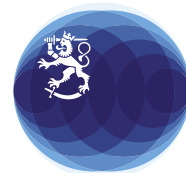


EVALUATION

EVALUATION OF THE FINNISH DEVELOPMENT POLICY
INFLUENCING IN THE EUROPEAN UNION



Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland

Volume 2



Evaluation of Finland's Development Policy and Cooperation

2022/5B



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1 Nepal case study

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1.1 Introduction

Remark: *The case study report does not constitute a separate evaluation of the Finnish Development Policy Influencing in the European Union. It presents findings relevant to the overall assessed Evaluation Questions (EQ) / Judgement Criteria (JC) and feeds into the main evaluation report of the Evaluation of the Finnish Development Policy Influencing in the European Union to which it will be attached as an annex.*

1.1.1 Objective and contribution of the case study to the evaluation

The objective of the case studies of this evaluation is to assess the level, degree and effectiveness of Finnish influencing of the EU within a country context. They are listed as one of the evaluation's methods of data collection in the Methodology (Volume 1, section 2.2).

The country context provides a very different context for influencing the EU than the Brussels/EU capitals context. The number of EU players (EUD and Member States (MS) embassies) is generally smaller, the personal connections between all the heads of mission, heads of cooperation and sector specialists are more direct and frequent and their daily concerns are both more operational and more political vis à vis a single interlocutor, the partner government. In such circumstances, influencing works more directly and regularly in often quite intense day-to-day debates. Of course, the work of Finnish Embassies and EUDs is set within frameworks provided by headquarters that make them more limited in scope, yet, at the same time debates occurring in-country often feed-back to headquarters bringing useful lessons learnt from hard experience to bear on overall policy frameworks and strategies.

It is hoped that this different country-level can therefore also bring out some useful lessons on EU influencing for the Ministry.

1.1.2 Methodology of the Nepal case study

The methodology of the Nepal case study included a desk review, key informant interviews and analysis and writing of the results. The data collection was organised remotely, on the one hand, because of the good connectivity and willingness of the key informants and stakeholders to conduct the interviews remotely, and on the other hand because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The case study team was composed of two evaluators that both had good previous expertise and knowledge of the socio-cultural situation of Nepal, which facilitated the desk study, interviews and analysis of information. The knowledge of the evaluators reflected different strengths of the evaluation focus areas which also enabled a more comprehensive view.



Box 1 Main techniques and tools used in the case study



Document review covering documents from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (including the country strategies, ambassador's plans, progress reports, crosscutting objectives, etc), the Finnish Embassy in Nepal, the RVWRMP project documents and reports, the European Union Delegation to Nepal's plans and strategies, as well as media articles.



Remote semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders, including the different members of the European Union Delegation to Nepal, the Finnish Embassy to Nepal, EU MS representatives present in Nepal, The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, the officials in Brussels following up on Nepalese themes, as well as the project and programme implementing actors.



Survey responses were received from the European Union Delegation to Nepal and from the Finnish Embassy to Nepal.

1.2 Context

Main evolution of the country context (e.g., using key development indicators) and main challenges:

Political situation: In the past two decades, Nepal has undergone dramatic political change, transforming from an absolute monarchy to a federal democratic republic and has successfully maintained peace after the violent internal conflict that ended in 2006. However, since the early 1990s political instability and short-lived governments have been a significant character of Nepalese politics. In the new Constitution adopted in September 2015, the country was restructured from five regions to seven provinces, within which 753 newly created local jurisdictions are governed by locally elected officials. In Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) Nepal has remained in the bottom third. In the regional and global context, Nepal maintains a non-aligned stance. It is sandwiched between two giant neighbours, India and China.

Inequality: Nepal is a highly diverse society that includes around 125 recognised ethnic and caste groups and over 100 spoken languages. The traditional caste system created many patterns of discrimination. Significant inequalities thus exist between gender and social groups, rural versus urban areas, ecological belts, and provinces. Wage inequality between sexes remains high, and the high rate of male out-migration has "feminised" Nepal's agriculture. Discrimination against women and some social groups remains a barrier to their empowerment. The hilly and mountainous terrain makes many remote areas inaccessible thereby also creating a geographical dimension to inequality, for instance impacting on rights to education, water and sanitation.

Disasters: Due to its mountainous terrain Nepal is prone to natural hazards and the resultant socio-economic losses. The country ranks in the top 10 in the long-term Climate Risk Index (2021) of the most affected countries from 2000 to 2019. Nepal's economic growth turned into a major slump in 2015 due to the dual effects of the devastating earthquakes and the political strife that led to a prolonged blockade of the country's Indian border. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused further abrupt halts in economic activities and has had widespread socio-economic impacts that will affect Nepal's growth strategy well beyond the pandemic.



Development trends and evolution of ODA figures:

Nepal has achieved an impressive decline in absolute poverty over the past decades as the poverty rate fell from 41.8% of the population in 1996 to 25.2% in 2011 and further to 18.7% in the fiscal year 2018. The UNDP's *Human Development Index (2019)* ranks Nepal 147th among 189 countries, and the country has shown a consistently improving trend. Nepal is categorised as a *least developed countries (LDC)*, with a gross national income per capita of 1,036.5 USD in 2019. Nevertheless, Nepal has set itself the goals of graduating from LDC status by 2026 to become a middle-income country and to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Nepal has made some improvements in the *Doing Business Index (2019)* recently, but a lot remains to be done. Nepal has a high potential e.g., in power generation, high-value agriculture and agro-processing and tourism.

Since 1956 the Government of Nepal has compiled *periodic development plans*, which have normally covered five years, but changes in periods have also happened due to political instability. *Foreign aid* continues to play an important role in Nepal's progress. According to the World Bank index on net ODA, the per centage of ODA in the GNI has remained stable between 2014 and 2019, at around 3,9% of GNI. However, the volume of remittances per month equals the development grants received by Nepal in a year.

Other main donors present in the country – in particular EU MS:

Development cooperation in Nepal is characterised by the presence of few bilateral donors but a wide variety of UN specialised agencies, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. The EU is the largest bilateral provider of development assistance to Nepal. Together with Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, the countries form the EU++ group. Currently among the EU MS only Finland, France and Germany are present in Nepal, in addition to the EU Delegation. Denmark was also present in Nepal but closed its Embassy in 2017. The UK has had diplomatic relations with Nepal since 1816, but now, due to Brexit, acts independently of the EU group. The United States and Japan are also among Nepal's biggest providers of development assistance.

1.3 Finland's activities with the EU in Nepal

Three MFA Country Strategies cover the period of the evaluation. Although the focus topics (see Annex 1 of this case study) have changed somewhat between these three plans, issues of accessibility and discrimination have remained constant concerns, particularly for women and groups in marginal circumstances. Quality education has been a priority area in all three periods as have health and WASH issues. Strengthening public administration has also been a recurrent theme.

The EU has had similar concerns in both its MIPs for 2014–2020 and the new one for 2021–2027. In the first period, the two sectors of Rural Development and Education were allocated about EUR 140 million each whereas a third sector on democracy and decentralisation got about half this amount. The specific objectives for each sector are listed in Annex 2 of this case study. The new MIP from 2021 on Human Capital Development and Good Governance continue with the priorities of education and institution building. To this is added a new priority area on Inclusive Green Growth. While the EU's MIP 2014–2020 mentions Finland only once as a pooling donor on education, the MIP 2021–2027 does so systematically and refers particularly to joint programming in WASH and education, and in the TEI focus on Green Recovery. It also notes the “drivers on gender inequality in Nepal through a *gender transformative approach*” and has a reference to GAP III.



Intensive Finland-EU cooperation in Nepal took off during this MIP in 2016 when the EU agreed to fund the long-standing Finnish project in the far West of Nepal, the RVWRMP with an allocation of EUR 20 million in *delegated cooperation* to be managed by the MFA, that more than doubled the scale of the project. While providing water supply to remote villages was the main instrument of the RVWRMP (or WAVE project as the EU called it), the project provided a valuable platform for tackling various key development issues in the remote rural areas covered, including women's empowerment, accessibility for marginalised groups, health, hygiene and sanitation and local institutional development. The EU shared many of these priorities with Finland and they added others such as renewable energy. Equally, it enabled the EU to diversify its support towards local authorities as an addition to their hitherto exclusive support to the central government.

The MIP 2021–2027 suggests that there is potential to synchronise the review of the seven years of programming with the current National Development Plan of Nepal from 2019 to 2024 and the programming cycle of EU MS (Finland and Germany). The mid-term review will also be timely to assess the policy coherence and implementation of the EU strategic priorities including the possible use of the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+) in Nepal, the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024, Gender Action Plan III 2021–2025 and other thematic strategies, priorities and plans. In addition to the joint programming at country level, important fora and platforms for exchange between Finland and the EU include the Finnish EU Presidency in the second half of 2019 and the COVID-19 Response.

The recent independent publication “*Transition from development cooperation to broader forms of cooperation in Nepal*”, commissioned by the Finnish University Partnership for International Development (UniPID), funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA), refers to the Nepal graduation from LDC status in 2026. It recognises that the EU is an important actor when it comes to trade relations in Nepal, and this is also relevant looking at Finland's interests in transitioning towards multiple forms of cooperation now and in the future. The report also recognises that, in line with Nepal's transition from LDC, Finland could be in a leading position in Nepal to prepare the stakeholders for the transition into a wider range of cooperation. The report concludes that in the wake of LDC graduation, Nepal will lose some of the existing preferential trade schemes with the EU and, despite the low volumes, trade with the EU would be affected. However, Nepal can still apply for the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) scheme, and Finland, along with the EU and its MS, could support Nepal in developing Nepal's capacity, with structural changes that are required to ratify and implement conventions to be eligible for GSP+. This could potentially provide it with further influencing opportunities when turning from development to trade.

Regarding the evaluation's focus areas, the following observations can be made:

- Covid-19 response: Finland and the EU have cooperated on Covid Response in Nepal. They have also discussed proposals for Team Europe initiatives in their 2021-2024 and 2021-2027 programmes.
- Gender equality: Both the EU and Finland have mainstreamed gender equality in their strategies during the evaluation period. The Finnish strategies also identify more targeted focuses on women's participation, particularly in economic and political development.
- Governance and Human Rights: As already strengthening transparent public administration has been a recurrent theme in Finland's country strategies in Nepal, the EU has a focal sector on good governance in its new MIP (2021-2027) and prior to that one on strengthening democracy and decentralisation.



- Rights of persons with disabilities: As indicated above the three Finnish country strategies for the period all include concerns with accessibility and discrimination, but it is not till the 2021 strategy that there is a specific mention of rights of persons with disabilities as such in the title of one of the focuses. The EU NIP 2014 and the MIP 2021-2027 do not mention disability inclusion per se in their respective focal sectors, though these do include some references to inclusive access notably to education.
- Education: This has been a focal sector for the EU under both the previous and the current MIP though now it is under the heading Human Capital Development. For Finland, education was a focal sector under both the previous strategies (2013-2016 and 2016-2019) but is now no longer a focus topic.
- Climate change: Inclusive Green Growth is now the first priority in the EU's MIP since 2021. For the earlier MIP climate change was not a focal sector but mainly came up in the context of adaptation in the rural development sector. For Finland, the 2013-2016 strategy had a focus on inclusive management of forests and environmental administration, but it is not until the 2021 strategy that a focus on climate and disaster resilience was identified.

1.4 Findings

1.4.1 Organising the MFA for efficient influencing of the EU (EQ1)

This section provides findings of the Case Study on Evaluation Question 1.

Criterion 1.1: The approach and strategy developed by the Ministry to influence the EU starting from its influencing plans, were efficient, coherent within and with wider MFA policies and well understood by all actors, including for the embassies and for the wider Finnish government bodies involved and the Parliament

Main findings:

Finland has organised itself to influence the EUD to Nepal in line with its Country Strategy priorities, which also correspond with Finland's overall development cooperation priorities and have been developed in cooperation with the MFA and the Embassy. Finland's focus on a limited number of sectors is widely understood and seen as sensible. This organisation for influencing has been evident in priority sectors and themes (gender equality, education, WASH, rights of persons with disabilities, climate), as well as influencing by marshalling evidence of programme results to persuade the EU of the value of Finnish approaches. On the other hand, working closely with the EU has been hindered by the MFA having different programming timelines and processes than the EUD and giving less emphasis to communication where more efforts on visibility would be useful to gain influence. Finland and the EU have largely shared goals. Finland's approach is systematic, iterative and long-term which is largely appreciated by the EU but is also seen by some officials as relatively cautious and indicating an aversion to taking risks.

**Evidence base:**

The findings are mainly based on interviews with MFA HQ, MFA Embassy and EUD, and supported by documentary review (MFA CSP and Results reports).

Criterion 1.2: The staffing levels and budgets deployed by the MFA at various levels of engagement for influencing the EU have optimised the use of the resources available

Main findings:

Finland's priority areas have been supported through the staffing at the Embassy to Nepal and Finland is considered to participate actively in key EU areas of work. Staffing levels are generally seen as adequate for running the operations and the Embassy can find good additional expertise when required. One EUD observer stated that *'Finnish staffing is limited in quantity but good in quality'*. However, the limited staff resources available have also meant that some opportunities for further influencing have not been used; for instance, in terms of political steering with the EUD, taking on more management roles in joint settings, extending good practices and for communication.

Finnish ODA budgets for spending in Nepal are recognised by the EUD as limited, but this does not appear to be seen as a problem. Rather Finland is recognised as a small member state with therefore fewer resources than the other two main EU players in Nepal (Germany and the EU itself) that have considerable ODA budgets at their disposal.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA HQ, MFA Embassy, EUD and MS, the survey findings, and supported by documentary review (CSP, Ambassador's Plans) and Final Review on the Action of Kathmandu Embassy 2015).

Criterion 1.3: The roles and responsibilities of the Ministry's various units and actors (including the embassies) involved in influencing the EU and the systems for linking them were efficient, clearly established and well understood

Main findings:

The roles and responsibilities of the Embassy in influencing the EUD are well defined around the country strategy priorities and complementary with MFA in Helsinki influencing priorities. They have been well understood, although some differences of opinion in priorities also occurred. There seems to be a limited amount of influencing in the private sector participation although a long-term cooperation and EUD partnership in Nepal should enable a beneficial environment for this. External partners also perceive Finland as effective in its influencing; as one stated, *'Finland has done a really good job of agenda setting'*.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with EUD and MS, the survey findings and supported by documentary review (Team Finland Annual report 2020, Promotion of Finland's interests and the reflection of the priorities of MFA).



Criterion 1.4: Opportunities for joint working within the Ministry (including the embassies), and with the wider Finnish government and Parliament have been maximised

Main findings:

The Embassy works in close cooperation with the MFA. In addition, it works in what is recognised as a constructive way with the EUD and MS in Nepal, consulting in good time and taking full note of the strategy.

However, the Embassy has different processes and timing for project preparation than the EUD which limits influencing and joint working to a certain extent, but this is considered to have an impact mainly in practical matters rather than at the strategic level and with some goodwill and effort solutions can be found. At the same time, Embassy staff feel this matter could usefully be reviewed.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA Embassy, EU HQ and EUD.

Criterion 1.5: Learning feedback and monitoring mechanism on influencing have been established and used

Main findings:

There are some learning practices at the Embassy, but no established systematic learning mechanisms have been set up in a comprehensive way nor extended into communication using existing good practices.

The Embassy to Nepal has participated in learning and evidence collection for the MFA HQ level, and in EU influencing this has been particularly evident and applaudable on how the gender transformative approach from Nepal has been brought forward to be used in EU GAP III for evidence and indicator definition.

As Finland does not have an entity that is a member of the European Practitioners Network the Embassy does not benefit from the learning and knowledge sharing on operational issues that GIZ, one of its partners in Nepal, does benefit from through its membership of the Network.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA HQ, MFA Embassy, EU member state representatives in Nepal and EUD and supported by the survey findings.



1.4.2 A relevant, efficient, and coherent influencing process (EQ2)

This section provides findings of the Case Study on Evaluation Question 2.

Criterion 2.1: The Ministry has engaged at various levels and used different channels in a relevant, coherent, and efficient manner to build coalitions, within the EU and with other EU Member States on various priority areas

Main findings:

The Embassy has engaged with the EUD actively and built coalitions to identify and pursue a mutual interest. This has been particularly straightforward in a country with a limited number of EU MS embassies present – out of this group Finland was estimated to be possibly the most influential and the cooperation with the EUD is seen to strengthen the interests of both sides.

The engagement has been particularly evident in the water sector, in which Finland has had a significant influence through a large Finnish RVWRMP project (in which the EUD got involved in 2016). Significant engagement has happened also in education, gender equality and the COVID-19 response where Finland has contributed its thematic knowledge.

Finland and the EUD have collaborated on many joint missions, mutual support in dialogue fora with other donors, relations with the Government of Nepal and extensive joint communications work in Nepal. Finland's engagement with the EUD is seen as even more important by both sides in the COVID-19 context and after UK disengagement through Brexit and now with another core MS, Germany, phasing out its bilateral development cooperation. Recently the EUD, Finland and GIZ with Global Climate Change Alliance+ (GCCA+) funding have established a Team Europe Initiative called GRAPE.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA HQ, MFA Embassy, EU HQ, EUD and other interviews, survey findings, and supported by documentary review (Results reports, Ambassadors plans, ASA-40 Experiences of EU-delegated agreements and Lauka & Alanen presenting collaboration with EU on RVWRMP 2021).

Criterion 2.2: The Ministry has engaged at various levels and using a variety of different channels (including staff secondments) in a relevant, coherent and efficient manner to participate proactively and purposefully in EU governance structures in relation to its various priority areas

Main findings:

The Embassy has participated actively in the EUD and MS joint planning and other channels particularly in relation to the water sector, education, gender equality and COVID-19 response and recovery.

EUD's involvement in the RVWRMP project through delegated cooperation brought Fin-EUD cooperation and governance structures to a new level in Nepal, which was a learning opportunity for the overall EU governance structures in the field. The role of a Finnish seconded Junior Professional to the EUD was also essential as he pushed the RVWRMP agenda on the EUD side in 2013, although this is before the evaluation period. Finland has been very



motivated to take advantage of the opportunities presented by Team Europe and various priorities that Finland pushed for have been successfully included in the Nepal TEI.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA Embassy, EU HQ, EUD, the survey findings and supported by documentary review (CSP and FORMTEXT: Harmonisation and coordination of development cooperation in Nepal 2015).

Criterion 2.3: The Ministry has engaged at various levels and used different channels in a relevant, coherent and efficient manner to take advantage of the specific and relevant EU policy debates and opportunities that have arisen, including Finland's EU Presidency

Main findings:

Finland has taken advantage of the relevant opportunities that have arisen in Nepal. During Finland's EU Presidency, a 'gender champion' initiative was started amongst the ambassadors of the EU representatives, to bring the importance of gender equality in Nepalese society to the attention of the general public. Country opportunities are also considered, as the EU and Finland are working closely together to help in formulating a proposal for future budget support to the government for teacher training. Finland and 21 other development partners in Nepal, with Government of Nepal, signed the Kathmandu GRID declaration on Green Resilient and Inclusive Development in September 2021.

Finland has also participated actively in the TEI approach and COVID-19 response; Finland responded to the Government of Nepal's request for material assistance through the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism – although no direct influencing took place in this operation, the cooperation with the EU was considered relevant, timely and direct, which improves Finland's position in influencing.

Due to Finland's well-known position on the gender transformative approach, there was a request from DG INTPA for Finland to provide examples and indicators. The related field-level work existed in Nepal and the Embassy reacted positively to this request with high motivation and contributed to the GAP III discussions in Brussels.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA HQ, MFA Embassy, EU HQ and EUD and supported by documentary review (Ambassador's Plan 2019; MFA COVID-19 Assessment).

Criterion 2.4: Finland's stance has been visible and well understood by the European Commission and EEAS as well as by other EU institutional actors and Member States

Main findings:

Due to close exchange, cooperation and similar values, the EUD and MS know and understand Finland's position on WASH, education and gender equality. This has played a valuable role in reaching a shared understanding quickly between EUD and Finland on many topics. Finland is seen to push many agendas, including gender transformative approach (its twin track), disability inclusion and intersectionality, extended particularly also to water and education sectors.

**Evidence base:**

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA Embassy, EUD and MS, the survey findings and supported by documentary review (CSP:s and EU MIP:s).

*Criterion 2.5: Finland has established a leading or influential role on some priority issues***Main findings:**

EU and EU MS in Nepal acknowledge Finland's leading role in WASH, Human-rights based approach (HRBA) and some parts of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), particularly on changing social attitudes to menstrual hygiene in the RVWRMP project (which can be understood as part of SRHR).

Finland's significant role in the gender transformative approach of RVWRMP was recognised also in Brussels. Finland's storytelling methodology for monitoring attitudinal change has been used in a subsequent UN Women project to measure a transformative (behavioural and norm) change, reflected in GAP III.

Finland's role is recognised in education either as leading or strongly influential (difference of evidence in this), particularly in addressing teachers' capacity and equal access to education, and overall, Finland is considered most advanced in this sector.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA HQ, MFA Embassy, EUD and MS:s, the survey findings and supported by documentary review (Ambassador's Plan, CSP:s).

*Criterion 2.6: EU financial decisions and disbursements are in line with Finnish interests***Main findings:**

EUD financial decision in 2016 to fund the RVWRMP with Euro 20m is strongly in line with Finnish interests and has meant that EUD spending has increased in Finland's priority areas of WASH, HRBA and GESI. EUD interests were also included to a large extent in the project and the win-win arrangement was considered to be very fruitful for functional, long-term co-operation. The project and EUD involvement have also strengthened the use of the related financing model in working with local governments even further in other projects. These positive experiences have contributed to further spending in areas of Finland's interests, and particularly in the education sector there would be EU interest to increase their EU-Finland delegated cooperation funding, though this proved not to be possible due to limited capacity of the related project to absorb more funding (please see also Criterion 1.2).

Equally, the EU's decision to provide delegated cooperation funds to Finland for the RVWRMP moved the EU away from just providing budget support to the central government in Nepal and got them to also start funding programme work at a local level in different parts of the country.

**Evidence base:**

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA Embassy, EU HQ and EUD and supported by documentary review (CSP and MIPs).

Criterion 2.7: Finland's image as a trusted, professional and effective development policy and cooperation actor to be followed is well recognised and respected

Main findings:

All the interviewees at the EUD and MS in Nepal have a positive image of Finland as a development actor. There is a high degree of trust and its long record of cooperation work in the country adds to the respect Finland enjoys in Nepal. The way Finns work is considered professional, cooperative and constructive, coupled with a high level of expertise. RVWRMP delegated cooperation is seen very positively by EUD and in Brussels where an official commented 'we feel very lucky to have Finland in Nepal'; potential replication to other countries is even recommended.

The high degree of respect for Finland's contribution is also evident in education and GESI. The Finnish way of pushing the disability inclusion agenda was also considered efficient but also felt to perhaps need some further back-up in terms of feasibility.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with EU HQ, EUD, MSs, MFA Embassy and other interviews with the implementor side.

1.4.3 Effectiveness of influencing outcomes (EQ3)

This section provides findings of the Case Study on Evaluation Question 3.

Criterion 3.1: There are several good examples of relevant EU development policy debates important to Finland where it was able to significantly influence the position of EU staff or units to reflect Finland's priorities

Main findings:

During the in-country joint planning, Finland was able to influence the EUD, particularly in sectors of WASH, education and GESI. Yet EU officials pointed out this influencing has also gone both ways as the EUD and MS share many similar values in what can be termed a "European agenda". Several changes in these sectors have been observed due to Finland's active presence in those debates and multi-stakeholder dialogues (in WASH overall, in the approach to work closely with the local governments and in transformative, intersectional and SRHR sides of GESI). In the gender transformative approach, this has been extended further to Brussels in GAP III debates due to good examples being communicated from the field.

EU funds in RVWRMP increased the volume and impact of the overall Finnish cooperation in Nepal, and the EU and Finland have become closer partners in Nepal through this delegated cooperation.

The TEI is a platform increasing its use and value also in Finnish influencing in the future.

**Evidence base:**

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA HQ, MFA Embassy, EUD and other interviews and supported by documentary review (results reports, ASA-40 Experiences of EU-delegated agreements, Embassy presentation on collaboration with EU on RVWRMP 2021).

Criterion 3.2: Finnish influencing efforts have contributed to improved EU policy frameworks with respect to Finnish policy objectives

Main findings:

A relatively minor but significant finding here has been that the EUD recognised that the decentralised governance model with local authorities that Finland developed in the RVWRMP has served as a model that the EUD is now seeking to use in all its projects at the local level in Nepal. This also came at an opportune moment as Nepal was converting to a federal structure that emphasises decentralised local administration. Finland's practical experience with this governance model has thus been adopted as part of the EU policy framework in Nepal.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with EUD officials.

Criterion 3.3: Finland's influencing efforts have contributed to changes in the operational approaches of the EU

Main findings:

Finland influenced EUD to co-fund RVWRMP, which started from EUD side in 2016. This was achieved as a result of the long history and success of the project, EUD matching priorities and due to Finland's influencing work, in which a joint field mission played a significant role in the EUD decision. This achievement then enabled to influence the EUD on other key priorities of Finland, such as changing social attitudes on menstrual hygiene and the gender transformative approach, as part of the RVWRMP, as well as cumulative effect and influence on other joint programmes and projects (GRAPE and SUSWA in particular). Overall, the delegated cooperation has enabled EU and Finland to become closer partners in Nepal, with several future opportunities in the operational approaches.

Another key outcome has been the adoption by the EUD of the model developed by the RVWRMP of working with and directly funding local authorities. Finland showed this was possible and with the conducive context created by the shift to federalisation in Nepal, the EUD is now pushing this model of local programme governance to other projects and programmes.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA Embassy, EU HQ, EUD and MS and supported by documentary review (Note from Embassy on joint mission to RVWRMP April 2015).



