



International evaluation of the Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)

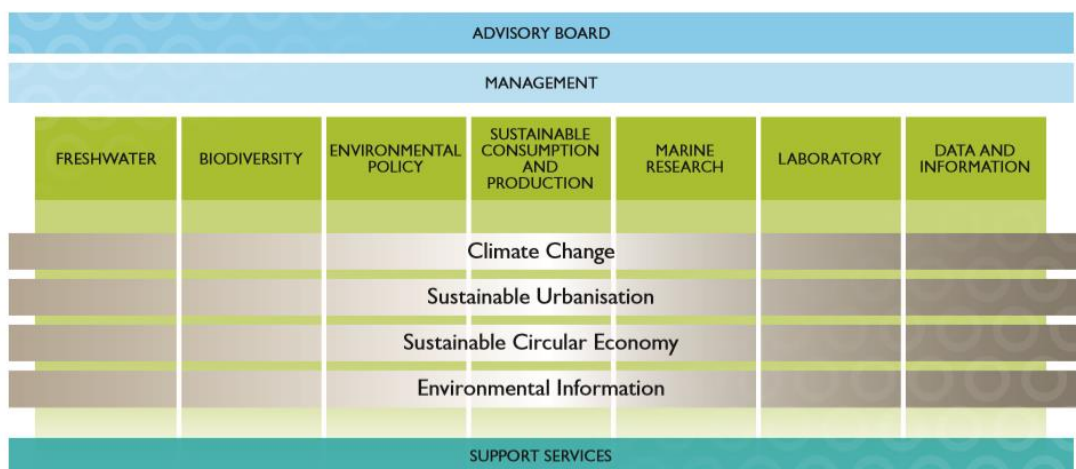
Terms of Reference

Introduction to SYKE and to the evaluation

The Finnish Environment Institute, SYKE, was established in 1995, when a major decentralization of state administration was implemented. The administrative tasks of the former National Board of Waters and the Environment were transferred to the newly established regional environmental centres, while research and development activities were assigned to SYKE. In 2009 parts of the Finnish Marine Research Centre were merged to SYKE. Today, [SYKE](#) is a multidisciplinary research and expert institute, whose tasks centre around building a sustainable society and supporting environmental policy implementation. The information, knowledge, expertise and services of SYKE support public and private decision-making, in a trans-disciplinary fashion.

SYKE works under the [Ministry of the Environment](#) and regarding water resources management under the [Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry](#). With Government budget accounting for approximately 40 percent of [SYKE's funding](#), SYKE is a competitive research and expert organisation, serving acute and long-term knowledge needs in the society.

SYKE's staff of 580 includes researchers, experts and support professionals, who are based in Helsinki, Oulu, Jyväskylä and Joensuu. All SYKE's [offices](#) are located on university campuses. SYKE's activities are organised into seven centres and four strategic programmes, as well as the international affairs unit, administrative services and communications unit. SYKE has an [Advisory Board](#).



SYKE collaborates with a broad range of actors in Finland, in the EU and internationally. In formal [networks](#) and through project collaboration, SYKE's partners include research institutes and universities, administration of various sectors, cities and municipalities, industry, companies and think-tanks as well as non-governmental organisations and citizens. SYKE experts participate in governmental and intergovernmental processes, feeding the findings from environmental research on a broad spectrum.

SYKE has been evaluated twice in the past, in 1998 and 2008. The first evaluation in 1998 concluded with operational recommendations to improve SYKE's international and national outreach. The evaluation in 1998 concluded with a number of operational recommendations to improve SYKE's international and national outreach. The latter evaluation in 2008 addressed environmental and sustainable development challenges, as well as methodological, organisational and strategic challenges. It recommended taking a more active role in assessing and evaluating environmental policy, and doing this in a way that integrates different disciplines and methods, making use of SYKE's own data and participatory approaches.

Since the previous evaluation of SYKE Finland's research organisation and funding landscape have changed significantly. Seeking to increase the efficiency, dynamism and societal relevance of research, the Finnish Government started a reform of the research institutes and their funding structure in 2013. The reform resulted in budget cuts and mergers of research institutes as well as the establishment of new funding instruments. SYKE experienced the cuts as well, and the austerity orientation of the following governments was reflected in SYKE's budget allocations. SYKE's annual budget funding is now almost a third smaller than ten years ago. At the same time, SYKE has been successful in accessing external funding from the new Finnish funding instruments, as well as from the European Union instruments.

