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Dear Sir,

I have been told that the Government of Finland is considering reorganizing its research institutes. I am also aware of a proposal to merge the FMI and the Environment Agency. I would like to express my view on this proposal. As the Chief Executive of the UK Met Office, I have had a chance to co-operate with FMI during the past four years and also evaluate the activities of FMI at the request of the Ministry for Science and Education in 2009.

First, it may help if I describe the Met Office, and its parallels with FMI. The Met Office is one of world's leading weather and climate services; it is the UK's National Meteorological Service (NMS) and also undertakes a number of international responsibilities including producing global forecasts for aviation. We operate a similar business model to FMI, providing a range of services from public services for the safety of life and property, to commercial services enabling industry in the UK and abroad to fully exploit the value of weather and climate information. Both the Met Office and FMI share the same philosophy that excellent science is necessary to underpin these services. We are at the forefront of climate research through the internationally renowned Met Office Hadley Centre, and are increasingly working with more science partners in UK and international academia to help pull excellent science into new and better services for the public and industry. As with all NMSs, including FMI, we operate a 24/7 operational capability we makes us a natural home for the hosting of other environmental operational services. For example, we host the UK Flood Forecasting Centre which is a joint operation between ourselves and the England and Wales Environment Agency, bringing together expertise from both organizations to provide excellent services for emergency responders in mitigating the impact of flooding.

In my opinion, FMI is one of the most successful national meteorological services in Europe and may even be regarded as the best medium-sized NMS in the world. It certainly "punches above its weight" globally, having an international influence in the World Meteorological Organisation and with its work with developing countries that some larger developed countries would envy. Evidence of FMI's standing is given in the NMS benchmarking study that my organization has conducted with other leading meteorological services from Germany, France, Sweden, Switzerland, Australia, Canada, Finland and the UK. The FMI was among the top three institutes with most of the criteria evaluated. Finland should be proud of its meteorological institute, and regard it as a success story in the public sector.



Met Office

I share this because I know that FMI have long had a similar approach to ourselves to working with partners from other sectors and academia. I understand they have a close partnership with Helsinki University and work closely with private enterprises, like Vaisala. This kind of partnership working is a model for the rest of the world. I believe that the my country is benefiting significantly from the kind of partnership working we have introduced into the UK, and I would expect that Finland would similarly benefit from extending the beneficial partnerships FMI have in place.

I am pleased with the opportunity to express my view on the proposal to modify the Finnish research institute scheme and the implications for FMI. I would be delighted to share my experiences with you in more depth to help inform your thinking, if so wished.

Yours sincerely,

John Hirst
Chief Executive