Criterion 3.4: Finland can point to plausible examples of where it can legitimately claim to have contributed to increased EU's longer term operational efficiency in development cooperation

Main findings:

Finland's position as a key player in development cooperation in Nepal has contributed positively to both EUD and Finland, as they consider themselves to be stronger working together and advancing their priorities together with the Government of Nepal.

The RVWRMP model was also influential for other programmes that came along with EUD and MS, in which Finnish were putting less money but had strong positioning and got their agenda through, contributing successfully to Finland being bigger than their size and scaling up.

Further, the delegated cooperation funding model was then considered in Tanzania and Ukraine, with an interest to replicate it in those countries. Finland's gender transformative approach will in part guide the EU gender approach from the global level and support the operational efficiency by providing indicators and evidence to support the EU's long-term operational efficiency in gender transformative approach.

Another key outcome has been the adoption by the EUD of the model developed by the RVWRMP of working with and directly funding local authorities. Finland showed this was possible and with the conducive context created by the shift to federalisation in Nepal, the EUD is now pushing this model of local programme governance to other projects and programmes.

Different project processes and timing remain a limitation for delegated cooperation.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA Embassy, EU HQ, EUD and supported by documentary review (Embassy presentation on collaboration with EU on RVWRMP).

Criterion 3.5: Finland can point to plausible examples of where it can legitimately claim to have contributed to adjustments to the EU's thematic approaches and priorities in the EU's development cooperation

Main findings:

Finland has been successful in Nepal in influencing the EU's thematic approaches and priorities, which have influence also in the long term. For example, in the new EUD-Germany-Finland GRAPE project, Finland pushed for WASH and disability inclusion to be included in the project that will run for a longer time; themes that otherwise would not have been considered to the same extent.

Based on the previous findings, the EU is also keen to bring in the Finnish expertise in Nepal, particularly in the areas where it has added value and is the most advanced (education, WASH and gender transformative approach, and also in forestry, although Finland is interested to engage with the theme as part of other priorities rather than as a direct priority in Nepal), to benefit from the Finnish added value on these themes on a long-term basis.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with EU HQ, EUD, MS:s and other interviews.



1.5 Implications for the main report

In addition to the inputs for the response to the 3 EQs in the main report, the Nepal case study also provides evidence for the Process and Thematic cases studied in this evaluation.

Table 1 Main findings from the Nepal case study

PROCESS AND THEMATIC CASE	MAIN FINDINGS
Process	
EU Presidency	During Finland's EU Presidency, a gender champion initiative was started among the ambassadors of the EU representatives, to bring the importance of gender equality in Nepalese society to the attention of the general public.
Joint Programming and Delegated Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finland influenced EUD to co-fund RVWRMP, which started from the EUD side in 2016. This was achieved as a result of the long history and success of the project, EUD matching priorities and due to Finland's influencing work, in which a joint field mission played a significant role. This achievement then enabled to influence the EUD also on other key priorities of Finland through the programme. • EU funds in RVWRMP increased the volume and impact of the overall Finnish cooperation in Nepal, and the EU and Finland have become closer partners in Nepal through this delegated cooperation. • Another key outcome was the adoption by the EUD of the model developed by the RVWRMP of working with and directly funding local authorities. Finland showed this was possible. The EUD is now pushing this model of local programme governance to other projects/programmes. • The RVWRMP model was also influential for other programmes that came along with EUD and MSs, in which Finnish were putting less money but had strong positioning and got their agenda through, contributing successfully to Finland being bigger than their size and scaling up. In the new EUD-Germany-Finland GRAPE project, Finland pushed for WASH and disability inclusion to be included in the project that will run for a longer time; themes that otherwise would not have been considered to the same extent. • The delegated cooperation funding model was then considered also in Tanzania and Ukraine. It may have further scaling-up opportunities if systematised for learning. • Different project processes and timing between Finland and EUD remain a limitation for delegated cooperation, influencing and joint working to a certain extent, but this has been considered to have an impact mainly on practical matters rather than on the strategic level.
COVID Response / TEIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant engagement has happened also in the COVID-19 response: The Embassy has participated actively in the EUD joint operation on COVID-19 response and recovery and Finland responded to the Government of Nepal's request for material assistance through the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism. • Although no significant direct influencing took place in this operation, the cooperation with EU was considered relevant, timely and direct, which improves Finland's position in influencing Nepal.



PROCESS AND THEMATIC CASE	MAIN FINDINGS
Thematic priority	
WASH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finland’s role in WASH is widely recognised by the EU and MS. Finland’s most significant influencing in WASH was in terms of RVWRMP (please see Joint Programming and Delegated Cooperation). • In the new EUD-Germany-Finland GRAPE project, Finland pushed for WASH and disability to be included in the project that will run for a longer time; themes that otherwise would not have been considered to the same extent.
Gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU and EU MS in Nepal acknowledge Finland’s leading role in some parts of GESI, particularly in changing social attitudes to menstrual hygiene in the RVWRMP project (which is part of SRHR). • Finland’s significant role in the gender transformative approach of RVWRMP was recognised also in Brussels. Finland’s storytelling methodology for monitoring attitudinal change has been used in a subsequent UN Women project to measure a transformative (behavioural and norm) change reflected in GAP III. Finland’s examples of gender transformative approach in Nepal will therefore form part of guiding the EU gender approach at the global level and support the operational efficiency by providing indicators and evidence to support the EU’s long-term operational efficiency in gender transformative approach. • During Finland’s EU Presidency, a gender champion initiative was started among the ambassadors of the EU representatives, to bring the importance of gender equality in Nepalese society to the attention of the general public.
Rights of persons with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Finnish way of pushing the disability inclusion agenda was considered efficient by MS, but also felt to perhaps need some further back-up in terms of feasibility. • In the new EUD-Germany-Finland GRAPE project, Finland pushed for WASH and disability inclusion to be included in the project that will run for a longer time; themes that otherwise would not have been considered to the same extent.
HRBA and Good Governance	EU and EU MS in Nepal acknowledge Finland’s leading role and efforts in HRBA.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant engagement has happened in education, as the Embassy has participated actively in the EUD and MS joint planning and other channels. • Finland’s role is recognised in education either as leading or strongly influential (difference of evidence in this), particularly in addressing teachers’ capacity and equal access to education, and overall, Finland is considered most advanced in this sector.
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finland and EUD share similar views on climate change-related matters. • EU is also keen to bring Finnish expertise to Nepal, particularly in the areas where it has added value and is the most advanced. This includes also forestry although Finland is interested to engage with the theme as part of other priorities rather than as a direct priority in Nepal.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The influencing has gone both ways as the EUD and MS share many similar values and a “European agenda”. • The TEI is a platform increasing its use and value also in Finnish influencing in the future. • With the aim of Nepal to graduate from LDC status in 2026, the related shifts and transition agenda, as well as the EU’s key role in trade agreements, the economic cooperation and private sector participation is a potential future interest for influencing.

Source: Nepal case study



1.6 Annexes

1.6.1 Annex 1: MFA priorities in Nepal

MFA Country strategy 2013–2016 focused on the following topics:

- Capacitated, strengthened and transparent public institutions, public administration, CSOs and inclusive policy-making processes.
- Equal and universal access to relevant quality education
- Equal and sustainable access to safe and potable water in rural areas
- Economic empowerment, especially for women and easily marginalised groups
- Inclusive management of forest resources and environmental administration
- Strengthened WASH policy, planning and management

MFA Country strategy 2016–2019 focused on the following topics:

- Improved health and living standard of people through safe and sustainable water and sanitation services and livelihood development
- The education system provides students with the necessary skills to contribute to Nepal's economic and democratic development
- Improved economic and political participation for women and people in vulnerable situations

MFA Country strategy 2021–2024 focuses on the following topics:

- To reduce inequalities by addressing the connections between gender equality, disability inclusion and discrimination and other forms of exclusion and marginalisation
- To support sustainable development and climate and disaster resilience in the areas of education, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), livelihood development and gender equality.
- To diversify and further enhance political and economic cooperation between Nepal and Finland to prepare for Nepal's future transition to a middle-income country

1.6.2 Annex 2: List of EU priorities in Nepal

EUD to Nepal MIP 2014–2020

Sector 1 Sustainable Rural Development (EUR 146 million – 40.5 %)

- Specific objective 1: Profitable agricultural commercialisation with improved connectivity and market infrastructure
- Specific objective 2: Efficient and sustainable agriculture sector guaranteeing food security in rural areas
- Specific objective 3: Improve maternal, infant and child nutrition in rural areas
- Specific objective 4: Strengthen response, preparedness and recovery capacities of communities exposed and vulnerable to recurrent and predictable disasters



- Specific objective 5: Maximise the development impact of migration and to minimise its negative consequences in rural areas

Sector 2 Education (EUR 136.4 million – 38%)

- Specific objective 1: Increase access to and completion of education
- Specific objective 2: Reduce inequalities in education
- Specific objective 3: Improve the quality of education
- Specific objective 4: Expand access to literacy
- Specific objective 5: Provide a safer educational environment
- Specific objective 6: Strengthen the vocational training system

Sector 3 Strengthening democracy and decentralisation (EUR 74 million – 20.5 %)

- Specific objective 1: Support democratisation, domestic accountability and human rights through electoral assistance but also through capacity-building of democratic legislative bodies, justice institutions and other key institutions.
- Specific objective 2: Support to Nepal's decentralisation and state restructuring in the context of a new federal state, to ensure quality service delivery to citizens at local level.
- Specific objective 3: Improve effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and accountability of public finance management and reduce corruption at national and local level.

EUD to Nepal MIP 2021–2027

Priority area: Inclusive Green Growth

- Specific Objective 1: To support the implementation of Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) Targets of Nepal's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)
- Specific Objective 2: To support the implementation of Drinking Water and Sanitation Goals of Nepal's 15th National Development Plan (NDP)

Priority area: Human Capital Development

- Specific Objective 1: In line with the National Development Plan, to support -inclusive and equitable quality education, to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, and to support quality and equitable nutrition services

Priority area: Good Governance

- Specific Objective 1: To support civil society in protecting and promoting democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms
- Specific Objective 2: To support public institution-building for promoting democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms



2 Tanzania case study

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2.1 Introduction

Remark: *The case study report does not constitute a separate evaluation of the Finnish Development Policy Influencing in the European Union. It presents findings relevant to the overall assessed Evaluation Questions (EQ) / Judgement Criteria (JC) and feeds into the main evaluation report of the Evaluation of the Finnish Development Policy Influencing in the European Union to which it will be attached as an annex.*

2.1.1 Objective and contribution of the case study to the evaluation

The objective of the case studies of this evaluation is to assess the level, degree and effectiveness of Finnish influencing of the EU within a country context. They are listed as one of the evaluation's methods of data collection in the Methodology (Volume 1, section 2.2)

The country context provides a very different context for influencing the EU than the Brussels/EU capitals context. The number of EU players (EUD and Member States (MS) embassies) is generally smaller, the personal connections between all the heads of mission, heads of cooperation and sector specialists are more direct and frequent and their daily concerns are both more operational and more political vis à vis a single interlocutor, the partner government. In such circumstances, influencing works more directly and regularly in often quite intense day-to-day debates. Of course, the work of Embassies and EUDs is set within frameworks provided by headquarters that make them more limited in scope, yet, at the same time debates occurring in-country often feedback to headquarters bringing useful lessons learnt from hard experience to bear on overall policy frameworks and strategies.

It is hoped that this different country-level can therefore also bring out some useful lessons on EU influencing for the Ministry.

2.1.2 Methodology of the case study

The methodology of the Tanzania case study included a documentary review, key informant interviews, and analysis and drafting of the results. Data collection was conducted remotely, partly due to good connectivity and willingness of key informants and stakeholders to conduct interviews remotely, and partly due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The case study team consisted of an evaluator and a research assistant who had good previous experience in evaluating and conducting case studies, which facilitated the desk review, interviews and data analysis. There were no responses received to the eSurvey questionnaire sent to Tanzania.



Box 2 Main techniques and tools used in the case study



Document review covering documents from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (including the country strategies, ambassador's plans, progress reports, crosscutting objectives, etc), the Finnish Embassy in Tanzania, and the European Union Delegation to Tanzania's plans and strategies.



(Remote) semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders, including members of the European Union Delegation to Tanzania, the Finnish Embassy to Tanzania, EU MS representatives present in Tanzania, The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, as well as the project and programme implementing actors.

2.2 Context

Tanzania has traditionally been a politically stable country and the CCM (Cama Cha Mapinduzi) has been Tanzania's main ruling party for decades. In 2015, President John Pombe Magufuli came to power with the ambitious goals of curbing corruption, reforming the public sector, cutting government spending, industrialising the economy, and prioritising infrastructure development. In October 2020, general elections were held, and President Magufuli was elected for a second term, also achieving an absolute majority in parliament. On March 17, 2021, President John Magufuli passed away during his term and his vice president, Samia Suluhu Hassan, became Tanzania's first female president.

Some useful steps forward have been made in recent years, for example, on access to free education and energy, and anti-corruption measures. In the Transparency Corruption Index (CPI), Tanzania ranks 87th out of 180 countries, seeing a positive evolution from 2016 (it was ranked 117th out of 168 countries). (Transparency International, 2022) However, the public sector remains ineffective in implementing development policies and providing adequate services for all. Tanzania has at the same time experienced a narrowing of democratic space and human rights. Civil and political rights such as freedom of expression, space for opposition, media and civil society are under pressure. The independence of institutions such as parliament and the judiciary has also deteriorated. An increase in trade and foreign investment in Tanzania is hampered by the unpredictability of the business environment. Tanzania ranks below its regional competitors in the World Bank's Doing Business index, with a ranking of 141/190 (World Bank, 2019a).

Tanzania has enjoyed strong economic growth over the past decade. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, real GDP growth was expected to remain in the 5-6% range over the medium term. In July 2020 Tanzania reached the World Bank's criteria for being a lower middle-income country, an achievement that may be difficult to maintain post-pandemic. Despite being one of the fastest growing economies globally, it remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Although poverty has declined from 34.4% in 2007 to 26.4% in 2018, the absolute number of poor has increased due to rapid population growth, with about 26 million people, or almost half of the population, living below the international poverty line (1.9 USD/day) (World Bank, 2019b). Tanzania ranks 163 out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2020). Inequality persists and women face multiple challenges, including discrimination in social institutions, which continues to severely



hamper empowerment opportunities for women and girls in Tanzania according to the latest OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index Country Report (OECD, 2022b).

Tanzania's political, economic and social development objectives are detailed in the Tanzania Development Vision 2025, whose practical implementation is carried out through the Five-Year Development Plans (FYDP). Foreign aid continues to play an important role in Tanzania's progress. According to the World Bank, net ODA levels have remained stable between 2014 and 2019 but have decreased as a % of GNI.

In Tanzania, the EU is the most important reference group for Finland. The Nordic countries also have a special role in Tanzania due to the long history of development cooperation. The Nordic countries cooperate actively in Tanzania on issues such as Nordic values, political dialogue and trade. Other like-minded countries with which Finland actively cooperates are the United States, Canada and Switzerland, as well as major international organisations, such as UN agencies like UN Women, UNFPA, the World Bank, the IMF and the African Development Bank.

2.3 Finland's activities with the EU in Tanzania

Finland's and EU cooperation framework in Tanzania, focal sectors and evolution in 2014–2021:

Three Finnish country strategies cover the period of the evaluation. In 2021, the MFA's guidance to the long-term partner countries of Finland changed in the sense that country teams were requested to prepare a comprehensive country strategy in addition to the country programme for development cooperation (previously titled 'country strategy'). The foci for each of the strategies were as follows:

1. MFA Country strategy 2014 – 2017 focus topics:

- Good governance and equitable service delivery;
- Sustainable management of natural resources and access to land;
- Promotion of inclusive, sustainable and employment-enhancing growth.

2. MFA Country strategy 2016 – 2019 focus topics:

- Improved performance of the public sector;
- Increased employment and livelihoods.

3. MFA Country strategy 2021 – 2024 focus topics:

- Democracy, human rights and gender equality;
- Stability and sustainable development by contributing to poverty alleviation, promotion of livelihoods and climate resilience;
- Inclusive and sustainable growth and employment creation by engaging in trade promotion and supporting the business environment.



4. Country programme for development cooperation Tanzania 2021–2024 focus topics:

- Inclusive development through active citizenship;
- Improved forest-based livelihoods and climate resilience.

On the other hand, there are two EU strategic documents for Tanzania for the same period. These covered:

1. EUD to Tanzania National Indicative Programme 2014-2020

- Good Governance and Development;
- Energy;
- Sustainable Agriculture;
- Support to civil society.

2. EUD to Tanzania Multi-Annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027

- Green deals;
- Human capital and employment;
- Governance;
- Civil society is identified as a key actor in each of the three priority areas.

Both EU's and Finland's programmes in Tanzania contain a long-term focus on good governance, one of the strongest common elements in the strategies over the years.

Similarly, both entities have maintained the land-use sector high on the agenda; the EU concentrated on agriculture in its NIP 2014-2020, while Finland also included forestry in its country strategy 2014-2017. In the MIP 2021-2027, the EU added forestry, but Finland dropped agriculture from its priorities in the 2016-2019 strategy.

The increased importance of private sector engagement can be observed for both parties since 2014. The trend is visible in the MIP 2021-2027 and Finland's country strategy and programme 2021-2024; the strategies emphasise the enhancement of businesses, jobs, and income opportunities.

The latter part of the evaluation period is also marked by President Magufuli's request for the Head of the EU Delegation to leave the country in 2018 (along with the Head of UN Women, the Head of the UNDP, and the Head of UNESCO who received a similar expulsion order) (EU, 2018). The disagreement was over the international community questioning the suppression of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights in Tanzania (CNN, 2018). According to the 2017 and 2018 MFA country reports, the Embassy of Finland in Dar es Salaam contributed actively to the dialogue to re-establish the relations between the two parties. However, they did not reach an agreement despite their efforts. The 2019 report points out that the ties have been normalised, but some challenges remain.



Regarding the evaluation's focus areas, the following observations can be made:

- Covid-19 response: Finland and the EU discuss Team Europe in their 2021-2024 and 2021-2027 programmes. Vaccine donations are not discussed.
- Gender equality: both the EU and Finland have mainstreamed gender equality in their strategies during the evaluation period. Furthermore, a clear shift in Finland's Country Programme 2021-2024 is the inclusion of targeted gender action (women's participation in political decision-making and action against gender-based violence).
- Governance and Human Rights: As discussed above, governance has constituted a key priority for both donors in Tanzania. Regarding human rights, Finland has been more explicit about the rights-based approach than the EU already since 2014. In Finland's Country Strategy 2021-2024, the first objective is that Finland will "*promote democracy, human rights, and gender equality*".
- Rights of persons with disabilities: The EU NIP 2014, the MIP 2021-2027, and Finland's Country Strategy 2014-2017 mention disability inclusion only briefly. However, explicit references are made in Finland Country Strategy and Country Programme 2021-2024 ("*Special attention will be given to the increased vulnerability of persons with disability*").
- Education: Neither donor has chosen education as a key priority in Tanzania; Finland withdrew from the sector before 2014 due to a changing division of labour among donors. EU MIP 2021-2027 and Finland's Country Programme 2021-2024 include some elements of vocational training.
- Climate change: Both parties bring up climate change mainly in the context of adaptation in the natural resources sector. In later strategies, both use the term "*climate resilience*" again when referring to the sustainable use of natural resources.

2.4 Findings

2.4.1 Organising the MFA for efficient influencing of the EU (EQ1)

This section provides findings of the Case Study on Evaluation Question 1.

Criterion 1.1: The approach and strategy developed by the Ministry to influence the EU starting from its influencing plans, were efficient, coherent within and with wider MFA policies and well understood by all actors, including for the embassies and for the wider Finnish government bodies involved and the Parliament

Main findings:

Finland has organised to influence the EUD to Tanzania in alignment with Tanzania's development strategies and five-year plans (FYDP). Finland has made use of its long track record in the country where it has garnered experience and expertise and has designed successive cooperation strategies that build on these elements that are in line with Finland's overall development cooperation priorities.



With a relatively small but long-term portfolio based on local capacity building, Finland has focused on a few thematic areas or “niches” through which it has been able to demonstrate a clear identity and achieve results, as recognised by the EU and other EU MS.

This approach is evidenced in the selection of sectors over time (mainly forestry, gender equality and inclusivity, and human rights/ governance), many of which are aligned with those of the EU. Finland has sought to engage in issues of particular strategic interest to the EU, making use of its thematic expertise in specific niche areas as a leveraging point, being more successful in some areas (e.g., gender equality) than others.

Finland’s approach, based on the idea of sustainability and working with local actors, is widely regarded as sensible but in some cases insufficient to achieve influence and change at a more global policy level.

Evidence base:

The findings are mainly based on interviews with MFA Embassy, EUD, EU MS and other actors, and supported by documentary review (MFA CSP).

Criterion 1.2: The staffing levels and budgets deployed by the MFA at various levels of engagement for influencing the EU have optimised the use of the resources available

Main findings:

Finland has organised itself in terms of resources around its main thematic pillars, with personnel with sufficient expertise and leadership skills to cover the positions. Resource constraints, which result in people having to fill more than one role, have been noted as a difficulty for influencing but also as a factor that has made it possible to portray signs of flexibility and adaptability. A lack of resources and administrative obstacles are identified as a hindrance that has not allowed Finland to exploit its capacity to influence the EU through, for example, delegated implementation of actions. This has also been reflected in the phasing out of support modalities that had proved to have positive effects, such as budget support, due to austerity measures.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA HQ, MFA Embassy, EUD and MS, and supported by documentary review (Biannual Results Report, Ambassador’s plans and Self-assessment of the Country Strategy).

Criterion 1.3: The roles and responsibilities of the Ministry’s various units and actors (including the embassies) involved in influencing the EU and the systems for linking them were efficient, clearly established and well understood

Main findings:

The roles within the Embassy around influencing the EU are clear, and the division of labour among the team members seems to be working well, although it is recognised that prioritisation of objectives may be necessary given the multiple tasks to be covered and the small number of staff. Although both the Embassy and the geographic desk (MFA HQ) indicated that they are not aware of a specific framework or guidelines for how influence on the EU should be carried out, they agree that influencing is an imperative. They also



recognise that they get this message through multiple communication channels with the MFA and acknowledge that *“it is something that is expected of them”*. The EU and EU MS agree that in Tanzania the effectiveness of Finland’s influence has been linked to strong, knowledgeable and long-standing individual staff, which makes some officials wonder about the sustainability of the effects.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA HQ, MFA Embassy, EUD and MS, and supported by documentary review (Self-assessment of the Country Strategy, Embassy Strategic plan).

Criterion 1.4: Opportunities for joint working within the Ministry (including the embassies), and with the wider Finnish government and Parliament have been maximised

Main findings:

The Embassy works actively in collaboration with the MFA, framed by weekly meetings and regular reporting. To mitigate their limited resources the Embassy has made efforts to increase collaboration with other institutions to increase their influence on the EU and diversify the ways cooperation is implemented. The success of these collaborations has been uneven, with some cases still too incipient to show results. Several actors have pointed out that the inability of other Finnish institutions (in addition to the MFA) to carry out delegated cooperation work for the EU is a reflection of administrative hurdles and lengthy processes which could be reviewed to facilitate joint work between institutions and greater influence on the EU. The cooperation with Tax Finland through technical cooperation with the Tanzanian Revenue Administration has been of great value to all parties, including the government, and has been positively recognised by the EU.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA HQ, MFA Embassy, EUD and MS, and supported by documentary review (CSP, Ambassador’s plan, State Department Development Policy Department Memorandum).

Criterion 1.5: Learning feedback and monitoring mechanism on influencing have been established and used

Main findings:

The Tanzanian Embassy, in particular its HoC, reports on the results of influencing the EU and has participated in several MFA workshops that have covered the topic and in which good practices have been shared. However, the mechanisms for learning, reporting and communicating results on EU policy influencing do not appear to be systematic, but rather incidental within the framework of trainings or workshops with other objectives. The piloting of an exercise in which Embassies could prepare papers on policy influence in the African region to share ideas and good practices has been highlighted, but this exercise was unfortunately never taken up again.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA HQ and MFA Embassy and supported by documentary review (Results Report on development Policy and Cooperation, workshop presentations).



2.4.2 A relevant, efficient, and coherent influencing process (EQ2)

This section provides findings of the Case Study on Evaluation Question 2.

Criterion 2.1: The Ministry has engaged at various levels and used different channels in a relevant, coherent, and efficient manner to build coalitions, within the EU and with other EU Member States on various priority areas

Main findings:

Finland is a committed development actor in Tanzania and has used different platforms, including coalitions, to engage with the EU and seek alignment on mutual action points. In Tanzania, the EU and 13 MS meet regularly, with Finland being one of the 5 most active, according to different sources.

The relationship between the EU and the Tanzanian government has been delicate in recent years and Finland, building on its good dialogue with the government, has aligned with a smaller group of EU MS to issue joint communications. In addition to the EU as a bloc, Finland has established close relations with other EU MS in bilateral relations, and also in the framework of the Development Partner Group (DPG), where MS “act as one family”. Finland’s commitment has been evident, for example, in the area of taxation, a sector in which few countries are currently active and where it has managed to excel, participating in joint programmes with the EU and other MS, as well as pushing for the creation of a sub-group focused on the issue within the DPG. The areas of human rights and gender equality, as well as forestry, are key sectors of Finnish cooperation in Tanzania, where the country has managed to differentiate itself through its long experience and track record. The Embassy has actively sought to use this to its advantage to try to increase its influence, including by exploring relatively innovative areas such as the blue economy.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA Embassy, EUD, EU MS, and other interviews, and supported by documentary review (CSP, Ambassador’s plan, and several communications).