SYKE's [strategy](#) is to go beyond conducting research and producing knowledge, to support decision-making with a sound knowledge base and through collaboration. SYKE's mission is to produce relevant information, novel understanding and innovative solutions for achieving sustainable development, and its vision for 2030 outlines: "together with our partners and stakeholders we have succeeded in guiding society's development onto a sustainable path. As its knowledge backbone, SYKE hosts long time-series of environmental monitoring data, based on which it develops models, planning tools and calculators. Many of SYKE's researchers co-supervise PhD and Master's students or teach at universities in their specific areas – but they do not give entire courses. Many of SYKE's researchers co-supervise PhD and Master's students or teach at universities in their specific areas. It should be mentioned that only universities and universities of applied sciences have formal teaching duties and can grant degrees. As the collaborative approach, along with a focus on generating impact, has been at the centre of Finnish and European funding instruments and RDI policies, SYKE has been in a position to turn these principles into practice.

SYKE's knowledge is in high demand. The latest environmental assessments, including the European environment — state and outlook 2020 (SOER 2020, 2019), the Global Sustainable Development Report 2019 (GSDR, 2019), the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES, 2019) and the Global Warming of 1.5 °C (IPCC, 2018), have all emphasised a need for transformative system level change. The European Green Deal further emphasises the need for just transition to no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050, economic growth is decoupled from resource use and no person or place left behind. [Finland's current Government Programme](#) aims for a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society, and sets an ambitious target for Finland to become carbon neutral by 2035. SYKE seeks to continue being a forerunner in operationalising sustainability transition in a trans-disciplinary fashion.

Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation should focus on the relevance of SYKE's activities, reflecting on the dynamic and engaging approach that SYKE seeks to follow. To support this broad focus, the evaluation is organised into four areas, starting from specific, and proceeding to broader views on research, development and innovation (RDI):

1. Quality and impact of SYKE's research and expert services
2. Societal impact and sustainability leadership
3. Collaboration and role in networks
4. Foresight and innovativeness

The focus of the evaluation is not on organisational matters.

The evaluation will be organised with the following guiding questions, for which background material and indicators will be provided. The below web-links provide an overview on SYKE's activities.

Background information

Strategy

[Website](#)

Organisation chart

[Website](#)

Experts

[Website](#)

Staff

Staff: person years and gender-division
Staff in organisational units (person years)
Age structure
Proportion of professional and support staff and gender-division
Number of trained researchers with PhDs

Financing

[Website](#)

Budget, Eur
External funding and sources, Eur

Area	Guiding questions, material and indicators (current or since 2016)
<p>1. Quality and impact of SYKE's research and expert services</p> <p>Publications</p> <p>Services Research and development projects</p>	<p><u>Questions for evaluators</u></p> <p>Q: How do SYKE's research and expert project portfolio, activities and output quality match SYKE's strategy? Q: How do they compare with similar institutes? Q: How could the quality and impact of SYKE's research and expert services be improved?</p> <p><u>Material:</u> Examples of research and expert service activities feeding inputs to decision-making Examples of high-impact publications</p> <p><u>Website</u> Number of publications Number of publications per organisational unit Number of papers in Q1 journals Top-10 index (also from LUKE and THL and from some European institutes, like CEH and UFZ) Number of papers published open access Number of papers with Finnish and international co-authors Number of 1st author papers</p> <p><u>Website</u> <u>Website</u> Research infrastructures Number of research projects funded by the Academy of Finland Success rate in the Academy of Finland / average success rate Number of research projects funded by H2020 Success rate in H2020 / average success rate</p>
<p>2. Societal impact and sustainability leadership</p>	<p><u>Guiding questions</u></p> <p>Q: How do SYKE's societally relevant project portfolio, outreach and societal impact match SYKE's strategy? Q: How does SYKE portray leadership in sustainability transition? Q: How does SYKE's societal impact and sustainability leadership compare with similar institutes? Q: How could SYKE's outreach, societal impact and sustainability leadership be improved?</p> <p>Examples of societal impact Examples of commissioned projects from various funding sources</p> <p><u>Material:</u> Number of reports directed at decision-makers Number of blogs Number of Policy Briefs All English language blogs All English language policy briefs Social media indicators Number of parliament hearings Number of website visits Number of users of open data Media barometer 2019 Citizen barometer 2019 Prizes (examples) Calculators and other interfaces (examples)</p> <p>Number of projects funded by Prime Minister's Office (PMO) Proportion of sole / leader role in ongoing PMO projects Number of projects funded by the ministries Number of EU Interreg and Life projects Proportion of projects with sole or leader role</p>

3. Collaboration and role in networks

Guiding questions

Q: How does SYKE's collaboration and role in networks match SYKE's strategy?

