

TFK programme, funded projects 2022

<p>Project title: Abraham Goes Global</p>	
<p>Coordinator</p> <p>Åbo Akademi</p> <p>Mika Vähäkangas mika.vahakangas@abo.fi</p>	<p>The project consists of one concrete aim of creating and conducting a unique international and interreligious theological course called "Abraham Goes Global" and conducting it twice with this funding. The course, in turn, is expected to produce the following results:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Updating academic theology to the diverse religious-social realities of today 2. Equipping future religious leaders with skills to encounter the religiously and culturally other 3. Transferring the existing international networks to Åbo Akademi University (ÅAU) and expanding them further
<p>Partners</p> <p>Stellenbosch University faculty of theology,</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Updating academic theology <p>Traditionally, academic theology has been denominationally limited according to the status quo churches of a given area. Today, state church systems have been dismantled in Finland and in South Africa (where the Dutch Reformed Church functioned as the de facto state church of the Apartheid government). The societies have become increasingly religiously plural whereas academic theology has not often kept up with these changes. Through this course, the course teachers (about five from each university) will be immersed into issues of interreligious and intercultural theologising. South African theological scene is particularly strong in involving the social and political realities in academic theology, and there ÅAU has lot to learn from Stellenbosch University (SU). At ÅAU, Jewish studies and Jewish theology have been effectively included in theology which serves as an encouraging example for SU. Both universities' theology still has to face the challenge of figuring out how to involve Islam in theological research and teaching. The fact that the planned course covers all the three so-called Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), nudges the teaching staff in the direction of including Islam in the theological agenda. Deep mutual dialogue that includes a critical and self-critical examination of the core tenets of faith facilitates better cooperation between the faith communities.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Equipping future religious leaders <p>The two rounds of the course will involve 40 students, most of whom will become religious leaders in their communities. In this manner, the course contents and the ethos of the course will eventually trickle down to the faith communities and ameliorate the connections between different faith groups. Considering the high</p>

level of immigration in both Åbo area and the Western Cape, the intercultural abilities gained through the course will come to daily use.

3. Transfer and expansion of international networks

Prof Vähäkangas moved to ÅAU in September 2021 for a five-year contract. Previously, he has worked e.g. in Tanzania, Sweden, Italy and South Africa. His South African networks are extensive and he serves as an extraordinary professor at both SU and University of the Western Cape in South Africa. With the help of this project, he will be able to transfer the existing contacts to ÅAU staff and help the staff to create new connections.



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UTBILDNINGSTYRELSEN

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