Criterion 2.2: The Ministry has engaged at various levels and using a variety of different channels (including staff secondments) in a relevant, coherent and efficient manner to participate proactively and purposefully in EU governance structures in relation to its various priority areas

Main findings:

The Embassy has used different channels to actively engage in joint planning with the EU, including engaging in the discussion processes of the new MIPs and the subsequent formulation of action documents.

The Embassy has made efforts to leverage the presence of Finnish consultants in the EUD and within other development actors, particularly in the areas of gender equality and forestry, with moderate success in the results obtained.

Finland has also been proactive in its effort to attract highly qualified short-term personnel of Finnish nationality to join projects of common interest between Finland and the EU. The



Embassy has also tried to leverage its reputation in a cross-cutting area such as gender equality to support its mainstreaming in projects of strategic interest, such as a TEI in blue economy.

At the same time, the Embassy has built on this reputation and track record to take leading roles in different thematic sub-groups within the DPG, such as on gender equality and human rights. Despite this, the inability to engage actively in delegated cooperation opportunities with the EU because the procedures (including pillar assessment) were not in place appears as a missed opportunity, particularly in the area of taxation, where other EU MS are withdrawing from Tanzania.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA HQ, MFA Embassy, EUD, and other interviews, and supported by documentary review (Annual reports, EU monitoring documents).

Criterion 2.3: The Ministry has engaged at various levels and used different channels in a relevant, coherent and efficient manner to take advantage of the specific and relevant EU policy debates and opportunities that have arisen, including Finland's EU Presidency

Main findings:

Finland has been able to seize the opportunities that have arisen in Tanzania, particularly around the gender equality agenda. Following the adoption of the EU's new Gender Action Plan (in late 2020), the Embassy has been actively involved in the design of its country-level implementation plans (CLIPs), being one of the few MS to do so. Finland has also been heavily involved in the programming of the action document (AD) on gender equality in the framework of the new MIP. Taking advantage of its role in leading the gender equality DPG, Finland assumed a leadership position and took a stand against government measures that undermined women's and girls' rights.

Building on the positive experience of consecutive projects on women's leadership, the Embassy was able to position itself in a way that the EU would pursue these areas of work and engage with Finland's implementing partners in its programming,

Finland has also taken advantage of opportunities such as the design of new TEIs in the country to push for the incorporation of elements of strategic interest to Finland, such as gender equality and forestry. For this purpose, Finland has used to its advantage not only its technical expertise but also its on-the-ground working experience and its well-established implementing partner network.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA Embassy, EUD, EU MS, and other interviews, and supported by documentary review (EU documentation).



Criterion 2.4: Finland's stance has been visible and well understood by the European Commission and EEAS as well as by other EU institutional actors and Member States

Main findings:

Due to its active role in Tanzania, thematic alignment and collaboration, Finland's position and approach are well known to the EUD and MS. Areas of intersection with other EU MS and the EUD, particularly gender equality, governance (including taxation and human rights) and forestry, have facilitated this understanding as well as joint work and cooperation. In addition to its expertise in these thematic areas, Finland has created an identity through its approach focused on concrete objectives and working in different geographic areas.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with EUD, EU MS, and other interviews, and supported by documentary review (Ambassadors' plans, CSP, evaluation of the term of office of ambassador).

Criterion 2.5: Finland has established a leading or influential role on some priority issues

Main findings:

The EU and MS in Tanzania recognise Finland's leadership role notably in the gender equality and forestry agendas, and also, though to a lesser extent, in the area of governance, including human rights and taxation. In the area of forestry, Finland is recognised for its long track record in the sector and in the country, and for the technical expertise of its specialists and staff that makes it the "go-to donor" in the forestry sector. The EU has contacted Finland to get "inspiration" on its programming and partners. In the area of gender equality, it is especially recognised for its focus on GBV, women's leadership, and mainstreaming. In terms of governance, there is evidence of a more vocal role in the human rights agenda at the beginning of the evaluation period that has evolved into more concentrated support in the area of taxation and mainstreaming of HRBA, including in the area of taxation.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA Embassy, EUD, EU MS, and other interviews, and supported by documentary review (CSP, AAP Tanzania).

Criterion 2.6: EU financial decisions and disbursements are in line with Finnish interests

Main findings:

The latest EU MIP in Tanzania (2021-2027) is aligned with Finland's priorities. Specifically, the 3 core thematic areas are the Green Deal (including forestry as a specific objective), human capital and employment (with a focus on education in its specific objectives, and inclusiveness as a cross-cutting issue), and governance. In the first ADs that emerged from the AAP 2021, Finland's priorities have been mainly reflected with respect to gender equality and taxation, which shows the active participation that the Embassy had during the process of formulation of the MIP and the first AD, particularly in these two areas. On gender equality, this resulted in the drafting of an AD adopting the "gender transformative" language in its title, to which the EU contributes EUR 70 million. As for taxation, Finland reinforced its already active participation in the MIP process through its successful experience with the Tanzania



Revenue Authority (TRA). This was reflected in the AD on green cities, which has as one of its strategic objectives “promoting and enabling regulatory and policy environment to enhance local revenue mobilisation”, a topic closely linked to Finland’s interests on governance linked to taxation and in which it has done joint work with the EU and other MS. The EU’s contribution to this component is EUR 30.6 million. This AD also makes reference to the work done with the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA), in which Finland has participated, and highlights a PFM reform programme carried out by Finland as a good practice. In the previous programming cycle, there had been discussions between the EUD and Finland for the financing of a project linked to forestry value chains for EUR 10 million, but in the end, no progress was made due to a mismatch in timing (the Finnish program was already underway) and geographical scope.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA Embassy and EUD and supported by documentary review (MIP Tanzania (2021-2027), Gender AAP Tanzania).

Criterion 2.7: Finland’s image as a trusted, professional and effective development policy and cooperation actor to be followed is well recognised and respected

Main findings:

All stakeholders interviewed in the EUD and the EU MS in Tanzania have a positive image of Finland as a development actor. This opinion is shared by other stakeholders, including UN agencies, and good dialogue with the government is also emphasised. Finland is noted for its credibility, its long-standing presence in the country, its technical expertise in thematic areas such as gender equality and forestry, and its comprehensive knowledge of the country and local structures. This facilitates cooperation with Finland, which is considered a professional actor, with sufficient visibility and is highly appreciated.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA HQ, MFA Embassy, EUD, EU MS and other interviews, and supported by documentary review (CSP, Gender AAP Tanzania).

2.4.3 Effectiveness of influencing outcomes (EQ3)

This section provides findings of the Case Study on Evaluation Question 3.

Criterion 3.1: There are several good examples of relevant EU development policy debates important to Finland where it was able to significantly influence the position of EU staff or units to reflect Finland’s priorities

Main findings:

During the joint planning of the latest MIP in Tanzania, Finland played a very active role. This, together with its long history in the country visible through successful programs and a general recognition of its expertise, has been reflected in a document reflecting Finland’s priorities, which are also shared priorities with the EU and other MS. The active presence of Finland in the forestry sector for over 45 years, among other factors such as the involvement of Finnish expertise in the MIP design, has contributed to the shift from a strategy



with a stronger focus on agriculture to one with the explicit inclusion of forestry in linkage to the blue economy. Also, through active dialogue, and based on consecutive successful programs on the topic, Finland has advocated for the inclusion of a focus on women's leadership in the gender AD under the most recent AAP. In addition, the titling of the AD as a "Gender Transformative" action is a reflection of Finland's efforts in the GAP III discussions in Brussels, which are also reflected at the country level.

Finland's trajectory working with the TRA and on PFM reform has served as inspiration and has been referenced in strategy documents as well as recognised by the EUD.

While TEIs in Tanzania are still under development, the TEI focused on Blue Economy has presented an opportunity for the EU to consult with Finland in specific areas, including forestry, and for Finland to seek to incorporate cross-cutting gender equality and HRBA elements into it.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA Embassy, EUD, EU MS and other interviews, and supported by documentary review (CSP, Gender AAP Tanzania).

Criterion 3.2: Finnish influencing efforts have contributed to improved EU policy frameworks with respect to Finnish policy objectives

There were no findings on this immediate outcome in Tanzania.

Criterion 3.3: Finland's influencing efforts have contributed to changes in the operational approaches of the EU

Main findings:

Finland was influential in shaping the scope of the TEI in Blue Economy, for which discussion started in mid-2020. Finland advocated for expanding the scope of the geographic area covered by the TEI (including more coastal areas in the mainland), due to its strong work in these areas. This new geographic delineation is evident in the text of the EU's 2021-2027 MIP describing the TEI and was achieved as a result of Finland's long history of working in the forestry sector in these areas.

In the area of gender equality, as a result of more than 12 years of work with the Uongozi Institute, Finland facilitated the partnership with the Institute and the EUD to initiate joint activities in the area.

In the area of taxation, through the example of successful experiences working with the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA), Finland persuaded the EUD to consider incorporating technical assistance into its cooperation package in this area. The EU is currently studying this possibility.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA Embassy, EUD, and other interviews, and supported by documentary review (Annual Results Report, MIP 2021–2027).



Criterion 3.4: Finland can point to plausible examples of where it can legitimately claim to have contributed to increased EU's longer term operational efficiency in development cooperation

There were no findings on this immediate outcome in Tanzania.

Criterion 3.5: Finland can point to plausible examples of where it can legitimately claim to have contributed to adjustments to the EU's thematic approaches and priorities in the EU's development cooperation

Main findings:

Finland has influenced EU approaches, thematic priorities and geographical delimitations that have long-term effects. For instance, forestry occupies an important place in the latest MIP that will be carried forward for a longer period and will make good use of Finland's long-standing experience in the thematic area in Tanzania. In the area of gender equality, Finland's active role in the preparation of Tanzania's GAP III CLIP will guide long-term EU actions in this area until at least 2025, with potential effects beyond that date. In turn, Finland has also been influential in the geographic delineation of the blue economy TEI, which also has a forestry focus. The TEIs aim to support transformational change, which constitutes a long-term approach.

The interest seen on the part of the EU in incorporating Finland's expertise and point of view in areas such as forestry, gender equality and taxation shows that Finland's long-term contributions in these areas could be significant, especially if further joint working modalities can be found.

Evidence base:

The finding is mainly based on interviews with MFA Embassy, EUD, and other interviews, and supported by documentary review (Annual Results Report, MIP 2021–2027).



2.5 Implications for the main report

Table 2 Main findings from the Tanzania case study

PROCESS AND THEMATIC CASE	MAIN FINDINGS
Process	
EU Presidency	-
NDICI Negotiation	-
COVID Response / TEIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finland and the EU discuss Team Europe in their 2021-2024 and 2021-2027 programmes. Vaccine donations are not discussed. • The Team Europe approach during the Covid crisis appears to have consolidated a common European approach and pooled resources in a productive way.
Thematic priority	
Gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender Equality is a high-priority objective for Finland and the EU, and Finland has become for the EUD the go-to partner on the topic. It is especially recognised for its focus on GBV, women's leadership, and mainstreaming. • Finland has been able to seize the opportunities around the gender agenda. Following the adoption of the new Gender Action Plan (in 2020), the Embassy has been actively involved in the country-level implementation plans (CLIPs), being one of the few MS to do so. • Finland has also been heavily involved in the programming of the action document on gender equality in the framework of the new EU MIP. There is a specific AD that has adopted the "gender transformative" language in its title. • As a result of more than 12 years of work with the Uongozi Institute, Finland facilitated the partnership with the Institute and the EUD to initiate joint activities in the area.
Governance & Human Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is evidence of a more vocal role in the human-rights agenda at the beginning of the evaluation period (2014) that has evolved into more concentrated support in the area of taxation and mainstreaming of HRBA, including in the area of taxation. • While TEIs in Tanzania are still under development, the TEI focused on Blue Economy has presented an opportunity for the EU to consult with Finland in specific areas and for Finland to seek to incorporate cross-cutting gender equality and HRBA elements into it. • In the area of taxation, through the example of successful experiences working with the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA), Finland persuaded the EUD to consider incorporating technical assistance into its cooperation package in this area.
Rights of persons with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit references are made in Finland Country Strategy and Country Programme 2021-2024 ("Special attention will be given to the increased vulnerability of persons with disability"). In practice, support for the disability inclusion agenda appears as linked to the gender equality and human rights agenda. • Finland's work with UNFPA, for instance on GBV issues, targets girls and women with disabilities. • Finland's role as a major donor and referent of the UNDP multi-partner trust fund "Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PRPD)" has been highlighted at the global level (not specifically in Tanzania).



PROCESS AND THEMATIC CASE	MAIN FINDINGS
Education	Neither the EU nor Finland have chosen education as a key priority in Tanzania; Finland withdrew from the sector before 2014 due to a changing division of labour among donors. EU MIP 2021-2027 and Finland's Country Programme 2021-2024 include some elements of vocational training.
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Climate change is referenced mainly in the context of adaptation in the natural resources sector. In particular, the Chairmanship of the donors' forest/ environment group enabled Finland to promote the role of forests in mitigating climate change. This has led, for example, to a proposal to bring in Finnish colleagues specialising in climate change and mitigation in support of the EUD, which is still being discussed.• Finland has also provided support to the meteorological agency of Tanzania, which can be of importance in the context of the Blue Economy TEI, but also in meteorology and climate analysis in general.
PCD & PCSD	While policy coherence has not been discussed to a great extent or as a specific priority in Tanzania, Finland has recognised the importance of aligning with the government's priorities in its strategies in the country. In addition, its role in supporting coherence and coordination in the UN environment has been recognised, and its role as a valued donor to the national government has been highlighted.

Source: Tanzania case study



3 Ukraine mini-case study

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3.1 Introduction

***Remark:** The mini-case study report does not constitute a separate evaluation of the Finnish Development Policy Influencing in the European Union. It presents findings relevant to the overall assessed Evaluation Questions (EQ) and feeds into the main evaluation report of the Evaluation of the Finnish Development Policy Influencing in the European Union to which it will be attached as an annex.*

3.1.1 Objective and contribution of the case study to the evaluation

The objective of the case studies of this evaluation is to assess the level, degree and effectiveness of Finnish influencing of the EU within a country context. They are listed as one of the evaluation's methods of data collection in the Methodology (Volume 1, section 2.2)

The country context provides a very different context for influencing the EU than the Brussels/EU capitals context. The number of EU players (EUD and Member States (MS) embassies) is generally smaller, the personal connections between all the heads of mission, heads of cooperation and sector specialists are more direct and frequent and their daily concerns are both more operational and more political vis à vis a single interlocutor, the partner government. In such circumstances, influencing works more directly and regularly in often quite intense day-to-day debates. Of course, the work of Finnish Embassies and EUDs is set within frameworks provided by headquarters that make them more limited in scope, yet, at the same time debates occurring in-country often feedback to headquarters bringing useful lessons learnt from hard experience to bear on overall policy frameworks and strategies.

It is hoped that this different country-level can therefore also bring out some useful lessons on EU influencing for the Ministry.

3.1.2 Methodology of the case study

Ukraine was initially selected as a case study during the inception phase of this evaluation. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, it was agreed with MFA that a "mini-case study" would be produced instead, based on a limited number of interviews with MFA stakeholders and documentation review. Education was selected as the main sector of relevance. As no interview took place with EU staff, the findings of this case study are based on only partially triangulated evidence.

3.2 Context

Finland's country-level development policy and cooperation priorities are typically stated in Country Strategy documents covering 3-4 years. Unlike in other long-term partner countries of Finland, the objectives and activities for Ukraine have been defined in the context of the **Wider Europe Initiative (WEI)**. WEI, launched in 2008, is a programme that covers Finland's bilateral development cooperation in Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia. The duration of Phase I was 2009-2013, and Phase II was 2014-2017.



Phase III was translated into a separate **Country Programme for Ukraine (2018-2022)**, and the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan (2018-2021) (MFA, 2018d). The disbursements for Ukraine in WEI I corresponded to approximately 6.2 million Euro; in Phase II, 5.5 million Euro; and in Phase III, 4.9 million Euro. In Phases II and III, the education sector increased in importance compared to other work areas. Finally, education has represented the largest share of Finland's development cooperation budget for Ukraine (Webber et al., 2021). Other essential sectors have included energy efficiency and humanitarian aid, among others. Finland's development cooperation in Ukraine is coordinated closely with the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the EU's Single Support Framework (SSF) (MFA, 2018d).

Similarly, as for Finland's other long-term partner countries, the MFA has also formulated a comprehensive **Country Strategy 2021-2024 for Ukraine**. The document describes all forms of joint efforts with the country beyond development cooperation. In this policy document, too, education is likewise a priority sector (MFA, 2021c).

3.3 Finland's activities with the EU in Ukraine

Chapter 4 of Finland's **Country Strategy 2021-2024 for Ukraine**, focusing on Development Cooperation, mentions close coordination with the EU, with some activities (notably education) included in the EU 2018-2020 Single Support Framework. *"The EU development cooperation in Ukraine is guided by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and implemented through the 2018–2020 **Single Support Framework (SSF)**. Finland's development cooperation in Ukraine is in line with the ENP and is closely coordinated and partly implemented with activities included in the SSF"* (page 12).

Education sector

The education sector is the first priority area in the Country Programme for Ukraine (2018-2022). The expected impact is that "Ukrainian basic and vocational education are reformed to meet European standards, and the education system is appreciated by citizens". The target is divided into three expected outcomes: (1) Modernisation of Ukrainian education and improved teaching and learning in accordance with 21st-century requirements, (2) the Vocational Education Training (VET) system in Ukraine has been reformed and modernised so that it can better contribute to sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, and (3) Ukrainian citizens regardless of native language have access to quality national language education and can fulfil their constitutional rights in Ukraine concerning access both to higher education and to the labour market.

The two main **education projects** involve some co-funding elements from the EU. They are:

- Finland's Support to the Ukrainian School Reform "Learning Together". The project provides financial support from Finland for educational reform in Ukraine in the amount of up to EUR 6 million and up to EUR 2 million from the European Union. Finland's support to the NUS reform focuses on general primary and secondary education and is designed around three main result-clusters (1) teacher preparation, (2) education promotion and (3) education environment. As a new element, the EU support for enhancing the Ukrainian language instruction among the national minorities is fully integrated into the initial three clusters in a cross-cutting manner. In addition, inclusive education for all is supported as an initial cross-cutting element across the three clusters. Finnish Consulting Group Ltd was selected as the main implementing agency in cooperation. The project has been extended until 2023.



- **EU4Skills for Modern Ukraine: EU4Skills (7/2019 – 6/2023)** is a multilateral project whose main objective is to support the reform and modernisation of vocational education and training in Ukraine in close cooperation with the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). The project is funded by the EU (EUR 16 million), Germany (EUR 2 million), Finland (EUR 2 million) and Poland (EUR 1 million). The funding is channelled through GIZ, which has overall responsibility for the implementation of the project.

3.4 Findings

3.4.1 Activities

Selected interviews with MFA staff provide more details about the relevant activities that have underpinned EU's partnership / influencing in the education sector.

The main communication channel is between the MFA Embassy and the EUD in Ukraine, “In education, coordination is mostly happening in Kyiv; Helsinki is not really involved”. Yet, due to limited time and resources, staff placement in Brussels has also been key in strengthening the EU-Finland partnership in Ukraine (education sector) over the years. More specifically, a Finnish education and social sector expert was seconded to the Brussels-based European Commission Support Group for Ukraine (SGUA)¹ from 2017. In this new role, the expert (who came from the Finnish National Agency for Education and was already well connected in Ukraine, having led the formulation of an MFA education project in Ukraine, focusing on teachers' education) was able to **make the connections – and share information – between the EU and the MFA, making them aware of joint programming opportunities.** This was the main “trigger” leading to the EU's decision to provide supplementary funding for the ongoing MFA education project, instead of developing its own project. For the EU4Skills project, information also came from the Embassy and colleagues at EEAS. After further internal discussion, the Finnish MFA subsequently decided to contribute to the EU4Skills project.

Since then, the MFA has appointed an education sector expert in the Embassy of Finland from 2018 (MFA, 2018d), creating another potential channel for influencing through close monitoring of the Learning Together project and active participation in project steering committees for the EU4Skills project.

¹ SGUA was established by decision of the President of the European Commission in April 2014. SGUA was created as a Task Force to support Ukraine in the implementation of the Association Agreement with the EU (including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area). SGUA ensures that support provided by the European Commission – advice, expertise and financial cooperation drawn from across the services of the Commission – is focused and concentrated. SGUA also helps to mobilise EU Member States' expertise and enhance strategic upstream coordination with other donors and the International Financing Institutions. SGUA is made up of a number of thematic teams corresponding to the essential reform priorities set out in the Association Agreement. These teams cover areas such as governance and rule of law, justice and home affairs, economic governance, agriculture, energy, infrastructure, health, education, and communications.



3.4.2 Outputs

Finland's demonstrated lead expertise in the education sector – coupled with its long-standing partnership with Ukrainian Ministry of Education – was key in getting the EU on board. According to MFA officials, Finland is the biggest bilateral actor in primary and secondary education. The EU had an agenda and realised it would be easier to channel their funds through Finland.

Furthermore, the importance of using sector experts was described as important not just for networking and “trust-building” but also for their knowledge of EU relevant policy documents: *“People need to be there to create trust and to make your points clear. For this you need to be aware of what is written in the EU policy documents – being well versed in this language to make successful change. Advisers have good knowledge of these policy documents. However, country desks do not – meaning that there is a gap here that can create problems” (MFA official).*

Another conducive factor was that “Finnish development policy is very much in-line with the EU. It's just that we emphasise different aspects. It's a good starting point for negotiation”. For example, MFA considers that a gender perspective is already well mainstreamed in the project.

3.4.3 Outcomes

The fact that the EU decided to financially support a Finnish-led project can be considered as an achievement/outcome in itself. There is limited evidence elsewhere to show that Finland MFA has influenced, on the one hand, the EU's education agenda in Ukraine and, on the other, the EU's ways of working.

A main hindering factor, highlighted by MFA staff, was the limited knowledge and experience that Finland (and its selected consultancy firm) has in implementing EU projects. This according to some MFA respondents, led to poor delivery. More specifically, the Finnish MFA has found it hard to meet the EU reporting requirements, which were in turn mostly non-negotiable. As put by MFA officials *“this is a learning curve for us”*.

Another constraint is related to the limited staff capacity of the MFA, in particular at the Embassy. As a result, despite the EU being the biggest player in Ukraine, and, until the secondment of the education expert at SGUA, **Finland's engagement with EUD was relatively ad hoc**, *“and down to the Embassy if they had enough time” (MFA)*. One feature of the MFA Unit for Eastern Europe and Central Asia is that they have a separate team dealing with development cooperation. This feature was not found to have an effect (positive or negative) on MFA EU influencing.

Information flow also remains an issue *“sometimes information does not reach the capitals” (MFA official).*

For the Learning Together project, the EUD (who was the main interlocutor during the preparation of the project) was reported as having given a “free-hand” to the MFA to design the project and select their team of consultants. At the same time, **from a content point of view, it seems that the influence came more from the EU, which, through additional funding, added a new component and cross-cutting element (on inclusion) to the Finnish project.**



For the EU4Skills project, **the MFA was at first hesitant to contribute to the EU4Skills project, because of its limited experience in vocational education and training (VET)**. Before the war started, the appointment of an education expert (which took more than a year) was expected to generate new opportunities to influence the project, through close monitoring and participation in GIZ-led meetings. **As put by one MFA respondent, the EU4Skills can be considered as their Team Europe Initiative in Ukraine.**

Looking forward, **the ongoing pillar-assessment of the Finnish National Education Agency** should provide an opportunity for Finland both to showcase its education expertise and gain experience in implementing EU-funded projects.

As put by an MFA informant, *“effective influencing requires to have the right individuals in the right place; be present; be pro-active (EUD organises a lot of meetings); and building trust through use of sector experts”*.

3.5 Implications for the main report

Based on the findings of this mini-case study, the following influencing outcome was harvested and verified for Ukraine: “EU has provided additional funding to Finland-led education project” – as an example of effective influencing by MFA, leading to the EU making new financial pledges at country level, which reflect Finland priorities.



4 Process brief – EU Presidency

4.1 Introduction

Background on Finland's Council Presidency



In July-December 2019, Finland held the EU Council Presidency. The last Presidency held by Finland was in 2006.

The 18-month programme of the Council, prepared by the succeeding Romanian, the Finnish and the preceding Croatian Presidencies (also referred to as the Trio Presidency Programme) was adopted by the General Affairs Council in December 2018 (Council of the European Union, 2019d).

Consequently, the Finnish **Presidency Programme** (Finnish Government, 2019b) covered (i) common values and the rule of law as a cornerstone of the EU (ii) a competitive and socially inclusive EU (iii) the EU as a global climate leader (iv) protecting the security of citizens comprehensively and (vi) other key issues (including migration).

EU key events in the context of Finnish Presidency



During the Finnish Presidency, the EU Council adopted the following **decisions and conclusions** of relevance to development cooperation: (Council of the European Union, 2019a):

- Council Conclusions on (i) addressing inequality in partner countries; (ii) humanitarian assistance and international humanitarian law; (iii) the third report on the implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan; and (iv) the fourth progress report on the Nutrition Action Plan (November 2019).
- Council decision amending the directives for the negotiation of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and regions (December 2019).
- Council Conclusions on Strengthening the European financial architecture for development (December 2019).

The Council Conclusions on gender equality, the financial architecture, and EPA were those mentioned during the interviews with MFA and external stakeholders.

Concerning **NDICI**, the Finnish Presidency came on the heels of the adoption by the EU Council of its mandate for negotiation (under the Romanian Presidency) in June 2019. (Council of the European Union, 2019c) This paved the way for the start of Trilogue negotiations (involving Commission, Parliament and Council) in October 2019.

