecosystem.

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