Q: How does SYKE's collaboration compare with similar institutes?

Q: How could SYKE's role in networks and collaboration be improved?

Material

Examples of hosted meetings and sessions

Examples of long-term collaboration with research institutes

Examples of collaboration with cities, business, education and NGOs

Number and proportion of ongoing collaborative projects

Leadership in ongoing collaborative projects

Number of memberships in national governmental committees, working groups & examples of SYKE's role

Number of members in scientific panels & examples of SYKE's role

Number of members in international committees, networks and

assessments & examples of SYKE's role

4. Foresight and innovativeness

Guiding questions

Q: How does SYKE's foresight and innovativeness match SYKE's strategy?

Q: How does SYKE's foresight and innovativeness go beyond SYKE's strategy?

Q: How could SYKE's foresight and innovativeness be improved?

Material

Examples of innovation and foresight

The organisation of the evaluation

The evaluation is assigned by the Ministry of the Environment, represented by **Ismo Tiainen**, Director General of the Department of Administration and International Affairs at Ministry of the Environment.

The evaluation will be conducted by a team of esteemed experts representing various disciplines relevant for environmental research and with background in comparable research institutes in Europe and in Finland, as well as experts representing SYKE's knowledge users from Finland and Europe.

The evaluation team members are:

- **Hanne Bach** (Chair of the evaluation team), Director, DCE - Danish Centre for Environment and Energy, Aarhus University, with ample international experience, including Chief Technical Advisor of Environment Programme at the Mekong River Commission
- **Maarten Hajer**, Professor of Urban Futures at Utrecht University, former Director of the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL), ample international experience, including member of the UN International Resource Panel
- **Jakob Granit**, Director General of Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, formerly Director at the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), broad international experience, e.g., as the International Waters Panel Member of the UN Global Environment Facility Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (GEF STAP)
- **Jonas Liimatta**, Director at the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of Northern Ostrobothnia (Pohjois-Pohjanmaa)
- **Raisa Mäkipää**, Research Professor, Research manager of Sustainability science and indicators, Bioeconomy and environment, at the Natural Resources Institute Finland

The evaluation will be facilitated by **Kirsi-Marja Lonkila** (kirsi.marja.lonkila@ym.fi), the Ministry of the Environment.

The team will receive access to an electronic background material package, and access to an electronic platform in which the evaluation will be conducted. The evaluation report drafts will be viewable only by the facilitator and the evaluation team, and the final draft will be shared with SYKE's management team for correcting potential misunderstandings. The final evaluation report will be public.

The evaluation will be conducted off-site, and through facilitated tele-meetings as well as on-site (or off-site in case travel limitations continue), with interviews of stakeholders.

The stakeholders of SYKE whom the evaluation team will meet include at least: Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Academy of Finland, Prime Minister's Office, SYKE's Advisory Board.

Timeline of the evaluation

The evaluation will be conducted in July-September. The material will be provided to the evaluation team by 22nd of June. The evaluation team can provide additional questions and request clarifications through an on-line interface by mid-august. The first tele-meeting with the evaluation team, the Ministry (Ismo Tiainen) and SYKE (Lea Kauppi and Eeva Primmer) will be held on 29 June-1 July. The evaluation team can request to hold a tele-meeting in July. The on-site visit (or series of tele-meetings) will be on 24-27 August. The evaluation team will present its findings at the end of the visit and have a first draft ready. If needed, the evaluation team can have internal tele-meetings in September. The final draft of the evaluation report is due on 23 September and the final report at the end of September. The evaluation team can, if they wish, hold a feed-back session with SYKE directors during the 1st week of October.

Activity	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct
Terms of Reference by MoE	○					
Material for evaluation by SYKE		○				
Start-off meeting with evaluation team and SYKE		○				
Optional meetings among the evaluation team			○ ○			
Optional requests for clarification and additional questions by evaluation team				○		
Meeting with SYKE and stakeholders on site or tele					○	
First draft report and feedback from SYKE Directors					○	
Optional meetings with by the evaluation team					○ ○	
Final draft of the report					○	
Comments from SYKE directors					○	
Final report						○
Optional feedback session						○