Little progress was made with the **post-Cotonou negotiations** with ACP countries and regions during the Trio and Finnish Presidency.



**Finland
Presidency's
influencing
objectives on
EU development
cooperation**



Finland's main priorities for influencing the EU's development cooperation and policies during the Presidency were **Africa** and **gender equality**. Other priorities (including NDICI) were listed in a work plan for **CODEV**, adopted in May 2019 (MFA, 2019a).

While retaining an overall vision – as first laid out in the 18-month programme of the Council – Finland's approach to its Presidency was to remain **flexible** and respond to new opportunities as they came up. This explains the long list of items included in the CODEV work plan.

The Presidency, as a whole, was supported by a total of **14 extra officials in different areas seconded** from the Commission (10), Parliament (1), the Council (2) and the External Action Service (1). At the beginning of 2019, the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CO-REPER I) team (dealing, amongst others, with development cooperation) more than doubled. Training and manuals were provided to all seconded officials.²

4.2 Finland's influencing activities and achievements

**Activities and
Outputs**



Overall:

Internal memos³ show that the **MFA started to prepare for the Presidency early**. The Prime Minister's Office (and MFA) coordinated cross-Ministerial (and **internal**) **inputs and discussion**, looking at likely priorities and practical matters (resources etc). From mid-2018, the MFA Development Policy unit paid visits from Helsinki to discuss the programme with (i) the Trio Member States (MS) and other MS (including France and Germany and Belgium) (ii) the European Commission and European Parliament.

With this preparatory work, Finland was able to:

- Build/strengthen the relationships with EU MS and EU institutions, while gauging their positions on key issues and understanding their expectations for the Presidency (39).
- Learn the dos and don'ts from previous Presidencies.
- Identify key opportunities for influencing, building on existing work and processes (from EC and CODEV working groups).
- Establish a realistic agenda, including a schedule of events.

² See list of internal MFA documents in the bibliography (Annex 7 in Volume 1).

³ See list of internal MFA documents in the bibliography (Annex 7 in Volume 1).



Implementation:

The main **activities** (specific to development cooperation) carried out during the Presidency included: (MFA, 2021b)⁴

Scheduled Council group meetings (COREPER, CoAfr, ACP working group, CODEV, NDICI working parties), as chaired by Finland's delegates.

From October 2019, Trilogue technical and political meetings, covering the first round (or so-called cluster) of NDICI negotiations.

Joint informal meetings involving Council delegates across working parties, including a CODEV- working party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) -NDICI informal event held in Helsinki, in July.^{5, 6}

A series of public events were held in Helsinki and Brussels, including a public event on gender equality with the Commission and a high-level event with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in October 2019 (European Platform of Women Scientists, 2019).

Regular visits by the Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade to Brussels to present the priorities of the Presidency to the EU Parliament (Committee on Development); participate in the Foreign Affairs Council; and, as speaker, in high-level events.

As confirmed by both MFA and external stakeholders, "corridor" discussions were also key in facilitating the adoption of Council Conclusions.⁷

During the Presidency, the MFA's role was to act as an "**honest broker**" who did not take a visible stance on its own positions. This approach was deliberate, as highlighted in the grey literature and interviews with officials in Brussels, who stress the importance of dialling down influencing when holding the Presidency.

Stakeholders' perceptions of Finland's Presidency in Brussels were all very positive. Finnish delegates came across as well-prepared and well-organised and benefiting from enough guidance while given enough autonomy from Helsinki. They were described as experienced, professional, and easy to work with. Finland's **constructive and inclusive approach** during its Presidency was also highlighted as key in helping create a **climate of trust and optimism** amongst MS and EU institutions (including, during NDICI negotiations).⁸

4 In addition to memos, see (MFA, 2021b).

5 Other examples include joint informal meetings between CODEV, NDICI sub-group and Working Group of Financial Advisors to discuss NDICI financial architecture.

6 There was no informal meeting of development ministers organised during the Trio presidency.

7 See for example (MFA, 2020c).

8 Adopting an inclusive approach was highlighted as particularly important when dealing with DG Near and Eastern MS during the NDICI negotiation, as they feared the focus on their region would be lost with the move towards a single instrument.



The decision to bring in an **ambassador** to chair the NDICI sub-group on the negotiations was well received, though her appointment was felt to have come a bit late in the process by some. More specifically, the team (ambassador & technical advisor) leading on NDICI was acknowledged as having strong negotiation skills. The technical advisor's full-time position (before and during Presidency) helped them stay on top of complex negotiations, and the ambassador's background in development cooperation provided some reassurance to all MS.

Also, in relation to the NDICI, Finland seemed well positioned to address **divisive issues, notably migration and the role of EIB in the new financial architecture**, thanks to active participation in related MS discussions (including like-minded groups) over the years. Finland's position on migration was also well established and consistent across EU internal and external affairs.⁹

Outcomes



Overall:

Five outcomes (including three on NDICI) were harvested and validated through triangulated evidence:

1. Council mandate for the **NDICI** negotiation was revised and Council Conclusion on the role of EIB/EFSD+ was adopted.
2. A compromise solution was found on the reference to migration.
3. The first round of the NDICI Trilogue negotiations, involving Council (with Finland as chair), Parliament and Commission, was completed successfully.
4. Council Conclusions on **GAP II annual report** (with some reference to SRHR) were adopted by consensus
5. Council amended the directives for the negotiation of **EPA** with ACP countries and regions.

⁹ See list of official MFA documents in the bibliography (Annex 7 in Volume 1).



4.3 Conclusions on Finland's effective influencing

Significance of verified outcomes



Although it would take another four Presidencies for the NDICI negotiations to be completed (under Germany's Presidency) in June 2021, Finland's Presidency was significant in getting MS to agree to key changes to the Council negotiating mandate and in getting the Trilogue discussion off to a good start:

- The revision of the Council negotiating mandate to include EFSD+ was key in keeping **NDICI** negotiations on track; so was the compromise solution on how to cover migration;¹⁰ the wording proposed by Finland on migration ('incitative' approach) was subsequently retained in the final regulation.¹¹
- Under Finland's Presidency, the Trilogue started in October 2019, with the negotiating teams agreeing on the working methodology (use of clusters and discussions first carried out at technical level); and, in December 2019, the Trilogue agreed on most parts of Cluster 1 topics.

Finland also followed Romania's footsteps in getting the GAP II progress report adopted by Council. The Conclusions proved significant in two ways: first, the language on SRHR was strengthened in the text of the Conclusion; second, the Conclusion gained more significance in time, as this is the last time that MS unanimously agreed to a shared EU **gender** action plan.

While heralded as a main priority in Finland's Presidency Programme, no specific outcome was achieved on **Africa** – outside the revision of the EPA negotiating directives, which was largely unplanned.

- Instead, Finland promoted Africa as a priority mostly through the work of EEAS and the Foreign Affairs Council, and through public events and external communication.
- As noted by MFA, Finland also took the opportunity of its Presidency to discuss the development of a comprehensive **EU-Africa partnership** with the Commission. The Commission and HRVP subsequently submitted a joint communication on the EU Strategy for Africa in March 2020.¹²
- Concerning the EPAs, the Council ACP working party requested the Commission to update the negotiating directives. While the 2002 directives remained overall comprehensive, an update was deemed "*necessary to frame new negotiations more accurately in light of recent Union policy initiatives and priorities as trade evolves worldwide*".

10 This compromise solution was approved without further discussion by COREPER as an addendum to the Council negotiating mandate in November 2019.

11 As confirmed in (Council of the European Union, 2019c).

12 Finland's Africa Strategy was approved in March 2021. (Finnish Government, 2021)



Contribution of other external factors



External factors that contributed to successful outcomes were as follows:

- Progress was made under Romania's Presidency, with the adoption of the Council negotiating mandate for **NDICI** in effect confirming the plan to move to one single instrument. Discussion on the role of EIB/EFSD+ was also ongoing, with notably the appointment of a Wise Men Group. (Council of the European Union, 2019b)
- Cluster 1 of the NDICI negotiation deliberately focused on the easier part of the negotiations (general provisions) as a way to create good momentum and *"a lot of confidence amongst MS"* (Interview with EU Parliament). This made it easier to complete this first round of negotiations, although some issues remained outstanding and were postponed to the next round of discussion.
- **Finland was the strongest MS during its Trio Presidency**, which helped boost its image and credibility.
- **At the time of the Finnish Presidency, there was good "collaborative spirit" between the EU institutions.** The transition to the new instrument has since led to a redefinition of the relationship between the Council and Commission

There were also a few hindering external factors:

- Opportunities to influence EU's partnership with Africa ended up **being** quite limited, because of the stalled **post-Cotonou negotiations** and limited opportunities for MS (and Presidency) to take part in the negotiation (MFA, 2019b).
- The Finnish Presidency also coincided with an **"institutional void"** (-Finnish Government, n.d.) in the EU institutions. The new Commission (and INTPA Commissioner, appointed in September) took up office in November 2019. EU parliamentary elections took place in May 2019, with the new MEPs starting work in July. According to the final MFA COREPER report (MFA, 2021b), the situation compounded the work of the Presidency: *"During Finland's presidency, the Commission was in a politically paralysed state and this was reflected in practical work"*.¹³

¹³ According to a key informant, the forthcoming parliamentary elections created a sense of urgency and helped the parliamentary team of negotiators to finalise Parliament's position on NDICI in March 2019, two months before the new parliament was installed.



Conclusions on Finland's contribution



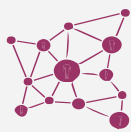
- **Finland played an effective and visible role in leading the NDICI/EFSD+ negotiation, during its Council Presidency in July-December 2019.** Some aspects of the negotiations were relatively straightforward, with the Trilogue discussion starting with procedural matters, and the hardest part of the negotiations (already) expected to take place under Germany's presidency. Finland was nonetheless able to **(pick up and) mediate on two difficult issues, migration in NDICI and the role of EIB in EFSD+**, for which the opinions within MS and with the EU institutions strongly diverged. On these topics, Finland combined strong mediation skills with innovative methods – prompting hands-on informal discussion between the Commission, the Council and the EIB, and proposing new wording for migration.
- Under its **Presidency**, Finland also confidently issued requests to the Commission, as shown by the request to update the EPA directives. On gender equality, Finland skilfully worked closely with like-minded states in favour of more ambitious language, while ensuring all MS would stay on board and unanimously approve the final text.
- On a less positive side, **the Finnish government (with the MFA) could have done more to elevate and shape its EU influencing development cooperation agenda** during its Presidency. Thus, while the Finnish Programme, promoted an EU-Africa partnership as a main priority, it did not take on board the evidently limited opportunities to do so because of the stalled post-Cotonou negotiations. As a result, the main achievements regarding Africa related to the holding of public events and selected country discussions (including Sudan), with EEAS, by the Foreign Affairs Council.



5 Process brief – NDICI negotiations

5.1 Introduction

Background on NDICI



The NDICI-Global Europe regulation was approved and came into force in June 2021, after 4-6 years of discussion involving all EU Member States (MS) and EU institutions.

NDICI-Global Europe includes 3 pillars (geographic, thematic, rapid response). The main guiding principles are simplification (notably the budgetisation of the European Development Fund (EDF)); increased democratic scrutiny and transparency; enhanced coherence; flexibility (financial, substantial, institutional); leverage (with the new investment architecture) and impact.

The NDICI regulation incorporates key spending targets. At least 93% of funding must qualify as official development assistance; at least 20% of ODA funding must be spent on human development; and at least 85% of new actions should have gender equality as a principal or significant objective of which at least 5% as a principal objective (see below for targets on climate and migration)

NDICI also comes with an investment framework. This framework seeks to mobilise private sector funds, through the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+). Key modalities used by EFSD+ are blending, technical assistance and budgetary guarantees supported by the External Action Guarantee, consisting of an open architecture window and a European Investment Bank (EIB) dedicated window.

In 2021 after the final negotiations on the 2021–2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the European Council agreed to allocate EUR 79 billion (in current prices) to the NDICI (under Heading 6 Neighbourhood and the World).

Key events



Main landmarks of the NDICI negotiations are as follows:

- **2016:** the European Commission opens a public consultation on the reform of EU development policy, leading to the New Consensus and the first round of discussion on the future development cooperation instrument.
- **June 2018:** European Commission publishes its proposal for the NDICI.
- **June 2018:** CODEV's sub-group on NDICI-Global Europe launched.
- **March 2019:** Parliament adopts its position/mandate for negotiations, based on a report by the committee on Development (DEVE) and the committee on Foreign affairs (AFET).



June 2019: Council adopts a partial mandate for negotiations with the European Parliament.

September 2019: Council adopts an additional mandate on the EFSD+.

October 2019: Parliament, Council and Commission enter into Trilogue negotiations (involving both technical and political discussions).

May 2020: the Commission publishes a revised MFF proposal.

September-October 2020: Council agrees to a full negotiating mandate, Trilogue negotiations on the final text regulation resume.

June 2021: NDICI regulations adopted as a legislative act.

Finland's position on NDICI



Finland first established its position on the new instrument, when the European Commission opened a public consultation in **2016** (MFA, 2016).

The government's position on the new instrument was presented in a letter to the Finnish **Parliament** shortly after the European Commission's proposal in 2018. Another two letters to Parliament on the status of the negotiations followed in 2020 (Finnish Government, 2018).

Finland's position, which is also clearly laid out in the MFA's own strategic documents, (MFA, 2018c, 2018a, 2020a) is that Finland **welcomes the European Commission's proposal** that the external financing system should be simplified and all instruments combined into a new unified and coherent instrument.

In addition, **human rights** (incl. gender equality) should be a central component of the new instrument. The regulation should also focus on **Africa** for ODA; integrate ambitious **climate action** and references to EU **Arctic policy**; and promote a comprehensive approach to **migration**.¹⁴

A particular emphasis by Finland has been that the new instrument should allow a **flexible and rapid response** to new challenges and crises.

With regard to EFSD+, Finland has been in favour of an open architecture, to avoid unfair competition between the EIB Group and other similar national and international actors and the Commission (Finnish Government, 2018).

Since the implementation of NDICI started in 2021, Finland's objective has been to pay special attention to the overall objectives of the Regulation on **equality, climate and the environment, migration and education**, both in the Council and in committee work (MFA, 2021a).

Importantly NDICI was first mentioned in **Government Report on EU Policy Strong and united EU** (MFA, 2020d) in 2021, with the report stating that the *"possibilities offered by the new, more integrated and flexible EU [...] instruments must be exploited to the fullest"*, including by the Finnish private sector. Latterly, Finnfund has undergone a pillar assessment so that it can also provide guarantees under the EFSD+ open window.

14 highlighting the importance of addressing the root causes of irregular migration and its forced displacement.



5.2 Finland's influencing activities and achievements

Activities and Outputs



Overall:

Finland was the most active in the NDICI negotiations during its Council Presidency in 2019 (see separate Presidency brief). Finland's objective was then no longer to push for its own priorities but obtain consensus amongst EU MS.

Finland has been an active participant in the NDICI sub-group from the start. The appointment of an MFA adviser, working full time on NDICI at the peak of the negotiations, was highlighted during the stakeholder interviews as a key element to success.

Finland Development Minister discussed NDICI bilaterally with the European Commissioner on at least one occasion. (MFA, 2021a) NDICI has also featured as a regular item on the agenda for discussion in the like-minded group and high-level meetings involving Heads of Development Cooperation.¹⁵

From mid-2021, Finland has consistently pushed for NDICI global and regional programmes to pay sufficient attention to the agreed priorities. For example, in its comments sent to the Commission in advance of the first NDICI Committee meeting on the Thematic Global Challenge Programme, Finland requested additional references be made to gender equality, migration, digitalisation, climate finance; the inclusion of the Arctic and programme complementarity, especially concerning Eastern Neighbourhood and cross-border cooperation. (MFA, 2021a)

With the appointment of a full-time adviser in Brussels in late 2020, Finland has also stepped up its participation in programming discussions related to digitalisation, education, and green transformation – three sectors identified as potential interest to the Finnish private sector (including in relation to Team Europe Initiatives).

Finally, NDICI was also an important item of discussion between the government and **Finnish parliament** – in part because of the impact that NDICI could potentially have on Finland's national legislation.

Outcomes



Finland's position on NDICI has been largely met, with the final regulation (i) confirming the use of a single instrument, a dual geographical-thematic focus, and, a revised (and more open) EFSD+ architecture; and (ii) making sufficient references (amongst others) to human rights, the Arctic, gender equality, climate action, and migration, with the latter three coming with financial targets. (EU, 2021a; MFA, 2020c, 2021b)

Other outcomes were also achieved during the Finnish Presidency, which was successful in keeping the NDICI negotiations on track. (see Presidency brief)

¹⁵ See for example (MFA, 2018b).



More specifically:

- Finland's objective on mainstreaming gender has been fully achieved: NDICI regulations are that "At least 85% of new actions implemented under the Instrument should have gender equality as a principal or a significant objective [and ...] at least 5% of those actions should have gender equality and women's and girls' rights and empowerment as a principal objective.
- NDICI's tackling of migration is development-led and comprehensive, with a dual focus on migration management and the root causes of migration and, the term "flexible incitative approach" (as negotiated during Finnish Presidency) was retained in the final text of the regulation.
- Other specific elements pushed by Finland and successfully incorporated in the final regulations are related to (i) sustainable forestry ([2] references made including one in relation to the EFSD+ operations) and (ii) Arctic (and cross-border) cooperation (as mentioned in the specific objectives of EU support in the Neighbourhood area)

On a slightly less positive note, Finland's mainstreaming objective for **climate change** action (as stated in the communication to the Finnish parliament) was only partly achieved, with the target in the final regulation remaining quite soft (compared to the lower but harder target of 25% proposed by EC, Finland and other like-minded states), and as follows: *"Actions under the Instrument are expected to contribute 30% of its overall financial envelope to climate objectives"*



5.3 Conclusions on Finland's effective influencing¹⁶

Significance of verified outcomes



The adoption of NDICI-Global Europe is a highly significant achievement in providing the framework for the EU's development cooperation policy and programming over the 7 years of the new MFF cycle.

Conclusions on Finland's contribution



The successful completion of the NDICI negotiations cannot be attributed to any individual institution or actor, although successive EU MS (including Finland in 2019 – see separate brief on NDICI negotiations) can claim to have facilitated key milestones being reached during their Presidencies.

Over the years, as confirmed during the interviews with MFA and external stakeholders, and in the documents, Finland has skilfully adjusted its level of contribution and “picked its fights” to push for its priorities during the NDICI negotiation. It has **actively supported topics already championed by the European Commission, like-minded donors and/or the majority of MS**, such as gender equality – while taking a more visible lead on “niche” topics, mostly the Arctic and cross-border cooperation.

As such, **priority setting** was a key contributing factor to Finland's achievement. In addition, many topics (gender equality, Arctic, climate) were not just priorities for Finland from a development cooperation perspective but also globally.

The mixed success in obtaining a harder target on **climate action** can in part be explained by missed opportunities and/or random/unknown elements of any negotiation process. As one MFA interviewee indicated: *“some issues were negotiated very last minute, and included many surprise elements!”*. Similarly, according to an internal report real-time pressure was required to reach the most difficult compromises. During the negotiating on both the EFSD+ and the migration target, the positions of the negotiating partners only began to move when the window for negotiations was closing. (MFA, 2020c)

¹⁶ The section on contribution of other external factors is excluded from this brief –NDICI being the outcome of complex, tri-partite negotiation between the Commission, the Council and Parliament, over many topics over the years.



6 Process & thematic brief – COVID-19 response / Team Europe

6.1 Introduction

Background on links with Finland's development cooperation



The COVID-19 pandemic caught the world by surprise in spring 2020; countries and institutions had to adapt to the rapid and unpredictable spread of the virus across the globe. After two challenging years, MFA assessed Finland's response and found that the Ministry successfully implemented a relevant, efficient, and relatively coherent response while maintaining its ongoing development interventions (Laaksonen et al., 2022).

Before the pandemic, MFA carried out an evaluation of how Finland supports economic development in its partner countries (Laaksonen et al., 2021). In the post-pandemic situation, the relevance of the evaluation is further increased, given the emphasis on the economic stimulus of the EU's external COVID-19 response. However, despite positive trends in the coherence of actions related to private sector engagement at the MFA, the evaluation found shortcomings in strategic leadership and the available private sector funding instruments. As a result, fragmentation of operations and results is a concern.

EU key events in the context



Team Europe is the single European framework launched in 2020 for the external response to the COVID-19 crisis. The initiative includes three policy priorities: (1) emergency/humanitarian aid; (2) support for health, water/sanitation and nutrition systems; and (3) support for socio-economic recovery (EU, 2022d).

The third pillar links with a longer-term approach that acknowledges the need to support developing countries to recover economically from the shock caused by the pandemic. The approach will be implemented through **Team Europe Initiatives** (TEIs) (EU, 2022b).

Currently, the European Commission aims to include these ongoing economic and social recovery efforts under the umbrella of the **Global Gateway** strategy launched in December 2021. This major new geopolitical strategy builds on the EU's potential to stimulate sustainable digital, energy, and transport solutions worldwide (EU, 2021b).



Grant-based funding to implement investments under the Global Gateway would be channelled through EU's **NDICI – Global Europe** financial instrument and in line with the **Team Europe** approach. Five priorities have been outlined: Digitalisation; Climate & Energy; Education, Health; and Transport (EU, 2021b).

To accelerate the implementation of digital initiatives between EU actors and its global partners, the European Commission also launched a new multistakeholder platform titled **Digital for Development – D4D Hub** – in December 2020. It should be noted that the first steps to establish the Hub were taken in 2017, i.e. before the COVID-19 pandemic (D4DHub, 2022).

The **COVAX Facility** (i.e., the vaccines pillar of the multistakeholder platform *Access to COVID-19 Tools' ACT Accelerator*) was established in April 2020 as part of the EU response. The Facility is the primary channel for EU Member States (MS) to share their vaccine donations to third countries (EU, 2022e).

Finland's influencing objectives



Strategy:

Finland's main objective in getting involved with the TE approach has been to increase the global role and development impact of the EU by strengthening joint EU coordination and visibility firstly as a COVID-19 response, but also as part of longer-term joint programming of the MFF implementation/period.

Another objective with TE has been to advocate for projects that focus on human development. There has been a concern that the EU would pay excessive attention to "hard" investments. Finland's representatives have highlighted these positions in the CODEV-PI meetings, as evident in MFA meeting notes made available to the evaluation team.

Similarly, Finland has fully supported the **Global Gateway** strategy and its priorities while underlining the importance of equitable sharing of benefits from investments and inclusiveness (MFA, 2022b).

Promoting equitable **digital development** is a priority that has gained more prominence recently in Finland's development policy; Finland's Africa Strategy (Finnish Government, 2021) and MFA's EU Development Policy Influencing Plans 2020 and 2021-2022 are among the recent policy documents that give it more emphasis. The idea is that economic recovery should be based on a green and digital transition, climate sustainability and low carbon development while protecting biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources. This vision has been formulated into a joint Nordic message of '**Building Back Better and Greener**'.



The above-mentioned priorities have been translated into support for the **D4DHub**, including a stronger focus on the human rights-based approach and gender equality in the Hub's operations. In any case, the basic premise of the Hub is to promote the EU as a value-based leader in digitalisation. In this setup, another important objective for Finland is facilitating access for relevant Finnish stakeholders to the initiatives developed under the Hub, as stated by MFA interviewees. According to an MFA informant, specific influencing actions implemented by MFA in the field of digitalisation include also meetings with and an influencing paper to the Cabinet, sharing of Finnish best practices to INTPA thematic and regional units and other EU MS, secondment plans, and joint programming under key D4D flagship initiatives.

Regarding the **TEIs**, according to MFA interviews, the Ministry has short-listed approximately 20 cases as Finland's focal projects. The initiatives have been grouped based on different levels of prioritisation to ensure timely action when required.

Regarding the vaccine donations to the **COVAX Facility**, Finland has not defined any specific influencing objectives. MFA Advisors informed that the discussions focused primarily on routine administrative and contractual negotiations.

Resources:

MFA has created a new staff position of Commercial Counsellor in the Perm Rep of Finland to the EU, tasked with facilitating Finnish private sector engagement in EU operations globally.

New education sector secondments are foreseen from Finland's new Centre of Expertise in Education and Development (FinCEED) to the EC education unit and to EUDs in third countries (see Volume 1 Section 4.3 for more details).

Through several means, MFA has strengthened the Team Finland export promotions process and brand. One of the most concrete changes has been increasing the number of staff assigned to the job; in 2021, 20 new advisers started working at the MFA to promote Finnish companies abroad (MFA, 2021d). It can be expected that their role will also include engagement with Team Europe in addition to the general mandate.

Organisation

The roles and responsibilities for monitoring or participating in the development of individual Team Europe Initiatives have been clearly assigned within the MFA; responsibility for each priority project has been allocated to a specific unit. The Unit for General Development Policy holds the central coordination role.



Collaboration between MFA and Business Finland (a public organisation that provides funding and services for Finnish companies to access international markets) has increased over the years. Examples are regular joint meetings and sharing the same office space in embassies (MFA, 2021d). In addition, business Finland's objectives include increasing the involvement of Finnish companies in EU-financed projects (Business Finland, 2021). These strengthened ties are critical for stimulating multistakeholder coordination in Finland in the context of TEIs and the Global Gateway strategy.

Also, Finnfund, the Finnish development finance institute, and FinCEED – The Finnish Centre of Expertise in Education and Development – are among the institutions expected to engage in TEIs in the future, MFA interviewees informed.

MFA's internal coordination and reflections on lessons learnt emerging from the process are coordinated by the Unit for General Development Policy in the form of regular written updates and occasional videoconferences. As confirmed by interviews and internal memos, embassy-level staff members have also been engaged in these exchanges. However, it seems that such information-sharing practices are only gradually taking shape, and some uncertainty remains in terms of how leadership around the complex multistakeholder setup of Team Europe is organised at the MFA.



6.2 Finland's influencing activities and achievements

Activities and Outputs



Outputs:

In addition to several **digital** initiatives, Finland is demonstrating an active role in regional and national TEIs and joint programming related to topics commonly associated with Finland's priorities, such as **SRHR** and **education**. Other sectors that stand out include **green growth** (e.g., economic recovery/transition, energy, free trade) and **migration**. Therefore, MFA's influencing objectives are translated mainly into the decision to support initiatives in specific sectors. However, some initiatives that Finland has shortlisted are located in countries that are not its long-term partner countries for development cooperation (such as Chile and Latin America as a region, Egypt, and Nigeria), or the sectors are not – strictly speaking – among the current priorities of Finland's development policy (such as smart cities and health) (EU, 2022c).

MFA meeting reports on Team Europe related Council negotiations show that Finland's positions have been well received. For example, the first general Council Conclusions on Team Europe on 23 April 2021 (Council of the European Union, 2021) was followed by another, on 14 June 2021 specifically on Strengthening Team Europe's commitment to human development¹⁷. The approval of the 'additional' conclusion can be considered an achievement as such. In addition, the text mentions SRHR and an acknowledgement that *"human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination are cornerstones of human development"*. As part of the process, Finland presented its positions together with like-minded countries.

Finland has also participated in a Commission-led expert working group focusing on the Team Europe approach in the field of education (see Education Brief). At the same time, Finland has also had to decline the leadership of an education TEI due to a lack of resources. According to an interviewee, a similar situation occurred in Ethiopia, where a vacuum of expertise existed in the digital sector; neither EUD nor any of the MSs could step in.

Emerging from the country case studies:

Regarding the COVID-19 response, the MFA provided material assistance to Nepal through the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism. Finland's support was positively regarded by both the EU and the Government of Nepal. (see Annex 9 in Laaksonen et al. (2022) for more information).

In Nepal, Finland is participating with the EU and GIZ in setting up a GCCA+ funded TE Initiative, GRAPE, on climate resilient green economic growth (Nepal Country Case).

¹⁷ The two sets on Council Conclusions on Team Europe and on Strengthening Team Europe's commitment to human development were reached on 23 April and 14 June respectively. (Reference Nos. 7894/21 and 8856/21)



In Tanzania, Finland has influenced the scope of a TEI in Blue Economy. As a result, the project's geographic scope was expanded further to the coastal area of the mainland, where Finland has prior experience in natural resources management. Furthermore, Finland advocated for better inclusion of gender equality and HRBA in the initiative.

In Ukraine, Team Europe activities – at least those followed up by Finland – are currently on hold. Before the war, opportunities in the education sector were high on the agenda.

Outcomes



Overall:

The COVID-19 response, including the Team Europe approach and the Global Gateway strategy, are only recent developments in EU cooperation. In this context, Finland has initiated promising lines of action which have the potential to develop into substantial benefits for Finnish stakeholders.

For example, the education sector presents a fertile ground for strengthening collaboration between the EC, MSs and Finnish institutions in the TE approach.

Similarly, Finland's engagement in the D4D Hub represents a platform for significant influencing opportunities in the short, medium, and long term. MFA's interest in several digital TEIs supports this vision.

6.3 Conclusions on Finland's effective influencing

Significance of verified outcomes



Finland has taken a close interest in TEIs and got directly engaged at HQ and in partner countries, although it is too early to expect any significant outcomes to have emerged yet. Moreover, it has sought to ensure that the TEI as a whole take on board some of its priorities in the spirit of Building Back Better and Greener. Some degree of success can be observed.

Contribution of other external factors



Subsequent years will be critical for the EU MS, especially the small MSs, to ensure they can draw maximal benefits from the TE-Global Gateway process. Further, the Global Gateway strategy pushes development policy increasingly towards modalities that are built around investments. However, many TEIs that Finland has shortlisted as priority projects follow a more traditional grant-based approach and have little commercial potential.

Therefore, **MFA will need to find its place in implementing the Global Gateway strategy**, given the growing gap in traditional and more investment-oriented development policy and cooperation paradigms.



Conclusions on Finland's contribution



MFA has demonstrated an ability to respond rapidly and in a relevant manner to the fast-changing contexts of the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic recovery efforts as part of the EU. This capacity has been shown at the country level (Nepal emergency response) and globally (vaccine donations). However, MFA has also had to turn down some opportunities for leadership given its limited human resources.

MFA has demonstrated improvements in private sector engagement in the past years, which will facilitate participation, especially in the green growth TEIs. Nevertheless, internal challenges at the MFA, the increased complexity of multistakeholder coordination, and the fast pace of post-COVID actions put pressure on dedicating more resources to the process. MFA's new recruitments and engagement in new platforms (such as D4D) are a step in the right direction. Notwithstanding, MFA still has some structural constraints to overcome.



7 Thematic brief – Gender equality

7.1 Introduction

Background on links with Finland's development cooperation on gender equality



The first development policy priority area of Finland is about the rights and status of women and girls, focusing on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), on gender-based violence (GBV)¹⁸ and the right of persons with disabilities.

Gender equality is also an MFA cross-cutting objective¹⁹. It is implemented via its twin- and triple-track approach, including targeted action, mainstreaming and political advocacy.

EU key events in the context of gender equality



The key events and opportunities for influencing EU development policy and cooperation on gender equality over the evaluation period were:

- The drafting of the 2017 European Consensus on Development
- The preparation and adoption of GAP II (2015) and III (2020)
- The Finnish 2019 EU Presidency (focus on GAP II Annual report)
- The NDICI negotiation, and since 2021, NDICI implementation, and
- The Post-Cotonou negotiations and partnership with Africa.

In addition, key influencing also occurred during work on the Commission Council Conclusions on Team Europe (2021) and the NDICI global programmes. There was also influencing at country level through the work with the EUDs and other Member States (MS).

Finland's influencing objectives on gender equality



Finland promoted a higher allocation of EU development funding to gender equality and SRHR and aimed to increase the number of likeminded (LM) countries in this aspect.

Finland aimed to strengthen the gender equality / SRHR language wherever and whenever possible (with 2017 European Consensus on Development as a benchmark).

18 Gender-Based violence refers to harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. These can include acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts and coercion.

19 See MFA (2020b).



Finland promoted a gender transformative approach to be included in the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III, as well as its implementation and promotion as an intersectional approach²⁰ in EU development policy.

Promoting gender equality was also a priority under Finland's Presidency, and, together with the likeminded countries, Finland aimed to advance gender equality and the rights of women and girls in the post-Cotonou negotiations.

Finland advanced in the EU the acknowledgement that COVID-19 has affected women and men differently and advances the COVID-19 related action on GBV.

7.2 Finland's influencing activities and achievements

Activities and Outputs



Overall:

Finland has taken full advantage of various influencing channels to reiterate its position on gender equality and SRHR, for which Finland is perceived by other MS as playing a leading and visible role (along with other Nordic countries), describing gender equality as part of Finland's brand. Based on interviews MFA and EU interviews, the key influencing activities during the evaluation period include:

- Working with the **European Commission (EC)**, Finland has sent written gender equality/SRHR comments on various EC proposals, notably on the European Consensus, GAP II and III, post-Cotonou, specific programmes and the technical expert working group on HRBA.
- Finland has actively participated in the informal **gender expert group** led by the Commission, "held the pen" in the development of GAP texts, and recently, led the establishment of the gender transformative approach (GTA) sub-group.
- Finnish delegates have actively promoted the gender equality agenda during **Council discussions** in preparatory working groups. Apart from the GAP, this includes for other Council Conclusions that focus on development cooperation areas, starting with the NDICI and for instance the water conclusions in 2021²¹ (language related to a "transformative approach that addresses the root causes of gender inequalities") and expressing their wish to adopt stronger gender language in the council conclusions on Team Europe.

²⁰ Intersectionality refers to the ways in which systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class and other forms of discrimination "intersect" to create unique discrimination dynamics and effects.

²¹ Council Conclusions on Water in the EU's External Action, 19 November 2021 (Ref. 14108/21)



- Finland has actively contributed to gender discussions during the EU development policy LM group, with additional steps to influence the EU. This includes: the 2017 joint LM states letter to EU Development Commissioner Mimica asking them to allocate additional funding to cover the SRHR funding gap; being part of lobbying for stronger language in the 2017 Consensus that would reflect the level of the UN 1995 Beijing Declaration; the 2018 coordination of the drafting of a joint like-minded states paper on how to include gender equality in the NDICI; and with the other LM States, pushing the Commission to send internal instructions to EUDs on how to integrate GAP in programming.
- The negotiations on gender equality were extensive in the preparatory meetings/visits to other EU capitals for the **Finnish Presidency of the EU**, notably with Germany. Preparatory visits were also very useful to build a solid partnership with the EC. Equally, during the Finnish Presidency, emphasis was placed on strengthening multilateral cooperation (UNFPA, UN Women, etc.) on SRHR.
- Gender equality has also been discussed in **high-level dialogue**, with Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) Ministers championing the cause. Strategic **interpersonal influencing and missions** have taken place via both formal and informal channels.

Emerging from the country case studies:

Gender equality and SRHR is a **high priority influencing objective for Finland also at country level**, as shown in the case study countries and broader Finland cooperation agenda. Finland is actively advancing the matter with EUDs at strategic, project and partner levels. Finland is particularly recognised for its specific focus areas on gender equality as well as its advanced methodology on the gender transformative approach.

Following the adoption of the GAP III in 2020, Finnish Embassies in case study countries have been actively involved in the **country-level strategies (CLIPs) and Multi-Annual Indicative Programmes (MIPs)**, pushing for gender transformative language.

The prioritisation of gender equality in **Finland's Presidency** was also evident at country level through activities and the influencing documented in the case study countries.

Outcomes



Overall:

Due to these efforts, the main outcomes during the evaluation period on gender equality and SRHR to which Finland contributed are:

The language for gender equality / SRHR was strengthened in the 2017 European Consensus for Development and, prior to this, albeit to a more limited extent, in GAP II (2015).

The language on gender transformative approach has been significantly strengthened under GAP III (2020).



- Council Conclusions on Gender Action Plan II annual report (with some reference to SRHR) were adopted by consensus during the Finnish Presidency (see Presidency Brief Section 4.3).
- Gender mainstreaming and funding targets are included in NDICI (see section 5 – Process brief on the NDICI negotiations).
- An EU gender transformative working group has been set up, due to Finland's influencing and coordination. The first meeting was held in April 2022.
- In contrast, Finland's objective to strengthen gender equality / SRHR language in post-Cotonou was not achieved, due to a hardening of some MS positions. A compromise solution was nonetheless found, by adding a reference to other international agreements (notably Cairo-Beijing agreements), which included similar SRHR commitments.

Due to these efforts, Finland is also perceived as having a transparent stance on gender equality, combined with a strong expertise, which makes it a high reputation partner on gender equality for the EU.

Emerging from the country case studies:

- EU and MS in case study countries acknowledge Finland's leading role in gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), particularly in some core areas and methodologies of it.
- Finland has successfully influenced EUDs to initiate activities on gender equality, based on Finland's success and long cooperation activities on the matter in particular countries. This is evident, for example, in the RVWRMP water project in Nepal (which benefitted mainly women) which the EUD joined as a co-donor thereby doubling the budget, as well as its facilitation of the partnership of the EUD in Tanzania with the Uongozi Institute that focuses on gender equality to initiate joint activities. Both outcomes were influenced by a long-standing Finnish in-country cooperation on the topic and with relevant partners. These successes have also led to further scale-up of opportunities within the same country and in other country cooperation programmes.
- Finland's significant role in the gender transformative approach of RVWRMP in Nepal was also recognised in Brussels. Finland's 'story-telling methodology' for monitoring attitudinal change has been used in a subsequent UN Women project to measure a transformative (behavioural and norm) change reflected in GAP III.



7.3 Conclusions on Finland's effective influencing

Significance of verified outcomes



Finland's success and reputation on gender equality make it a high-quality partner on the topic for the EU. This enables Finland to use further influencing opportunities in the future.

Finland has become the go-to partner also for country-level EUDs on the topic. Finland's examples of gender transformative approach in Nepal will form part of the guidance for the EU gender equality approach from the global level and provide indicators and evidence to support the EU's long-term operational efficiency in the gender transformative approach.

Contribution of external factors



Finland's influencing has benefited from its broad alignment with EC positions that include a similar thematic interest on gender equality. Gender equality was a priority under former DG DEVCO Commissioner Mimica and there is also an active push by other LM's MS (Sweden, Denmark). The existence of international agreements in line with Finland's priorities is also a supportive factor.

As a hindering factor, Council decisions require consensus or unanimous votes and some MS are opposed to wording in relation to gender identity and SRHR.

Conclusions on Finland's contribution



With their common gender equality focus on development cooperation, Finland and EU are good partners and both seek to advance GESI. Influencing, therefore, goes both ways, with one reinforcing the other and vice versa.

Finland's added value comes in the more ambitious gender transformative methodology to implement gender equality, as well as in certain specific parts of the GESI and its intersectional approach.

Coalition building / working with LM states has been a key part of Finland's overall approach. As has its ability to devote staff time and expertise to play a proactive role at the EU level. Facilitating an EU-level expert group takes time and a sustained effort.

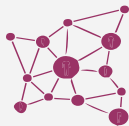
Finland can influence through both HQ dialogue and country-level operations.



8 Thematic brief – Governance and human rights

8.1 Introduction

Background on links with Finland's development cooperation on Governance and Human Rights



Peaceful and democratic societies is one of Finland's development policy priority areas.

Finland's portfolio in this policy area is highly varied reflecting a broad variety of themes included: peace building, democratic institutions (incl. reforms of legal systems), public financial management (transparency, effective public administration), human rights, freedoms (independent media and a free civil society), and the rule of law.

Human rights (especially through the lens of the human rights-based approach), and the cross-cutting objectives set the framework for the thematic work in all of Finland's development policy priority areas, including climate change, sustainable economies, and respect for human rights in private sector cooperation, among others.

EU key events in the context of Governance and Human Rights



The key events and opportunities for influencing EU development policy and cooperation on gender equality over the evaluation period were:

- The drafting of the 2017 European Consensus on Development
- The preparation and adoption of GAP II (2015) and III (2020)
- The 2019 Council Presidency (focusing on GAP II Annual report)
- The NDICI negotiation, and since 2021, NDICI implementation
- The Post-Cotonou negotiations and partnership with Africa.
- In addition, key influencing has also happened in the regular work with the EC, Council Conclusions on Team Europe (2021) and the NDICI global programmes. There has been key influencing at country level through work with the EUDs and other Member States (MS).
- Preparation of the EU's third Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024.



Finland's influencing objectives on Governance and Human Rights



The aim of the MFA's influence on the EU is to strengthen the EU as an external actor that promotes peace, democracy and human rights worldwide. This includes the effective implementation and monitoring of the EU's Human Rights and Democracy Plan 2020-2024, and the strategic promotion of human rights and democracy elements in negotiations with the ACP.

Finland is advocating the EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights, which would strengthen the protection of fundamental rights and human rights in Europe and extend the individual's right of appeal to the European Court of Human Rights, also allowing appeals against the actions of the EU institutions.

For Finland, *human rights and the cross-cutting objectives form the basis for both programming and influencing efforts*. This was particularly the case, for instance, during the NDICI negotiations, where *“the basis of human rights must be the starting point for the regulation”* and *“the human rights base must be the starting point for implementation”*.

8.2 Finland's influencing activities and achievements

Activities and Outputs



Overall:

The EU's 'Human Rights Based Approach Toolbox' was updated by the Commission. Finland participated in the preparatory discussions on the Toolbox through the group of 'EU MS human rights-based approach experts' and, as a part of this, presented its own guidance note and approach as an example.

Finland organised a business and human rights conference in 2019, which led to the publication of the Agenda for Action on Business and Human Rights. The agenda for action included several recommendations, including on improving human rights outcomes through development cooperation, trade and collective initiatives involving the private sector.

Emerging from the country case studies:

In Tanzania, a TEI focused on the Blue Economy presented the opportunity for the EU to consult with Finland in specific areas. Finland sought to incorporate cross-cutting gender equality and HRBA elements into the TEI document.

In the area of taxation, based on the example of successful experience working with the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA), Finland persuaded the EUD to consider incorporating technical assistance into its cooperation package in this area.



Outcomes



Overall:

During the preparations of the EU Toolbox on HRBA (2021), Finland influenced the Commission to update the terminology from the previously used ‘rights-based approach’ to ‘human rights-based approach’, which is in line with UN language. Finland also promoted an approach whereby gender equality is looked at as a human rights issue rather than as a separate issue – a view that has also been adopted in the updated EU Toolbox.

During its Presidency of the EU, Finland put the topic of business and human rights/ responsible business conduct high on the agenda. Finland influenced the EU in acknowledging the relevance of the topic in EU directives and was also reflected in the new EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, which has a greater focus on business and human rights than its predecessor.

Emerging from the country case studies:

In the Evaluation’s country case studies, the EU and EU MS acknowledge Finland’s leading role and efforts in the governance policy area, including public financial management. For example, in Tanzania, Finland’s leading role and efforts in developing a more effective and accountable public sector in the country are particularly acknowledged.

8.3 Conclusions on Finland’s effective influencing

Finland’s influencing objectives on Governance and Human Rights



To its initial objectives, Finland has played an appropriate, albeit modest role in influencing the EU on governance and human rights in relation to its initial objectives. Finland has managed to convey its support for the protection and promotion of Human Rights as well as the application of HRBA, both at global and case study country level.

Contribution of other external factors



The development of the Agenda for Action on Business and Human Rights took place in the context of a more overarching push to strengthen engagement in international I and with partner countries to actively promote and support global efforts to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. This included fostering the development and implementation of national action plans in EU MS and partner countries, advancing relevant due diligence standards and working on a comprehensive EU framework for the implementation of the Guiding Principles.



Conclusions on Finland's contribution



The update of the Toolbox is called for in various Council documents and was a continuation of a broader and more ambitious process setting out the EU's priorities on human rights, democracy and rule of law (including the development of the third EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024).

Finland has partly achieved its objectives of influence in the area of governance and human rights, by contributing technical expertise, and by leveraging its own experience, both in terms of HRBA and taxation. Finland's influence on the EU in this area has been achieved by using available opportunities to promote its agenda but given its performance in other thematic areas (such as gender equality), it might have benefited more from creating more synergies with these.

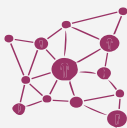
The rise of the TEIs and the priority thematic areas selected by the EU for the current programming exercise present a major opportunity for Finland to seek to capitalise on these synergies and foster the mainstreaming of governance and human rights in areas where it still has untapped potential, such as climate change.



9 Thematic brief – Rights of persons with disabilities

9.1 Introduction

Background on links with Finland's development cooperation on disability inclusion



Non-discrimination with a focus on disability inclusion is a **cross-cutting objective** for Finnish development cooperation since 2020.²²

Realization of the rights of persons with disabilities is one of the Priority Area 1 outcomes (ToCs 2020).

Twin-track approach to achieve this goal: **mainstreaming** and **targeted action**.

Finland also aims to promote the **intersectionality of gender and disability** and the rights and inclusion of women and girls with disabilities, including SRHR and eliminating violence.

Rooted in analysis that disability and poverty are closely connected (e.g.: 80% of disabled live in developing countries, one-third of 58 million children out of school are disabled and the disabled have 50–75% lower rates of employment).²³

EU key events in the context of disability inclusion



The Finnish EU Presidency in 2019 included a discussion and approval of Council Conclusions on the GAP II Annual Report. This provided an opportunity for the Finns to put forward their intersectional approach to gender equality and disability inclusion and their impact on poverty.

The 2017 *European Consensus on Development* lists disability inclusion as a priority, reflecting the SDG10 commitment to reduce inequalities based on disability as well as other issues.

The EU is a signatory to the UN Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities – CPRD, 2006.

22 MFA, 2020d, *Theories of Change and Aggregate Indicators for Finland's Development Policy 2020*.

23 MFA powerpoint November 2020, *Cross-cutting Objectives for Finland's development policy and cooperation*.



Finland's influencing objectives on disability inclusion



In influencing the EU development cooperation on disability Finland seeks to:

1. **Non-discrimination** towards persons with disabilities is systematically referred to, (non-discrimination is at the heart of the rights-based approach; it is rooted in UN CPRD, 2006).
2. The **Twin-track Approach** is pursued by:
 - **Track 1: Mainstreaming disability inclusion**
 - Minimum standard for mainstreaming: *Do No Harm*.
 - Implies: risks assessed, avoided and mitigated; barriers identified and addressed; impacts continuously assessed and monitored; data is disaggregated, systematically collected, analysed and used.
 - **Track 2: Targeted action.** While the minimum standard of identifying risk is important, Finland should also try and make a positive contribution on rights for persons with disabilities; this can be addressed in all development policy.
3. In *Priority Area 1: Rights of Women & Girls*. (ToCs 2020) one of three specific **Policy Influencing Outcomes** that Finland seeks to push with the EU is on:

Disability inclusive strategies, policies and programmers and corporate-level accountability mechanisms.

Indicators for this are: Corporate level commitments, policies, strategies and accountability frameworks for gender equality and disability-inclusive development are in place and implemented.

9.2 Finland's influencing activities and achievements

Activities and Outputs



Overall:

Finnish CODEV representative pushed language as suggested by disability inclusion and gender equality focal points in MFA, KEO-10 was also involved:

- Worked with a like-minded group of MS working on gender equality.
- The Finns took advantage of their Presidency of the EU.
- Gender equality was an important policy debate in Council. In addition, based on the intersectional approach being followed on gender equality, the Finns demonstrated the relevance of disability inclusion as an important part of the analysis and persuaded the like-minded MS to support this additional element.



Stakeholders' perceptions:

Finland's stance on inclusiveness and disability inclusion is known, though EU officials do not see it as one of Finland's high-level priorities at least not in development cooperation (stronger in the humanitarian aid field).

Finland's expertise on inclusiveness and disability is acknowledged by officials from EU and EU Member States (MS).

Finland's image as a trusted professional and effective development actor in the area of disability inclusion is widely recognised in interviews with EU officials and MS officials in HQ and the field.

Emerging from the country case studies:

Nepal

- Embassy Strategic Plan 2019-2022 does not mention disability inclusion, though it does refer to women and girls' rights and to influencing EU policy in-country.
- The EU MIP2021-2027 cites 'disability status' as an indicator in both the EU-funded WASH and Education programmes.

Tanzania

The EU NIP 2014, the MIP 2021-2027 and Finland's Country Strategy 2014-2017 mention disability only briefly. However, explicit references are made in the 2021-2024 Country Strategy and Country Programme.

Ukraine

No specific mention of disability inclusion on the MFA webpage on Finland's bilateral cooperation (2021–2024, EUR 29 million) in Ukraine.

Outcomes



Overall:

Enabling language on disability inclusion in EU GAP II Council Conclusions 2019: During Finnish Presidency it was managed to get some progressive enabling language on disability inclusion into a Council Conclusion:

Para 8: *"It also recalls that the ambitious gender equality targets should include other dimensions, such as age and disability in order to ensure positive compounding effect."*

Para 12: *"Specific attention should be paid to women and girls who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons, women and girls with disabilities."*

Emerging from the country case studies:

Nepal: Disability inclusion is addressed in various EU/Finland projects and cooperation and regularly features in their joint policies and programmes.

Tanzania: EU and Finnish policies are now aligned on addressing disability inclusion in their country programmes. In practice, support for the disability inclusion agenda appears as linked to the gender equality and human rights agenda.



9.3 Conclusions on Finland's effective influencing

Significance of verified outcomes



Not a very significant outcome. Given that disability inclusion was already a priority for the EU, its significance lies in that it maintains the level of the language and updates it in a more recent policy statement.

Moreover, no non-MFA sources were found to validate Finnish officials' claim specifically on disability inclusion, but the Council Conclusions on the 2019 Gender Action Plan II passed during the Finnish Presidency do indeed contain wording on disability inclusion.

The specific mention of disability inclusion has in effect 'piggy-backed' on wider language on inclusiveness and gender equality, a strategy that was confirmed by the MFA Disability Inclusion Adviser from 2019 and follows Finland's intersectional approach.

Contribution of other external factors



MFA officials worked with other like-minded states on this and with the DG DEVCO Gender Unit to achieve this outcome in the 2019 Council Conclusions.

The EU already supported disability inclusion as a priority as clearly stated in the 2017 *European Consensus*. Restating this commitment in these Council Conclusions would therefore be generally supported by other MS.

Conclusions on Finland contribution



Finland has successfully pushed for explicit intersectional language on gender and disability in the 2019 EU Council Conclusions on GAP II. As a standing policy of the EU accepted by all MS this renews a long-term policy commitment which should have an important effect on all EU and MS programming.

The main action around the Council Conclusions was clearly to introduce strong language on gender equality. But the language chosen refers to intersectionality and specifically lists disability as another area of discrimination. The push for intersectional language on gender equality has thus had the additional effect of enabling references to disability inclusion.



10 Thematic brief – Education

10.1 Introduction

Background on links with Finland's development cooperation on education



Education is part of Finland's Priority area 3, with a focus on access to quality primary and secondary education, especially for girls and those in the most vulnerable position.

Finland's support to this policy area includes seeking to improve the inclusiveness of education systems and teaching and learning processes, supporting education policies that promote gender equality and non-discrimination, improving teaching and learning practices and educational environments, strengthening institutional capacity to improve learning outcomes, and supporting access to vocational training for women and girls with disabilities.

EU key events in the context of education



The key events and opportunities for influencing EU development policy and cooperation on gender equality over the evaluation period were:

- Appointment of the new DG INTPA Commissioner (Finnish) and the decision to make education a priority for the EU / European Commission.
- Development of the EU NDICI instrument, whereby 20% of the total funding must be allocated to human development with a focus on health and education.
- Annual European Education Summit (2022).
- Strengthening of Team Europe's commitment to human development (06/21).
- EU's contribution to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

Finland's influencing objectives regarding education



The main objective of influencing the development policy of the European education sector is to strengthen the resources and commitment of the EU and other major development financiers to inclusive and high-quality education. Among other things, this also means prioritising girls and the most vulnerable children and young people, including the disabled.

Making greater use of Finnish know-how in TE initiatives education. It is important that Finland can be proactive in education and training.

Important for the EU to continue to support key financial instruments in the education sector, including Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and Education Cannot Wait (ECW).

In the MFA's EU impact plan 2022 (covering all EU matters), Finland supports the strengthening of the EU's global role in education development policy.



10.2 Finland's influencing activities and achievements

Activities and Outputs



Overall:

Finland has significantly stepped up its influencing activities with the EU on the education sector to respond to Commissioner Urpilainen's personal commitment to increase the share of education in EU aid from 7% to 10%. Some key influencing activities during the evaluation period include:

- During its EU Presidency, Finland set the development Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) agenda and invited a lunchtime guest speaker (Ethiopian Minister of Education, Tilaye Gete).
- Finland was involved in several meetings with the European Commission, which helped them focus on education being picked up. These meetings included Member States (MS) expert meetings on education, working group meetings focusing on the Team Europe approach to education, and discussions at CoDEV and CoAFR/ CoACP, where Finland promoted education as a priority in advance of the EU-Africa summit.
- Finland was asked to make a presentation on its priorities in education during the CODEV meeting on human development in March 2021 – the only MS to do so.
- Finland was also able to submit a 2-pager highlighting its priorities and recommendations to the EU to the Commissioner's cabinet, which was a unique opportunity.
- Finland has joined the working group on the Team Europe approach to education and actively participated in the first meeting of this working group in June 2021 (also the only MS to do so).
- Finland has signed up to second three education advisers (from the Centre of Expertise on Education), one at the Commission education unit (which was understaffed) and in two EUDs (Nigeria and Ethiopia).

Key influencing outputs during the evaluation period include:

- Education was frequently acknowledged by other EU actors as a Finnish priority and area of expertise.
- Finland is well known for its high-quality education system.
- The role of the Finnish INTPA Commissioner in pushing for education and a funding 10% target was widely known and acknowledged in interviews.



Emerging from the country case studies:

- Education has been a key development cooperation sector for Finland in two of the case study countries. In Ukraine education has represented the largest share of Finland's development cooperation budget in the country. In Nepal, quality education has been a priority area for three consecutive periods since 2014.
- Finland has been actively involved in the area of education in case study countries. In Nepal in particular, the Embassy has participated actively in the EUD and MS joint planning exercises.
- Finland has made use of its technical expertise in a strategic way, for example by seconding an education expert within the Embassy in Ukraine (2018) and drawing on its long-standing relationship with local actors (Ukrainian Ministry of Education) which was key in ensuring EU support.

Outcomes.



Overall:

The Finnish MFA was able to influence the EU's response to Commissioner Urpilainen's personal pledge to increase the share of education in EU development cooperation. This was reflected in the fact that the EU recently made an announcement to increase its contribution to the Global Partnership for Education, in line with one of the recommendations that Finland made to the Commission.

Under the NDICI-GE, the annual action plan for Sub-Saharan Africa includes an education component for the first time in 2022.

With Team Europe, the EU and EU MS, including Finland, have begun to strengthen their coordination on education, at country, regional and global level, on the back of the Council Conclusion on Strengthening Team Europe's commitment to Human Development (June 2021), which Finland contributed to. In line with the point above, Team Europe Initiatives should also generate more funding on education in Africa.

Emerging from the country case studies:

The EU and MS in case study countries acknowledge Finland's leading role in education, particularly in addressing teacher capacity and equal access to education (Nepal), and in primary and secondary education (Ukraine).

In Ukraine, the EU has provided additional funding to a Finland-led education project.



10.3 Conclusions on Finland's effective influencing

Significance of verified outcomes



Finland has played an important role in influencing the EU to increase its contribution to the Global Partnership for Education. To achieve this, Finland has taken advantage of the recognition of its technical expertise and its renowned education system and placed experts in strategic locations, all of which have contributed to the achievement of this outcome. However, the importance of certain external factors (see below) that contributed positively to this result should not be underestimated.

Contribution of other external factors



External factors that contributed to successful outcomes were as follows:

- Finland's influencing benefited from the fact that the Commissioner is Finnish, and her personal commitment to education. In addition, a Finnish education expert was appointed as a special adviser on education, who contributed with substantive and strategic leadership and was seen as a 'very influential person'.
- The European Commission had relatively limited technical expertise in education and was in strong demand to receive technical support from EU MS.
- Broad alignment among EU MS to prioritise human development as part of Team Europe /NDICI; general agreement to push for education.
- The period coincided with the 4th replenishment of the GPE, allowing the EU to make a new pledge in July 2021.

Conclusions on Finland's contribution



With the EU increasing its commitment to GPE, Finland has largely met its main objective under education, which is to strengthen the EU's global role in education development policy.

EU influencing in the education sector was able to seize the momentum given by the appointment of a Finnish Commissioner and use it to its advantage, particularly in global terms/ in Brussels.

Country-level influencing has demonstrated positive results. Finland has clearly made use of its technical expertise, cooperation with other EU MS and long-standing relationships with local actors to achieve its objectives.

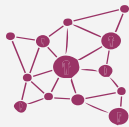
The TEIs, although recent, have been an arena in which Finland has been able to push the education agenda and coordinate with other MS and the EU. Their growing potential in terms of scope and financial volume presents an opportunity for Finland to continue to promote education support and to play an even more influential role.



11 Thematic brief – Climate change and forestry

11.1 Introduction

Background on links with Finland's development cooperation



Climate change has increased in importance in Finland's development policy since 2019. Thus climate sustainability was included as a cross-cutting objective for the first time in 2012 (MFA, 2012). In 2019, climate change was upgraded as the fourth policy priority area with an emphasis on natural resources (MFA, 2019c). In MFA's most recent development policy paper, the priority area is titled "*Climate change, biodiversity and sustainable management and use of natural resources*" (MFA, 2021e). The mainstreaming approach was revised in 2020 to distinguish between climate resilience and low-emission development (MFA, 2020b). In addition, the guidance recognises the implications of climate change as a human rights issue. The MFA's efforts to strengthen climate action align with Finland's own national climate policy (Finnish Government, 2019a).

The year 2019 also saw the formulation of Finland's **Action Plan for Climate Smart Foreign Policy** which covers security and trade in addition to development policy. The action plan extends to cooperation with the EU, Nordic countries, the UN, and other international bodies (MFA, 2022a). The document is internal to the MFA; its purpose is to mainstream climate change in all Ministry activities. The most recent update covers the years 2022-2023.

In 2021, the National Audit Office (VTV) audited Finland's climate finance for funds administered by the MFA during 2017–2019. The assessment also covered the current state of climate finance steering (National Audit Office, 2021). The report observes several shortcomings in the MFA's climate finance planning, monitoring, reporting, and communication, although positive developments were also discussed. Weaknesses in the coordination of the steering of climate finance are mentioned, and scarcity of human resources at the MFA is identified as a risk factor.

In 2022, the MFA published Finland's implementation plan for public international climate finance, indicating a twofold increase in budget (MFA, 2022c). In the same year, the Development Policy Committee (KPT) launched its own analysis demanding a clearer direction for Finland's climate finance (KPT, 2022). Thus, the MFA does seem to have stepped up its efforts on climate action, although strategic elements still require clarifying.



EU key events in the context



Forest sector cooperation has gradually declined in importance in Finland's development cooperation since the 2010s (Topper et al., 2019). On the other hand, Finnfund is increasingly taking the lead in the sector with investments in natural forest management, plantations, and forest industries in emerging markets (Spratt et al., 2018). Tanzania is among the few countries where Finland continues to implement bilateral forestry programmes (Laaksonen et al., 2021). Furthermore, some collaboration and influencing activities have taken place in the multilateral context, namely with the UN's FAO (Palenberg et al., 2020).

Climate change. The EU's ambitious overarching **European Green Deal** is expected to pave the way for policy reforms and sustainable investments (EU, 2022). The Green Deal is internal to the EU, but it also has implications for external action. It increases pressure on the EU to lead by example abroad, implement climate diplomacy, and ensure ambitious targets are reflected in its external financing and international partnerships (Blaschke & John, 2021). The EU has also played a pivotal role in brokering international climate agreements, including the Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC, adopted in 2015 (EC, 2022).

Climate diplomacy emerged on the EU agenda with the adoption of two Council Conclusions on Climate Diplomacy in 2011 and 2018 (Council of the EU, 2011, 2018). In 2020, the Council renewed its commitment to place climate action and diplomacy at the centre of external policy (Council of the EU, 2020). Since then, and especially during the COP26 in Glasgow, the EU has defined climate diplomacy as a permanent process instead of just linking it to specific events.

In terms of practical implementation, the **NDICI-Global Europe** financing instrument is expected to address climate change in a cross-cutting manner, with a spending target of 30% on climate change having been set (EC, 2021).

Forests. EU's external action on forests has focussed on reducing illegal logging. The main initiative is the **Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan**, launched in 2003. This aims to reduce illegal logging by strengthening sustainable and legal forest management, improving governance, and promoting trade in legally produced timber.

In recent years, the EU has been creating new momentum for forests by tackling **deforestation and forest degradation** "hidden" in cattle, cocoa, coffee, palm oil, soya and wood supply chains. In November 2021, the European Commission presented a legislative initiative as a follow-up to a European Parliament resolution in 2020 requiring obligations on operators placing these commodities and some derived products on the EU market or exporting them outside the Union (European Parliament, 2022). It is understood that the new resolution would gradually replace the FLEGT approach as a tool for addressing deforestation globally.



Finland's influencing objectives regarding



President Ursula von der Leyen also announced a **€1 billion EU pledge to protect world forests** at the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow in November 2021.

Yet, despite these steps, an MFA official with long-term experience in EU matters argued that the Commission had not paid enough attention to forests in its external action. The absence of a comprehensive high-profile EU strategy on forestry (that extends beyond the elements described above) seems to confirm this view.

Strategy

Climate change. The MFA's general EU and specific EU development policy influencing plans include various entry points on climate action. The MFA has systematically included climate change in the former since 2018 (2018, 2020-2021, and 2022). Climate change is brought up in various contexts, namely, the EU's foreign and security policy, recognising economic opportunities created by climate change, and mainstreaming climate action in internal and external actions. Climate diplomacy first appeared in the MFA's internal influencing plans in 2018 and then consistently since 2020.

In Finland's **EU development policy influencing plans** (2018, 2020, and 2021-2022), the objectives are similar to the *general* EU influencing plans but more specific to the development policy and cooperation context. Examples include ensuring that sufficient funds are allocated to mainstreaming climate change in the NDICI-Global Europe instrument, economic recovery based on climate sustainability and low emission solutions and engaging third countries more in climate action. Similarly, climate diplomacy is given high importance.

Forests. The MFA's EU influencing plans make only a few points on forests. These focus on funding for forest-related interventions in the NDICI-Global Europe instrument and forestry as an eligible industry in the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+). Eliminating deforestation and forest degradation from global supply chains is also mentioned, given the EU's past work on this topic.

Resources:

The Unit for Sustainable Development and Climate Policy (KEO-90) has been coordinating climate change affairs at the MFA. A new Ambassador for Climate Change started in May 2020. Moreover, from 1 August 2022 onwards, a separate unit was dedicated to climate and environmental diplomacy. Notwithstanding, the number of staff assigned for climate work is low relative to the level of ambition (National Audit Office, 2021).

A forestry and agriculture specialist was placed in the Brussels Perm Rep during Finland's EU Presidency, but there has been no such sector specialist since. But there is a plan to hire a forestry expert to follow up on the file of deforestation-free commodities and products in the EU (MFA interview).



Organisation

The MFA and the Ministry of the Environment are apparently closely aligned and coordinated on climate change matters (MFA interview). In forestry, joint efforts are also common: thus, an official from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MMM) chaired the Council Working Party on Forestry during Finland's Presidency, which helped align MFA and MMM resources behind a common objective.

MFA interviewees indicated that monitoring and feedback loops in this area could be improved; activities are often too reactive, and it would be beneficial to clarify the role of MFA leadership in steering the processes and priorities. This echoes the National Audit Office's report (2021).

11.2 Finland's influencing activities and achievements

Activities and Outputs



Activities and Outputs:

Finland's climate action related to the EU's development policy is closely interlinked with the EU's overall external action, namely international climate negotiations and climate diplomacy.

Finland is engaged in a number of platforms and initiatives, of which some are global, and others operate between the Commission and the EU Member States (MS). Those that engage actors beyond the EU often embed coalitions of EU MS. Below, we list some *examples* of Finland's engagement in the EU's climate and forest action relevant to development policy.

Finnish experts from the Perm Rep and MMM coordinated closely and worked with the Commission to pay increased attention to the issue of deforestation globally. Finland played an active role in the preparation of the **EU Communication on Stepping up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests** (from now on, 'EU Communication on forests') (EC, 2019). This process took place during Finland's Presidency and was supported by additional staff in the Perm Rep in 2019. At the same time, Finnish officials made a concerted effort to bring up the topic simultaneously in other Council Working Party meetings (environment; agriculture; and development cooperation). The fact that the Finnish official placed in the Perm Rep was an agriculture and forestry specialist facilitated the process. However, Finland's focus there was not on the development policy aspects but on domestic issues. Furthermore, MMM assumed a more active role in the influencing compared to the MFA, given the emphasis on the EU's and Finland's internal matters.

Overall, it can be argued that the Communication was significant from a development policy perspective both on its own and in the role it played in future legislation. However, Finland's contribution to the process was not significant from the perspective of development policy.



The process continued with a European Parliament resolution calling for regulatory action to tackle EU-driven global deforestation. Following this, on 17 November 2021, the European Commission submitted a legislative proposal to combat deforestation and forest degradation driven by the expansion of agricultural land used to produce specific commodities, namely cattle, cocoa, coffee, palm oil, soya and wood. The issue was also announced in the European Green Deal, the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 and the Farm to Fork Strategy (European Parliament, 2022). In these latter steps, Finland has not been significantly involved.

Since 2019, Finland has become increasingly engaged in climate diplomacy, as the influencing plans also indicate. A recent major event was the **High-level Meeting on Adaptation Finance** in Lahti, Finland, on 3–4 April 2022. The meeting served as a preparatory step for the Glasgow COP26 of the UNFCCC, and it paves the way for the subsequent COP27 to be held in November 2022. One of the achievements of COP26 was the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, which was signed by 145 countries committing to sustainable management of forests. This links with the MFA's previous policy directions; it positions Finland as an important global actor and has created significant demand for Finland to assume some leadership in the negotiations.

The Lahti discussions occurred in the context of international climate negotiations, yet the role of the EU and Finland was central. The **Champions Group on Adaptation Finance** (launched at the UN General Assembly in 2021), supported by the European Commission, played a prominent role in the event. Finland emphasised the links between **forests** and **adaptation**, priorities that have emerged strongly in Finland's EU influencing (MFA, 2022d). Biodiversity conservation and management are seen as an integral part of the package. As a result of the event, Finland clearly positioned itself as a thematic leader in this field. Another platform closely related to the Champions Group, and one of Finland's flagship initiatives, is the **Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action**. It is composed of 70 countries, including many EU MS and 25 institutional partners. It was established by Finland in 2019, and its objective is to mainstream climate change issues in the planning of economic and financial policy. The coalition follows the **Helsinki Principles** (2019) that highlight the unique position of Ministries of Finance to accelerate a just transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy (Coalition, 2022). In March 2020, the Finnish Ministry of Finance nominated a Special Representative for Finland in the Coalition (Min. of Finance, 2020). The cooperation between this Special Representative and the MFA Ambassador for Climate Change is an example of close inter-ministerial coordination on foreign and EU policy.

With these advances in the climate negotiations, the elimination of deforestation from commodity supply chains (i.e., the 'EU Communication on forests') remains a relevant process for Finland as an EU MS. Stakeholder interviews suggested that the agenda continues to be monitored closely in the EU influencing context.



As a separate line of action, the MFA also influenced the EU to include forestry as an eligible sector in the **EFSD+**. However, the evaluation team could not confirm Finland's level of input from more than one source.

For **FLEGT**, MFA internal documents show that the file remained on the agenda during Finland's Presidency. In addition, Finland also financed some bilateral forestry projects that supported a partner country in accessing a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) (Williams et al., 2019). However, these initiatives have not included a direct EU influencing dimension.

Concerning **NDICI**, references to sustainable forestry were included in the text, in line with Finland's priorities. Similarly, provisions on climate change mainstreaming in the NDICI were included in the instrument but to a lesser extent compared to what Finland advocated.

Emerging from the country case studies:

Finland's activities in climate change and forestry in **Tanzania** (see case study) were mainly focused on adaptation in the natural resources sector but also mitigation in the forestry sector. However, the relationship between the Finnish Embassy and the EUD has become closer in recent years as the EU Multiannual Investment Plan (MIP) 2021-2027 features more forestry than its predecessors. Furthermore, the planned Team Europe Initiatives include a Blue Economy project in Tanzania. Here, Finland's forestry sector experience has played a role. For example, Finland's long-term cooperation in the forestry sector in the country provided the means to successfully negotiate the geographic scope of the initiative.

In **Nepal** (see case study), Finland is known for its successful WASH projects, one of which has received EU delegated cooperation funds. In the future, Finland aims to participate in a TEI that focuses on green recovery, where Finland can add value with its sector expertise. However, it seems that – even if the EUD has expressed interest in tapping Finland's knowledge in forestry, Finland has been reluctant to once again engage in the sector in Nepal though this may change with a new project on natural resource management in local government.

Outcomes



In EU external climate action, MFA has played a highly proactive role, especially since 2019. Finland has demonstrated leadership in the field of forests and adaptation, as well as mainstreaming climate change in the work of the Ministry of Finance. However, it should be noted that, regarding climate change in NDICI negotiations, Finland failed to take a more proactive role in pushing for a more ambitious target. Instead, it relied on other parties to improve the language on climate in the regulation, but those parties then failed to do so. This omission constituted a drawback for Finland in terms of its influencing objectives (for more information, see Section 4.3 of the main report).



On forestry, the evaluation team did not observe any specific and significant outcomes that could be linked to Finland’s influencing activities on EU external action. This reflects the fact that MFA has not paid significant attention to forestry in its EU influencing objectives. However, forestry has returned to the high-level agenda in the past few years in the context of international climate negotiations, where Finland has worked jointly with the EU. Therefore, a potential exists for using Finland’s expertise in this topic despite the fact that ground-level forestry activities have been gradually de-prioritised in the past. Also, interviews carried out during the evaluation with external stakeholders showed that Finland still holds the reputation of a country with solid forest-sector expertise.

11.3 Conclusions on Finland’s effective influencing

Significance of verified outcomes



Finland’s influencing objectives are ambitious, and a significant number of activities have taken place since 2019, considering the limited number of staff dedicated to the task. Finland’s proactive role is generating considerable demand for engagement in the international arena, to which MFA and other Finnish ministries have been able to respond in a consistent manner. These processes often overlap and merge with other international and multistakeholder platforms.

Country-level influencing has demonstrated good potential and concrete results. Finland is well placed to influence the EUD in the forestry sector in Tanzania, which is closely linked with adaptation and mitigation activities alike. On the other hand, in Nepal, Finland has so far declined the EUD’s invitation to support the forestry sector, though there are plans to include forestry in a new natural resource management in local governance project. Despite this rejection, Finland adds value to the EU through its WASH projects and climate action within those.

Contribution of other external factors



It is difficult and not even necessarily relevant to distinguish EU influencing from other types of international collaboration in climate diplomacy.



Conclusions on Finland's contribution



EU influencing in the forestry sector has shown positive momentum at times but, overall, constitutes a missed opportunity for Finland. However, 2019 marks a shift in this trend. In the 2000s, forestry featured strongly on MFA's overall development agenda, including several bilateral and multi-bilateral projects. However, since the 2010s, a decline in investments in this sector has been visible, although Finnfund has started to assume the role of forestry expert among Finnish development actors. In any case, EU influencing in the forestry sector has so far not been a top priority for Finland. Yet, given the relatively low profile of the Commission in the sector, there has been and still is room for an EU MS like Finland to take leadership. With the renewed visibility of forests in the international climate negotiations, there is good potential for Finland to regain this role. Recent MFA actions already show concrete steps in this direction.

Country-level influencing has demonstrated positive results; however, Finland has also declined a role as a key figure in the forestry sector. The rejection echoes the MFA's limited ability to respond to various potential opportunities.

Nevertheless, Finland has stood firmly with those EU MS that promote ambitious sustainable development objectives in external action overall in various forms.

Other discussion



It is not too late for Finland to engage in the forestry sector in the EU's external action; the new "movement" requires consistency and resources in the long run. Prior experience from bilateral forestry projects and multilateral work with FAO coupled with Finnfund's forestry leadership among DFIs, expertise in other Finnish institutions, and past climate diplomacy efforts form a solid foundation for continuing the efforts. However, there are also past examples where momentum on promising lines of action has been lost. So far, a similar risk can be observed in climate diplomacy efforts.



12 Peer review report

12.1 Methodology

Main question: How does Finland's approach to influencing the EU on development cooperation compare with other similar EU Member States (MS)?

Objective: A light peer review was developed to allow for a comparison with a small number of other EU MS. This 'benchmarking' exercise aimed to compare Finland with other EU small or medium MS that put a similar amount of effort into development cooperation, to see what resources and approaches they used for EU influencing in this area and, if possible, whether similar types of results could be identified.

The main research questions guiding the peer review are:

1. What does the country do in terms of allocating resources for EU influencing (staffing resources, including training, seniority incentives, and financial resources, including research and capacity building)?
2. What does the country follow in terms of a strategy or approach to EU influencing: based on prioritised objectives; focused on specific themes; participating in specific bodies or groups? Is there a specific organisational set-up?
3. Areas / themes in which the country aims at influencing on EU staff positions (people), and/or EU decisions on policy priorities?
4. Can they name any positive outcomes of their countries' EU influencing in the last couple of years and any main factors of success in the country's influencing efforts?

12.1.1 Selection of the peer review group

We compare Finland primarily with other smaller EU MS that make a similar contribution to development cooperation. This can primarily be defined by official development assistance (ODA) and ODA/gross national income (GNI) statistics but should also include an indication of staff resources devoted to diplomacy and development cooperation, including on development cooperation and to overall attitudes to development cooperation. Finland frequently works with MS that it sees as like-minded and they are mostly located in northern Europe (such as the Nordics, Netherlands, Germany). But, arguably, it could also be compared with countries from other parts of Europe such as Eastern or Southern Europe. We have therefore included in our selection one country from each of these regions (Poland and Portugal).

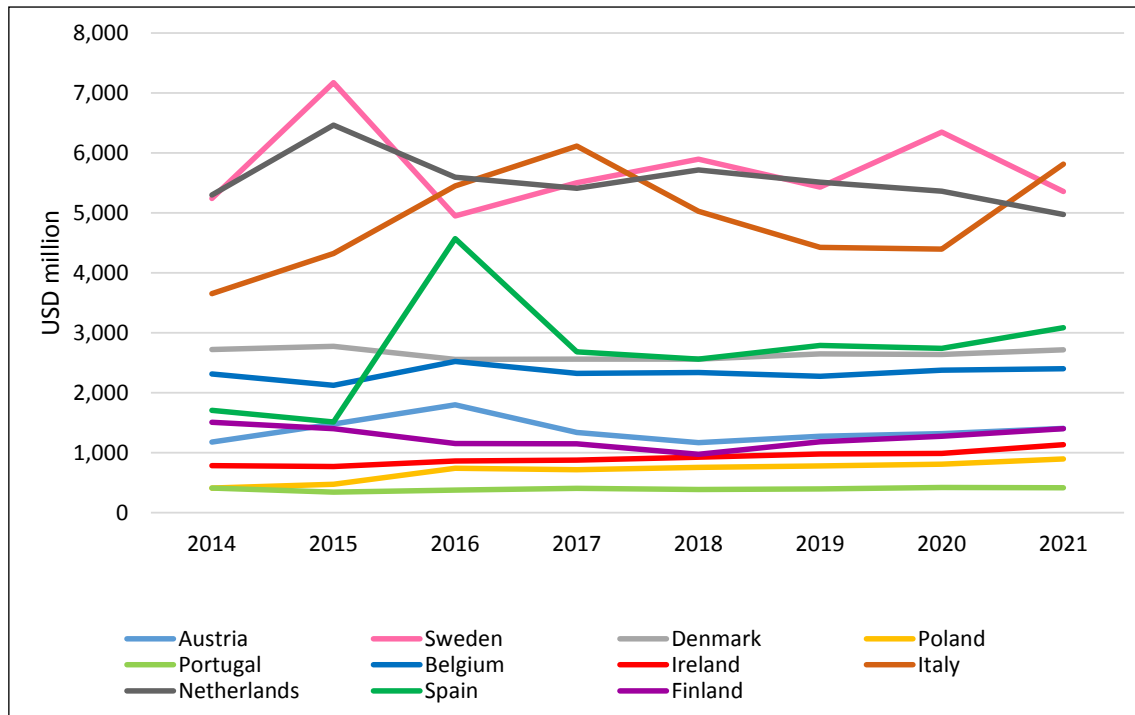
The following process has been followed to identify a group of peer countries.



ODA volume

This criterion can help indicate the comparative weight each Member State might have in terms of support to development cooperation.

Figure 1. EU Member States' net ODA volume, 2014-2021



Source: Evaluation team, based on OECD Aid Statistics (data are only available in USD)

As a first criterion for selecting comparable peer countries, we examined ODA volumes and selected countries with volumes close to Finland's. The EU MS closest to Finland in ODA terms are Poland, Ireland and Austria. The next group just above includes Belgium, Denmark and Spain. Above them comes another group with Netherlands, Italy and Sweden with considerably higher ODA volumes which make them less comparable. Spain on the other hand has a much larger population than Finland also making comparison less appropriate. In sum, based on this ODA volume criterion the following selection would include Poland, Ireland, Austria, Belgium and Denmark. To this we added Sweden to give an additional Nordic comparator even though it has a much higher ODA level.

ODA/GNI ratios

The countries identified in the previous section were then ranked according to their ODA/GNI ratios. For this, Portugal, as a smaller, Southern European member state was also included. These countries ranked in terms of this ratio produced a spread (Table 3) with Finland close to Belgium, Ireland and Austria, but below its two Nordic neighbours and well ahead of Portugal and Poland.



Table 3 Net ODA provided as ratio percentage of country GNI in 2021

COUNTRY	NET ODA AS SHARE OF GNI
Sweden	0.92
Denmark	0.70
Finland	0.47
Belgium	0.46
Ireland	0.32
Austria	0.31
Portugal	0.18
Poland	0.15

Source: OECD, 2022a

Number of diplomatic representations

Another criterion to take into account for influencing, is ideally, staff resources for diplomacy and development cooperation. No data could easily be found for this, but the number of diplomatic representations each country has abroad can be used as a proxy indicator. For this the Global Policy Index (Baker et al., 2022), provides a comprehensive comparison of significant diplomatic networks. Taking data for 2019 (the most recent available), the countries being considered are relatively close to Finland in terms of number of representations and number of representations per million inhabitants. In all the cases they are close to or below the global and EU averages. Finland does do better in the latter category than all the others apart from Ireland. Poland may have the largest number of representations but in relation to its population it is at the bottom of the list.

Table 4 Selected EU countries by diplomatic representations

COUNTRY	TOTAL DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIONS ²⁴	DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIONS PER MILLION INHABITANTS
Sweden	104	10.2
Denmark	89	15.3
Belgium	118	10.4
Finland	85	15.5
Ireland	87	17.8
Austria	98	11.1
Portugal	128	12.4
Poland	136	3.6

Source: Evaluation team compilation from Global Policy Index (Baker et al., 2022)

²⁴ Embassies, consulates, permanent missions, other representations.



Commitment to development

To see how much our sample of peer review countries varies in their overall attitudes to development cooperation which may make them have very different attitudes to influencing the EU, we made use of the Center for Global Development's (CGD) on Commitment to Development Index. This ranks countries in relation to their commitments in eight policy areas that impact on development cooperation. Each policy area, as outlined in Table 5, is assessed using a points system for several indicators outlined on the CGD website (Mitchell et al., 2021). These points are then added up and countries performance can be then comparatively ranked. The Commitment to Development Index is relevant when considering Finland's comparative performance in policy areas, particularly those specific to their EU influencing strategy for international development. The aim was to identify countries with similar positions to Finland in these policy areas.

Table 5 Ranking of countries using the Commitment to Development Index

Country	Overall rank	Finance	Investment	Migration	Trade	Environment	Health	Security	Tech	Income adjusted rank
Sweden	1	3	4	1	4	1	2	11	18	1
France	2	16	1	18	12	2	16	13	5	3
Norway	3	2	9	4	32	17	12	10	9	27
Australia	4	27	11	19	2	35	4	15	1	11
United Kingdom	5	6	3	26	6	10	20	1	20	4
Netherlands	6	7	18	13	1	11	7	16	24	8
Germany	7	12	6	6	5	14	10	20	19	5
Finland	8	11	12	16	7	29	1	8	25	7
Canada	9	15	2	10	18	36	6	21	6	6
Denmark	10	5	19	24	9	9	9	7	22	23
Austria	11	21	14	14	14	13	21	5	7	17
Portugal	12	18	16	9	19	3	15	9	14	2
Switzerland	13	13	15	12	24	18	8	23	11	35
Luxembourg	14	1	29	7	20	38	13	27	3	34
New Zealand	15	36	22	8	3	28	24	19	4	15
Belgium	16	9	10	11	16	30	18	25	16	20
Japan	17	24	13	28	8	25	3	26	13	18
Ireland	18	8	8	21	26	16	26	3	32	29
Italy	19	17	5	15	17	12	34	18	31	19
Spain	20	23	7	17	13	4	31	22	34	14
Czech Republic	21	26	25	32	15	19	22	12	15	10
United States	22	20	24	20	10	37	17	6	29	38
Slovakia	23	25	26	38	22	8	11	2	35	16
South Korea	24	30	31	23	35	26	23	28	2	24
Hungary	25	32	27	33	23	7	19	4	30	12
Chile	26	35	28	3	11	5	33	34	36	13
Greece	27	22	17	5	28	15	37	17	38	21
South Africa	28	19	30	22	31	31	35	14	8	9
Turkey	29	4	37	2	37	32	32	31	39	22
Poland	30	28	32	34	27	21	38	24	37	28

Source: Center for Global Development (CGD) Commitment to Development Index 2021



In this index Finland ranks 8th. All the MS identified, including Finland, are grouped between the 6th and 18th position with two outliers: Sweden at the head of the list (1st) and Poland at the bottom in 30th position. The majority of our peer sample, Denmark, Austria, Portugal, Belgium and Ireland, are thus all grouped closely in Table 5 and just below Finland, indicating very similar attitudes to development cooperation and we assume to influencing the EU, and thereby reinforcing the case for using them as a group of peers. The two outliers, Sweden and particularly Poland, on the other hand might therefore be expected to take rather different positions from Finland.

12.1.2 Summary – conclusion of the selection

In sum, we have a peer group of four very similar countries to Finland: Austria, Belgium, Denmark and Ireland. To this we added three MS who are similar to Finland in some respects but rather different in others: Sweden as an additional Nordic member with whom Finland cooperates a lot, Poland to provide an Eastern European comparator and Portugal as a Southern European comparator.

12.1.3 Implementation of the peer review

Officials from six of these seven countries were interviewed for the peer review. Austrian officials proved reluctant to participate.

Four questions on (i) their approach to development cooperation influencing, (ii) their priority themes in development cooperation, (iii) any results achieved, and (iv) resources used for development cooperation influencing, provided the framework for these structured interviews. The links with the EQs and specific Criteria (JCs) are indicated in each section. OECD data and peer review reports were also used to supplement the information collected from the interviews. The findings below are analysed first by country (section 2) and then aggregated to give an overview (section 3) before some lessons for Finland are brought out (section 4).

As this was a light exercise only one interview was done per country. This constraint inevitably limited the amount of information it was possible to collect. Moreover, while the interviewees were generally well informed and helpful, the evidence is inevitably somewhat subjective and could not be independently verified. The results of the review should therefore be taken as indicative, and a further study would be required to provide a more accurate and in-depth comparison.

12.1.4 Comparisons with Sweden's Like-Minded Countries

A recent EBA study (Karlsson & Tallberg, 2021) comparing Sweden with several its own like-minded countries offers an interesting point of comparison with our peer review. Based on seven criteria²⁵ the EBA study identified the following closest like-minded states for Sweden: Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Finland, Italy and the Netherlands. The first three in this group are also in the group selected above for our peer review. They all have six out of seven features similar to Sweden, as does Finland itself. The remaining two peer countries selected above, Portugal and Poland, only had two or three features out of seven that compared closely with Sweden. This therefore confirms

25 The 7 criteria used by the EBA study are: ODA/GNI ratio for 2018, Primary regional focus on Africa, LDC share, Top 5 ODA recipients, Primary sub sector, Gender score and Environment score



our choice of peer group, in that four out of six countries in our peer group have similar policies to Finland whereas Poland and Portugal are indeed outliers as also argued above.

One interesting finding that the EBA study brings out that is on the percentage of net ODA that EU MS allocate to the EU. In 2018 Sweden's allocation of ODA to the EU development Budget was less than 10%, but for Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Finland, France and Austria it ranged between 18% and 40%. On the other hand, Poland and Portugal allocated 65% and 55% respectively (Karlsson & Tallberg 2021). This again shows how most of our selected peer review countries have similar development policy priorities to Finland. On the other hand, Sweden, as a high ODA/GNI ratio country, and Portugal and Poland as low ODA/GNI ratio countries, channel rather different proportions of their OD through the EU.

Looking more specifically at some of the seven criteria the EBA study uses to determine like-mindedness is also interesting:

For instance, the EBA report also looks at the primary geographic focus by region of EU MS (Table 5, EBA). Ten MS including Finland focus their ODA primarily on Africa. This group also includes five MS from our peer group: Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Portugal and Sweden, showing that in this respect at least the bulk of the peer group can be said to be like-minded with Finland. On the other hand, Poland's primary regional focus is on Europe.

Equally the EBA report notes that these same five MS in our peer group allocate 60% or more of their ODA to LDCs (Finland is just below 60%) with Ireland reaching as much as 75%. For Poland only 30-35% of its ODA goes to LDCs (Figure 5, EBA).

Finally, the EBA study looks at the performance of the EU MS against the OECD's gender and environment markers (Figure 6, EBA). For our peer group, both Sweden and Ireland do better than Finland and Belgium who both score around 60% on the gender marker. Denmark and Portugal are somewhat below Finland and Poland is one of the poorest performers in the EU. The picture is very different on the environmental marker where Poland scores above Finland, as indeed do the majority of the peer group apart from Ireland and Portugal.

We can conclude therefore that our peer review group of six MS do have a series of fairly similar policy positions to Finland and that therefore five out of this group, aside from Poland that is, can be said to be generally 'like-minded' with Finland and not just Sweden.

12.2 Country analysis

12.2.1 Quantitative comparison

Table 6 details the selected peer countries performance on the Commitment to Development Index (CDI) 2021 (Mitchell et al., 2021). Comparing the peer countries' scores and rankings adjusted for income²⁶ yielded a more comprehensive and accurate snapshot of performance in the eight policy

²⁶ Responsibility for development rises with a country's income. The 2021 CDI contains 40 countries whose income levels vary significantly. Therefore, these results take into account a country's income level. Income-adjusted results are calculated by comparing the country's score to an "expected score"—based on the performance of other countries relative to their income levels—and then ranked according to how far above or below that level the country scores.



areas. Table 6 shows that Sweden remained in first rank, however Portugal with the lowest ODA volume (see Figure 1 above) and second lowest ODA/GNI (see Table 3) in the selected group moved to 2nd rank, performing well across all assessed policy areas. Finland, moved to 7th rank, positioning itself above the other peer countries identified as being most similar. Table 6 shows that Austria, Belgium and Poland's rankings fell modestly, however Denmark and Ireland's rankings drop significantly once adjusted for income.

Table 6 Commitment to Development Index income adjusted rankings for selected countries

Table 6 Commitment to Development Index income adjusted rankings for selected countries

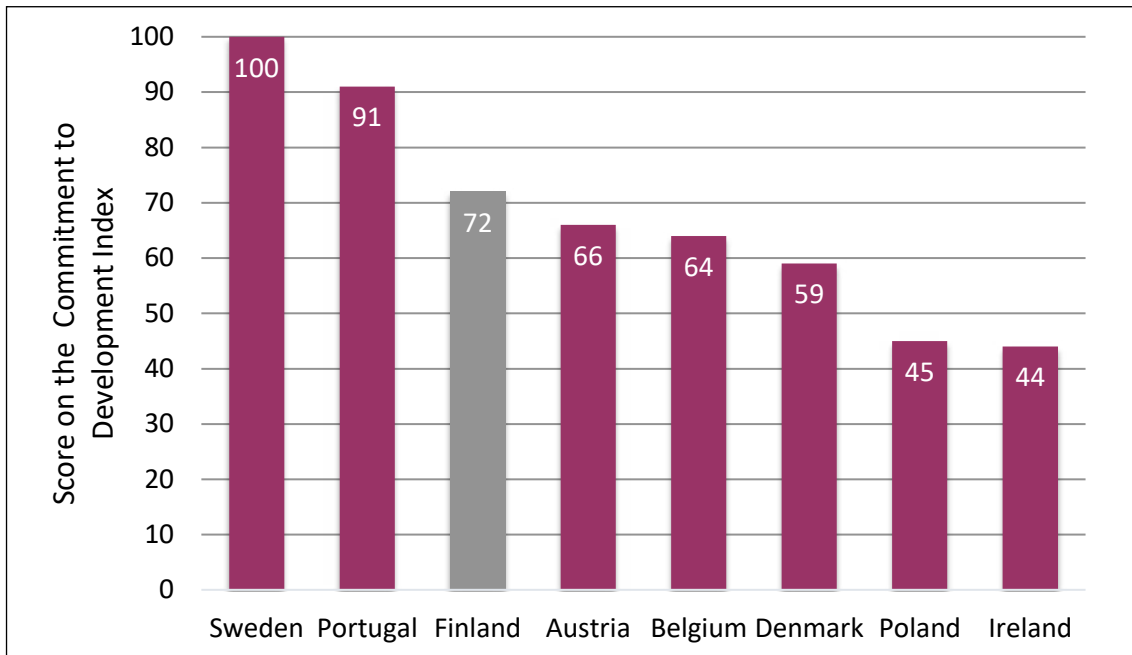
Country	Overall rank	Finance	Investment	Migration	Trade	Environment	Health	Security	Tech.	Income adjusted rank
Sweden	1	2	6	3	11	1	2	18	25	1
Portugal	12	13	10	5	9	3	17	5	11	2
Finland	8	15	16	16	12	28	1	10	29	7
Austria	11	14	18	15	17	13	19	8	10	17
Belgium	16	9	11	9	18	30	18	27	19	20
Denmark	10	5	29	32	20	6	9	14	30	23
Poland	30	18	26	35	19	20	38	15	36	28
Ireland	18	17	14	26	32	14	25	9	39	29
Group Mean	16	12	16	18	17	14	16	13	25	16

Source: Center for Global Development (CGD) Commitment to Development Index 2021

Combing both income adjusted thematic rankings (Table 6) and overall Development Index scores (Figure 2), Finland scores best out of the group identified as having a similar ODA contribution. When considering ODA contribution, it was expected that Poland and Portugal would have the lowest scores in group. However, both Figure 2 and Table 6 indicate that, after adjusting for income, Ireland's lag in migration, trade, health and technology contribute to it having the lowest score of all the selected peer countries.



Figure 2 Overall scores achieved in Commitment to Development Index, 2021



Source: Evaluation team, based on data from the Center for Global Development.

Although the CDI does not include indicators for some of Finland's key influencing priorities (such as for instance gender equality, rights of persons with disabilities or education), it does include three policy areas where the index covers issues Finland has expressed interest in influencing EU development policy on: migration, environment and technology. These are brought out in Figure 3 where Finland is compared with the two highest ranking ODA providers (Sweden and Denmark) as well as Portugal a high performer on the CDI. This shows that, for each policy area, Finland comes out of this comparison poorly with lower scores than all the other three countries, as well as performing below the selected peer-countries' average score.

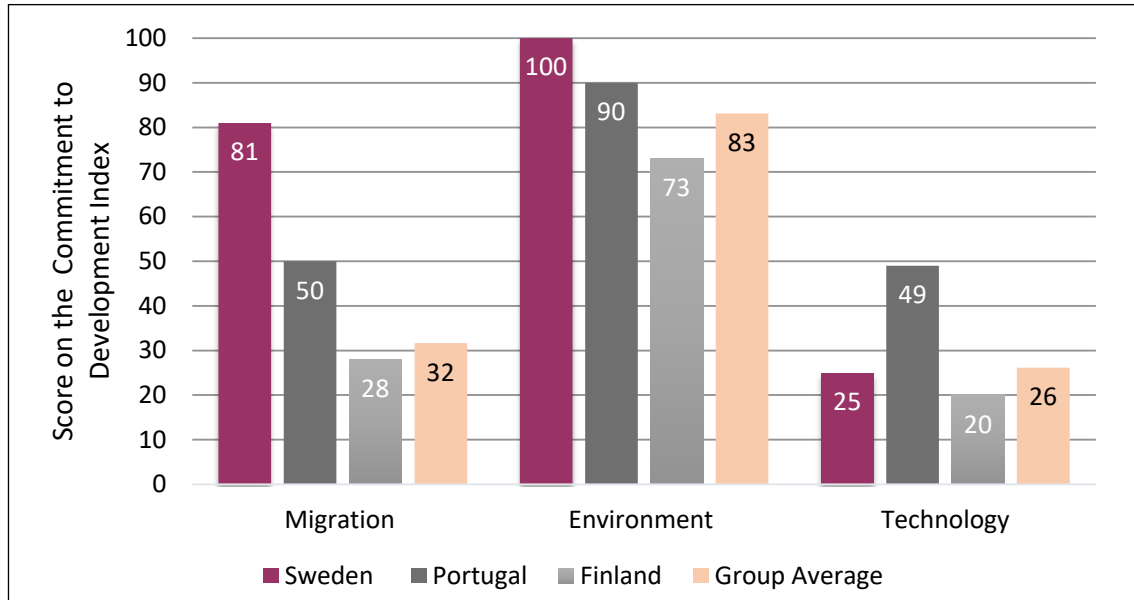
Regarding migration, Finland is well below average on the majority of indicators including increasing immigrant flows with emphasis on improving female immigrant flows, as well as becoming signatories to International Migration Conventions – specifically ratifying the international Labour Organisation Conventions on migration for employment and on migrant workers (Mitchell et al., 2021). Figure 3 demonstrates that Finland was weak on the environment component of the index, again doing worse than Sweden, Portugal and the group average. This is due to high CO₂ emissions from land use change and forestry and fossil fuel support, specifically subsidising oil and coal production and consumption (Mitchell et al., 2021). Figure 3 shows Finland was again the weakest performer in the technology scoring, being considerably outperformed by Portugal. Finland's low score was based on the need to provide more tax incentives and subsidies to private research and development (R&D), increase the portion of international tertiary students coming from low-income countries and include more researchers from low-income countries in international research collaborations (Mitchell et al., 2021).

This quick analysis of the scoring results of the selected peer countries on the CDI shows the variety in policy views that countries in the EU with similar ODA levels and capacities for diplomatic influencing can have. While these factors are important in terms of the capacities these countries



can deploy for influencing, they do not give any indication of what policy influencing priorities countries may have.

Figure 3 Scores achieved in key thematic area in Commitment to Development Index, 2021



Source: Evaluation team, based on data from the Center for Global Development.

Another way to measure performance in key areas is by using policy markers. The Karlsson & Tallberg (2021) report used markers to measure donor performance in relation to gender equality and environment/climate protection as they are central elements of international agreements such as Agenda°2030, the European Consensus, and the European Gender Action Plan. To do this the percentage of allocable bilateral ODA committed to policy goals that identified the two above mentioned markers as principle or significant objectives was determined. The results for the gender marker has Sweden (87%) and Ireland (78%) well above the others in the peer sample. Finland (60%), Belgium (58%) and Austria (50%) make up the middle performing groups. While Denmark (41%), Portugal (28%) and, most notably, Poland (2%) make up the lowest performing group (Karlsson & Tallberg 2021). The environmental marker is far more sporadic, with no clear grouping among the peer sample countries. The results from highest to lowest: Sweden (57%), Belgium (44%), Poland (38%), Austria (38%), Denmark (29%), Finland (22%), Ireland (18%) and Portugal (5%). These results are interesting and reflect our findings that highlight many outcomes on gender equality and far less on environmental protection and climate change (incl. issues like forestry).



12.2.2 Belgium

Approach / strategy for influencing (Criterion 1.1.)

Main findings:

Belgium's approach to influencing the EU relies on coordination with like-minded MS, as a way of striving to achieve greater influence.

While there is no specific documentation on how to influence the EU, this is acknowledged as part of the job description of different roles, such as in the PermRep. There is also room for influence tasks to occur on an ad-hoc basis depending on the context.

The fact that their own machinery is based in Brussels implies they can have direct contact with EU representatives, which is an advantage and facilitates regular contact. This is reinforced by proactive action by the ambassador in liaising with reference persons from different DGs.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives.

Themes / areas of focus for influencing

Main findings:

Belgium's policy for development cooperation prioritises least developed countries (LDCs) and fragile states in Africa. In 2019, Belgium's bilateral ODA was primarily focused on Africa.

Thematically, according to interviewees, the country's priority areas for influencing have been human rights-based approach (HRBA) and gender, in close relation to the SDGs. In addition, the area of social protection has become more relevant, in particular in relation to the most recent minister of development cooperation. In 2019, social infrastructure and services was the largest focus of Belgium's bilateral ODA. Investments in this area accounted for 27.4% of bilateral ODA commitments, with a strong focus on education, population policies and health.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives, OECD 2021 Trends and insights on development cooperation.

Results / factors of success (EQ3, elements of EQ2)

Main findings:

Areas in which Belgium considers it has been successful in influencing the EU include gender, the 'humanitarian+' concept and the 'Digital for development' agenda.

In the area of gender equality, the influencing had to do with the inclusion of progressive language in the 2021 Council Conclusions. In this sense, they managed to include all elements they were pursuing, with the support of other MS such as Finland.



Regarding the 'humanitarian+' support label that refers to the complementary support²⁷ to EU humanitarian aid in the crisis in Afghanistan, collective coordination was highlighted as a reason for success in the removal of this designation, which had initially been introduced in different communiqués.

Regarding the 'Digital for development' agenda, it was highlighted that an influential person can play a role in leading influencing processes and pushing an agenda, including convincing other MS (in this case a former Minister of Development Cooperation).

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives.

Resources and organisation for influencing (Criteria 1.2 and 1.3)

Main findings:

The Directorate-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD) of the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation is responsible for development cooperation. The DGD manages 58.5% of the development assistance disbursements that it grants to implementing partners. The remaining 41.5% mainly cover contributions to multilateral organisations (including the European Commission) under the responsibility of other Federal Public Services. This requires for the DGD to act as a coordinator of Belgian aid aiming for a stronger whole-of-government approach.

In terms of specific human resources, the existence of a specific unit working on EU affairs and Partnerships has been highlighted, which currently comprises three people.

According to the latest OECD peer review, the DGD staff is very committed but requires additional support and expertise in some areas, particularly in the face of increased staff turnover.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives, OECD 2021 Trends and insights on development cooperation, OECD Development Cooperation Peer Reviews: Belgium 2020.

²⁷ This included support to basic needs and livelihood support (e.g., health, education, food security).



12.2.3 Denmark

Approach / strategy for influencing (Criterion 1.1.)

Main findings:

For Denmark, the EU appears as an important partner in its development cooperation strategy, in which priority areas are also highlighted. Although there is no specific strategy for influencing the EU, this takes place at different levels and in different instances or working groups.

Depending on what is to be influenced (processes, strategies, etc.), Denmark highlights the use of different channels, such as dialogue with decision-makers, the work that takes place in working groups (e.g., CODEV), or at country level.

According to Denmark, to influence the EU a high level of technical expertise is necessary, as the EU is characterised by highly qualified thematic specialists. To influence the EU, you need good technical arguments, and this is the only way to stand out for individual countries.

The fact that there is more consensus on certain issues among EU MS makes it difficult for countries to find the right approach to influence and not to fall into overly generalised positions.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives.

Themes / areas of focus for influencing

Main findings:

Denmark's 2017 humanitarian and development cooperation strategy, The World 2030, sets out four strategic objectives: 1) safety, peace and protection; 2) prevention of irregular migration; 3) inclusive, sustainable growth; and 4) freedom, democracy, human rights and equality, over a five-year time frame.

In 2019 social infrastructure and services was the largest focus of bilateral ODA for Denmark. Investments in this area accounted for 41.8% of bilateral ODA commitments, with a strong focus on support to government and civil society, education and reproductive health.

Denmark's geographical focus is shifting to the Sahel and Horn of Africa, with a focus on strengthening local resilience to discourage irregular migration. In 2019, Denmark's bilateral ODA was primarily focused on Africa and the Middle East.

According to interviewees, the country has also had a growing focus on climate change, which they seek to see more reflected in the EU and has therefore grown as an important influencing concern.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives, OECD 2021 Trends and insights on development cooperation.



Results / factors of success (EQ3, elements of EQ2)

Main findings:

Denmark has particularly sought to influence migration and climate issues. In this regard, Danish representatives consider that they have been relatively successful in influencing the incorporation of spending targets in NDICI's regulation regarding these two issues.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives.

Resources and organisation for influencing (Criteria 1.2 and 1.3)

Main findings:

Policy, coordination and implementation of Denmark's development cooperation remain the remit of the MFA. Denmark has a decentralised model that allows its embassies and missions to connect its development cooperation with its political advocacy. Despite the apparent flexibility this gives for influencing, decentralisation and flexibility are identified as making it more challenging to ensure coherence.

Interviewees felt they had most success in influencing in areas such as migration and climate targets where there is most consensus between MS.

The MFA Denmark has limited staff and only recently restored specialist skills to the level prior to the cuts in 2016. The lack of sufficient staff and resources and the difficulty of matching the EU's level of expertise are identified as major challenges to pursue influencing.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives, OECD 2021 Trends and insights on development cooperation, OECD Development Cooperation Peer Reviews: Denmark 2021.

12.2.4 Ireland

Approach / strategy for influencing (Criterion 1.1.)

Main findings:

Ireland has a development cooperation 'vision strategy' (the 'A Better World' policy) that sets out the country's priorities. Development cooperation is an integral part of Ireland's foreign policy, as foreign policy shapes Ireland's development cooperation, e.g., in terms of participation in certain fora or size of different divisions (Africa Division is the largest division).

The overall development strategy is also how Ireland puts forward their position in EU policy engagement. Brexit has been a relevant driving force to show their independence and voice within the EU.

In terms of influencing strategy, Ireland seeks to support coalitions to carry forward specific issues, knowing that coalitions can change, and like-minded countries may not always coincide. *"As a smaller Member State, you have to pick your battles, nonetheless this can be more effective than the larger countries being involved in everything"*.



At the level of relevant staff working in partner countries, respondents highlighted the way in which the prioritisation of EU influence appears as clear and concrete, which is reflected in their colleagues' duty to inform their superiors about it.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives, Interviews with Country Embassy representatives.

Themes / areas of focus for influencing

Main findings:

Ireland's 2019 policy for international development, 'A Better World', focuses on the LDCs and fragile contexts, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa. Ireland's development policy priorities are gender equality, humanitarian assistance, climate change and governance. To achieve them, Ireland commits to take action in three areas: protection (including fragility), food and people (human development).

In 2019, Ireland's bilateral ODA was primarily focused on Africa and the Middle East. That same year, social infrastructure and services was the largest focus of bilateral ODA for Ireland. Investments in this area accounted for 36.9% of bilateral ODA commitments, with a strong focus on support to government and civil society, health, and education.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives, OECD 2021 Trends and insights on development cooperation.

Results / factors of success (EQ3, elements of EQ2)

Main findings:

Ireland considers it has been quite successful in terms of advancing their interests and views on development among collective EU bodies, e.g., in Council Conclusions, although with greater difficulty in influencing the Commission.

Beyond this, it remains to be noted positive results have not been the result of working alone, but rather through working in coalition, which has led to their success. Part of the success of this approach can be explained by having a considerable number of EU MS supporting and agreeing with Ireland's vision on specific topics (e.g., food security), for which being a credible and flexible player has been an advantage.

At the country level, in Tanzania, Ireland noted no major contributions to the MIP development process, although it was more successful in its contributions to the development of the Country-level implementation plan (CLIP) of EU's Gender Action Plan III.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives, Interviews with Country Embassy representatives.



Resources and organisation for influencing (Criteria 1.2 and 1.3)

Main findings:

In terms of EU influence, there is a specific unit coordinating with the EU. A specific post has been designated to send information to the embassies in the partner countries, although this is only 1/3 of his/her work.

Low levels of staffing and high levels of turnover affect the level and quality of engagement. While it is noted that the lack of resources can negatively influence the tasks of influence and coordination, it has also given them flexibility by allowing them to have a more versatile capacity to manoeuvre compared to other countries with larger bureaucracies.

In terms of training on exercising influence on development matters, Irish officials do not receive formalised training on the subject but rather ad-hoc guidance on specific positions to be taken. DFA has contracted the services of ECDPM to provide training on various topics.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives, OECD 2021 Trends and insights on development cooperation, OECD Development Cooperation Peer Reviews: Ireland 2020

12.2.5 Poland

Approach / strategy for influencing (Criterion 1.1.)

Main findings:

Poland has a Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme which describes in detail its priorities in development cooperation, as well as the geographic and thematic focuses. This is transposed into Poland's position in the EU and other multilateral fora.

Poland does not have a specific guidance document/ strategy for influencing the EU policy: it is not described in any particular way, neither are there public nor internal documents. It is considered to be rather a process than a particular strategy.

In Brussels, cooperation and policy influencing take a more structured approach. At country level, representatives from the embassies are on a daily basis in touch with the EU delegation either more formally (e.g., in the form of joint programming Team Europe initiatives) or informally. Reporting on influencing is done regularly and it is often ad hoc, depending on the partner country.

Poland has used coalitions and coordinated with like-minded countries, which is considered as *"a standard practice in Brussels"*.

In influencing, Poland has also taken advantage of its experience working on the ground, particularly given its good relations with governments of countries in the neighbourhood. Cross border cooperation with local governments has given it a unique position, and both aspects have contributed to its ability to influence the EU.



Poland is currently embarking on the path as an implementing partner of the Commission. While this is seen as a way to concretely influence the EU, Poland also highlights difficulties about the modality.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives.

Themes / areas of focus for influencing

Main findings:

The 'Multiannual Programme for Development Cooperation for 2021–2030: Solidarity for Development' focuses Poland's bilateral cooperation on its Eastern neighbours as well as selected partners in Africa and the Middle East, while the engagement with the EU is a multilateral priority.

Thematically, Poland focuses on peace, justice and strong institutions, as well as equal opportunities, including in education and labour.

According to interviewees, health and disaster preparedness were also highlighted among the areas in which the country is most active and in which it seeks to influence EU development policies.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives, OECD 2021 Trends and insights on development cooperation.

Results / factors of success (EQ3, elements of EQ2)

Main findings:

NDICI is a good example in which Poland has had a certain degree of success in influencing.

Poland was initially of the position to keep the 'old' financing instrument focused on the Neighbourhood region. When the EU opted for a single instrument, Poland acted to ensure that sufficient funding was maintained for the Neighbourhood.

Poland's priority was to ensure that not only would the new funding mechanism be sufficiently financed, but that it also incorporated the character of this cooperation and the form in which cooperation takes place with the neighbourhood countries.

In Poland's view, they, together with other MS who supported this position, managed to secure sufficient funding. The current situation with the war in Ukraine reflects that it was actually important to keep ENI as a high priority.

A major factor in this success involved coalition-building and regular meetings during the NDICI negotiation process.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives.



Resources and organisation for influencing (Criteria 1.2 and 1.3)

Main findings:

In Poland, the MFA coordinates development cooperation policy under the brand 'Polish Aid'. It manages most of bilateral cooperation and is also responsible for EU cooperation.

The limited time available to staff has been highlighted as a characteristic feature. In general, the person who covers development cooperation in an embassy might or might not also be covering other policy areas, which makes prioritisation difficult. At the same time, the OECD peer review identifies limited resources as an element that hinders the ability to recruit expertise.

There are currently six people working in the unit managing multilateral relations, including the EU.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives, OECD 2021 Trends and insights on development cooperation, OECD Development Cooperation Peer Reviews: Poland 2017.

12.2.6 Portugal

Approach / strategy for influencing (Criterion 1.1.)

Main findings:

Portugal has used the coalition strategy as a way of gaining or attracting support for its priorities, as well as strengthening cooperation and financial leverage. The ability to work with other EU MS has proven to be an important aspect of influencing the EU.

There is a strategy for Portuguese cooperation, which includes a multilateral component and is currently being revised. Institutionally, there is a State Secretary for European Affairs within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a European Affairs Division within the Portuguese development agency, which coordinate with line ministries to consolidate a national position.

Increasingly, influencing work is moving to the 'field'. Embassies are increasingly working on influencing EU delegations, as Portugal notes that there are many aspects of programming and implementation that take place at partner country level, including Team Europe Initiatives.

Having built up a track record and expertise working on the ground and in specific areas, particularly with ACP countries, has given Portugal an added value when it comes to being valued, beyond its size, as credible and reliable.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives.



Themes / areas of focus for influencing

Main findings:

According to its development cooperation strategy, Portugal focuses on cooperation with Africa and the ACP countries, particularly with Portuguese-speaking countries. In 2019, the LDCs received 63.4% of Portugal's gross bilateral ODA.

Under the overall goal of poverty eradication and sustainable development, the country concentrates on health, education, governance, the rule of law and human rights, as well as human development and global public goods. In 2019, most of Portugal's bilateral ODA was allocated to social infrastructure and services. Investments in this area accounted for 70.7% of bilateral ODA commitments, with a strong focus on support to education, health, and government and civil society

Portuguese cooperation mainly aims to strengthen institutional capacity in its partner countries.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives, OECD 2021 Trends and insights on development cooperation.

Results / factors of success (EQ3, elements of EQ2)

Main findings:

During Portugal's EU Presidency (first half 2021), the country aimed to emphasise relations with low middle income countries, but there was a clear split before between Member States. Resulting from the discussion/reflection that Portugal led together with think tanks, the Council Conclusions were adopted reflecting how least developed countries (LDC) can indeed transition to low middle income, and that this does not mean that MS that are supporting LDCs have to immediately disengage after their 'graduation'.

For Portugal this message was successfully conveyed, and according to its representatives this achievement is partly related to its strong track record and its expertise working with ACP countries.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives.

Resources and organisation for influencing (Criteria 1.2 and 1.3)

Main findings:

Camões, I.P. is Portugal's public agency for development cooperation. It ensures the overall direction and coordination of Portuguese development cooperation but implements only a small share of the Portuguese ODA programme.

The creation of Portuguese Cooperation Centres (CPCs) in 2018 was a first step in moving away from highly centralised decision making. As administratively independent entities overseen by the respective embassies, the centres have been able to hire staff locally and increase their capacity to support and provide advice. Nonetheless, lack of personnel and



budgetary constraints still appear as problematic. High turnover and insufficient development expertise of new staff are also critical elements identified by interviewees and the OECD peer review.

In CODEV, influencing the EU is more clearly defined as part of the job description of its officials. At the level of embassies in partner countries, although not explicitly outlined in job descriptions, it is a task that is increasingly being carried out. As for training, at the PermRep in Brussels this currently takes place on an ad-hoc basis.

For Portugal, influencing the EU is crucial, particularly in the light of not being a large member state and not having extensive resources.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives, OECD 2021 Trends and insights on development cooperation; OECD Development Cooperation Peer Reviews: Portugal 2022.

12.2.7 Sweden

Approach / strategy for influencing (Criterion 1.1.)

Main findings:

Sweden has a solid policy framework in which it sets out its thematic priorities and which is the foundational basis for all issues related to international cooperation. Beyond this comprehensive document, there is no specific guidance paper on policy influencing, since most of the issues on which they want to influence on (and how to influence them) are defined in this policy framework.

While there is no specific guidance document, staff receive support on how and on what issues to push in Brussels, including from Sida.

Sweden makes use of informal channels, and groups/coalitions with like-minded countries. In general terms, this group has consisted of Finland, Germany and Denmark, and has had periods of varying degrees of activity, currently holding informal meetings on a weekly basis. It was particularly relevant for the NDICI and post-Cotonou negotiations.

At the partner country level, in the Tanzanian Embassy for example, there has been a greater perceived push from HQ to work together with the EU, as well as to try to influence them. Gender equality, where Sweden has worked together with like-minded countries such as Finland, is a specific example where they have sought to influence the EU at the country level.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives, Interviews with Country Embassy representatives.



Themes / areas of focus for influencing

Main findings:

Sweden's development policy framework sets out five perspectives – poor people, rights, environment and climate, gender equality, and conflict. Sweden has a clear focus on poverty, and is a leader on gender equality, confirmed through its Feminist Foreign Policy. Sweden's selection of partner countries is focused on least developed countries (LDCs) and the most vulnerable countries.

According to interviewees, other salient issues that Sweden has sought to influence on are democracy and the rule of law.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives, OECD 2021 Trends and insights on development cooperation.

Results / factors of success (EQ3, elements of EQ2)

Main findings:

The key global and European priorities that Sweden has pushed for were on gender equality, climate and biodiversity.

While they consider themselves to have played a relevant role in these issues and to have contributed their expertise, there is also an issue of momentum. As there are many countries promoting these issues, including countries such as France and Germany, it is difficult to take credit for, for example, the relevance of gender equality, climate and biodiversity in the European priorities promoted under the recent NDICI.

Beyond this, they believe that working in small groups (such as the like-minded group) has been key to gaining support and facilitating coordination. They have used this platform, for example, to present different proposals and test the way forward. Another key point of the 'Swedish approach' has to do with having an overall flexible approach rather than pushing too hard: it always works better to be assertive, transparent and clear on the country's position.

At the partner country level, the importance of dialogue and being well prepared and equipped to have these discussions and present qualitative/thematic inputs (e.g., around the definition of MIPs) has been pointed out.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives, Interviews with Country Embassy representatives.



Resources and organisation for influencing (Criteria 1.2 and 1.3)

Main findings:

The MFA has the mandate to define Sweden's development cooperation policy and to oversee the related budget. Within the MFA, the Department for International Development is the main hub for coordination.

The department is very small compared to Sweden's implementing agencies, making it a highly decentralised approach. Sweden's decentralised workforce remains a major asset, although it requires the need to work very closely with different agencies and units within them in order to get their input on different topics, which can be a challenge.

According to the OECD, Sweden has enhanced its human resources planning and improved its staff capacity since the last OECD peer review.

Sweden has senior individuals working on EU development issues, constantly engaging with other areas at the MFA.

Sweden has around 20 seconded development experts in the EU institutions, which is a significant number "for being a small Member State". These are placed in strategic positions – such as gender equality, the Eastern Partnership, democracy, rule of law, and Sweden is planning to increase the number to 25.

Sources: Interviews with CODEV representatives, OECD 2021 Trends and insights on development cooperation, OECD Development Cooperation Peer Reviews: Sweden 2019.

12.3 Overall findings

12.3.1 Approach / strategy for influencing (Criteria 1.1.)

All countries consulted make use of coordination with like-minded MS, as well as coalition building on a regular basis. This is considered almost as a standard practice in Brussels.

In all countries it was reported that there is no specific documentation or a concrete strategy on how to influence the EU. In most cases it is the strategy or policy framework that guides the development cooperation of each respective country that provides the framework for influencing the EU and other multilateral bodies.

Countries have made use of different channels, both formal and informal, including dialogue with decision-makers, and the work carried out in different working groups.

While it is recognised that the task of influencing is part of the job description of many positions, in many cases influencing is done on an ad-hoc basis, as is reporting on it.

Some countries, such as Portugal and Poland, have drawn on their experience of working locally in partner countries, particularly building on a recognised track record and expertise.



According to informants, influencing work is increasingly moving to the 'field'. Embassies are increasingly working to influence EU delegations, including by working together with them on TEI.

12.3.2 Themes / areas of focus for influencing

In terms of geographic focus, most countries have a specific focus on least developed countries (LDCs) and fragile states, mainly in Africa (with different countries targeting different sub-regions of the continent). Poland is the only one of the countries consulted with a particular focus on supporting Neighbourhood countries.

In terms of the thematic areas, gender equality, human rights and democracy, conflict, security and peace, humanitarian assistance, and social protection stand out. Support for environmental issues and climate change appears as an emerging issue. The prevention of irregular migration appears as a theme only prioritised by one country (Denmark), while support for education, labour and health also emerges as relevant.

12.3.3 Results / factors of success (EQ3, elements of EQ2)

The factors that have been key for the Member States consulted in their efforts to influence the EU have particularly involved the support of other MS. In almost all cases, it has been stressed that the results achieved have not been the result of solitary work, but of working in coalition, collective coordination and regular meetings.

Other contributing factors have been the involvement of key decision-makers in leading influencing processes and driving an agenda, and the drawing on their track records and experience of working on specific issues or geographic areas.

Among the issues that have been highlighted as most successful in terms of influence are gender equality, migration and climate. Beyond coalition work, many recognise the importance of the timing / momentum factor as a facilitating aspect of consensus on these issues.

12.3.4 Resources and organisation for influencing (Criterion 1.2 and 1.3)

Many of the countries consulted acknowledged having a specific unit working on EU affairs and multilateral partnerships.

It was noted that while staff working at different levels are highly committed, they often need additional support and expertise in some areas, including influencing tasks. Staff turnover and constraints in terms of human and financial resources, particularly at partner country level, affect the level and quality of engagement as well as the ability to devote time to influencing tasks.



Some countries indicated that a certain level of technical expertise is required to work on influencing the EU, which is often difficult to attain.

In terms of training, no country reported providing their staff with specific training on influencing issues, but rather such guidance tended to be provided on an ad hoc basis.

Only one country consulted (Sweden) explicitly indicated that they have seconded experts and explained that they are looking to further expand their network.

12.4 Comparison with and lessons for Finland

Among the 27 EU MS Finland can be seen as an ambitious and influential donor, providing a consistently strong ODA-levels (see Figure 1). Yet, within the peer sample Denmark and Sweden boasted a far higher ODA percentage of GNI (see Table 3). In the case of Sweden, their high ODA level combined with clear guiding development cooperation principles have enabled them to assume a leading position in many areas that Finland also focuses on such as gender equality, human rights and environmental sustainability (Karlsson & Tallberg 2021).

Our selected peer sample countries, primarily focused on identifying countries with similar ODA levels, also re-enforces the finding of other studies that identify 'like-minded' countries within the EU27, consisting of a group of progressive MS (Elgström & Delputte 2016 and Saltnes 2019). The EBA report found that the main degree of division (i.e., prioritisation on thematic areas) could be identified by the level of ODA contribution and how established a donor is within the EU (Karlsson & Tallberg 2021). Our study also reports similarities between four like-minded states out of six. At the same time, we noted that the priorities and performance of Poland, a member of a large group of Eastern EU MS, differ substantially from these four. On the other hand, Portugal, as a southern EU MS, shares similar development cooperation priorities and geographical focus to Finland, despite it having a much lower net ODA contributions. When reviewing Finland's performance among the peer sample countries we found strong performance in areas such as gender equality and human rights. However, CDI indicators suggest performance is below the group average in environmental protection/climate change. An investigation into bilateral ODA committed to environmental protection and climate change shows that performance in this area is an issue among many of the selected peer countries. Karlsson & Tallberg (2021) reported Finland to be Sweden's second most like-minded country, identifying only Finland's low 'environment' prioritisation as being a point of divergence.

Overall, this peer review is also reassuring on the advocacy side in that it indicates that Finland follows a similar track to comparable MS when it comes to how they influence EU development policy and development cooperation, the focus of EQ2 in this evaluation.

In particular, it emerges from the analysis that coalition building or coordinating with like-minded states is strongly confirmed as the prime standard practice and one that does work. The use of coalitions is also reflected in many of the influencing outcomes that Finland achieved and that are analysed in section 4.3 of Volume 1. In working with coalitions, Finland's approach to influencing the EU is thus consistent with what other small MS do, including one of the original EU small MS, Belgium, that has been playing this game longer than the others, and it confirms the value of one of the key approaches identified in Small State Theory. To deepen this further, Finland could



perhaps explore with other MS what are the most successful techniques and lessons on coalition building and coordination.

On the other hand, Finland does stand out as the only one of this group that has worked with written EU influencing plans. Interviewees expressed interest in this approach, so this may be something the MFA might wish to share with others.

Poland and Portugal's practice of leveraging experience gained in the field as an asset in influencing in Brussels also stands out as something Finland might wish to learn from. The MFA already has some experience of this, for instance in the case of Nepal (see also the Nepal case study) where the Embassy's sharing of lessons learnt on building a gender transformative approach have been taken up by DG INTPA in Brussels, but it would be interesting to extend and generalise this approach.

It is interesting to note that other MS are picking up a trend of 'influencing moving to the field'. Finnish officials have also stressed the importance of this, and it is reassuring that others are sensing this as well. With the advent of TE Initiatives, it is clear this is likely to be increasingly the case in the future.

Finally, it would seem that Sweden has a good deal more experience on the value of secondments of specialist staff to the EU than any of the others. This may be partly a result of the greater ODA resources it has at its disposal than any of the other countries in the chosen peer group. Despite the more restricted budgets available to Finland, if the MFA wishes to extend the practice of secondments, it would probably be useful to discuss this Swedish experience in more detail with MFA counterparts in Stockholm.



13 Survey report

13.1 Design and implementation of the eSurvey

The eSurvey allowed the Evaluation Team to collect primary information on Finnish influence of EU development policy. The survey sought to engage with respondents from both Finnish Embassy and the European Union Delegation (EUD) staff in partner countries.

The questionnaire consisted both of quantitative and qualitative questions. Quantitative questions had a scoring scale and the possibility to answer, 'don't know'. Qualitative questions allowed for further contextualisation and additional information. While each survey question was related to different aspects tackled by the evaluation matrix and directly linked to specific indicators (and/or criteria), priority was given to issues difficult to capture by other means.

The questionnaire was structured around 3 questions:

- Organising the MFA for efficient influencing of the EU;
- A relevant, efficient and coherent influencing process; and
- Effectiveness of influencing outcomes.

13.2 Identification

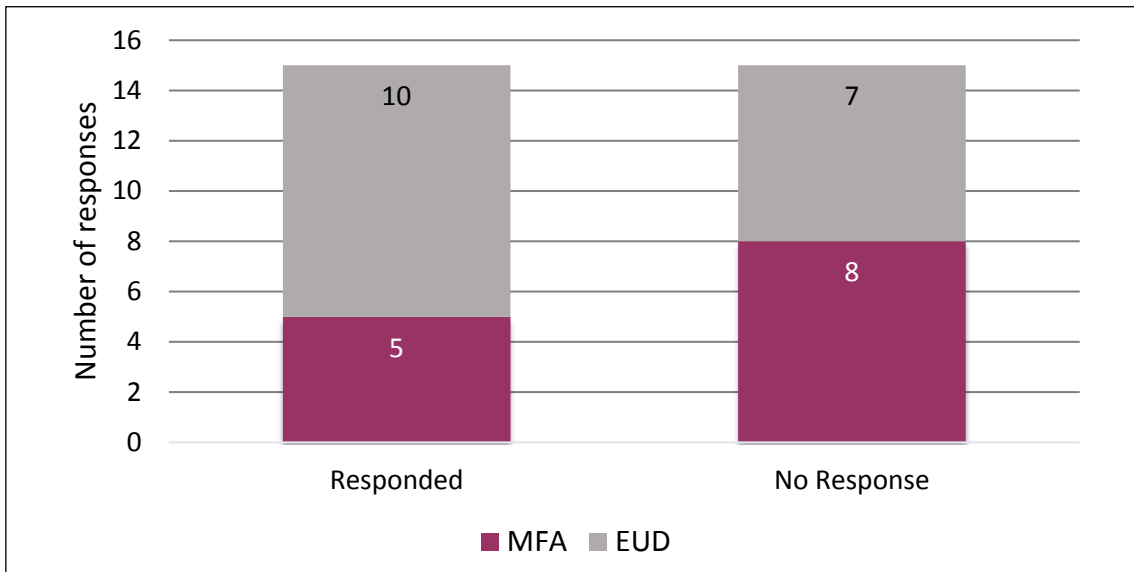
In total, 13 Finnish MFA Staff and 17 EU Delegations covering 14 countries were invited to reply to the eSurvey. A total of 15 responses (5 MFA & 10 EUD)²⁸ were received, a 50% response rate (Figure 4). The MFA respondents represent a variety of roles, while the EUD respondents were predominantly Heads of Cooperation of the respective partner country. Figure 5 shows that from the 14 countries from which participants were invited, responses were received from 12 different countries²⁹.

28 There were partial responses from both MFA and EUD, however both individual responses were insufficient to be added to the survey.

29 Ethiopia, Tajikistan, Myanmar, Kenya, Vietnam, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique, Syria, Afghanistan, Nepal, Palestinian Territory and Zambia.

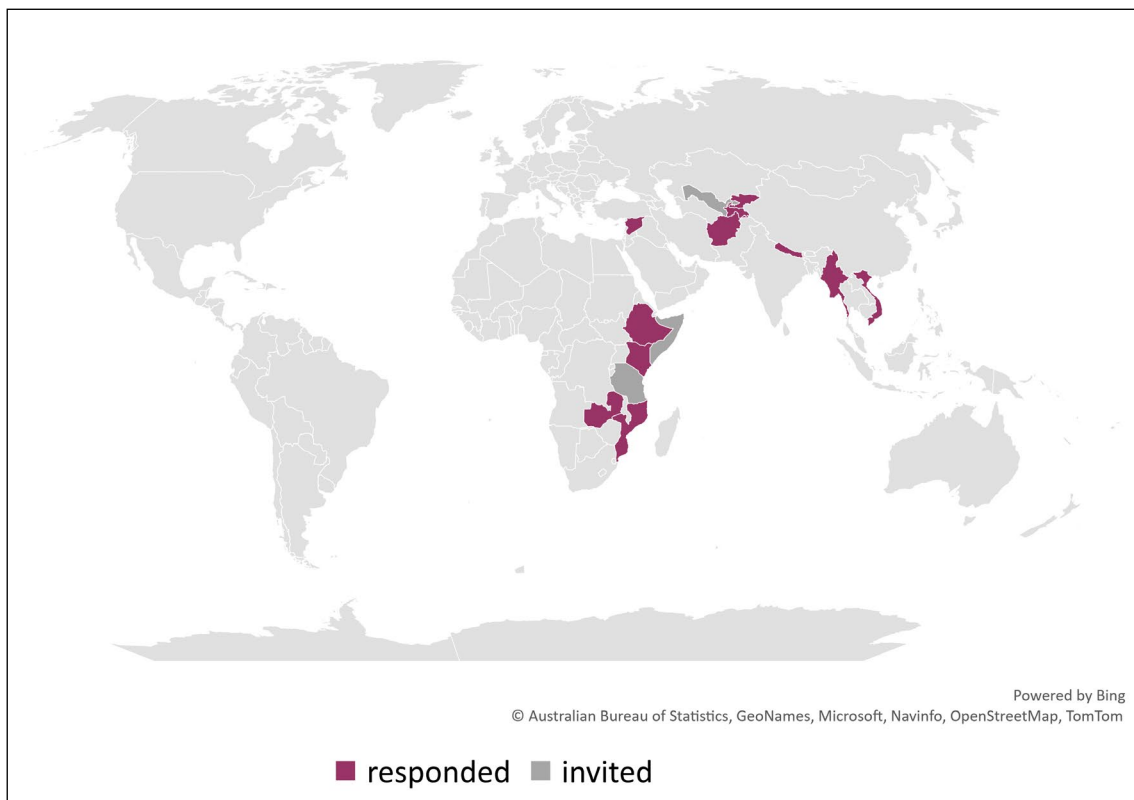


Figure 4 Share of responses and no responses between MFA and EUD staff



Source: Evaluation team, eSurvey

Figure 5 Geographical Overview of Survey Participation – Finnish MFA & EUD



Source: Evaluation team, eSurvey

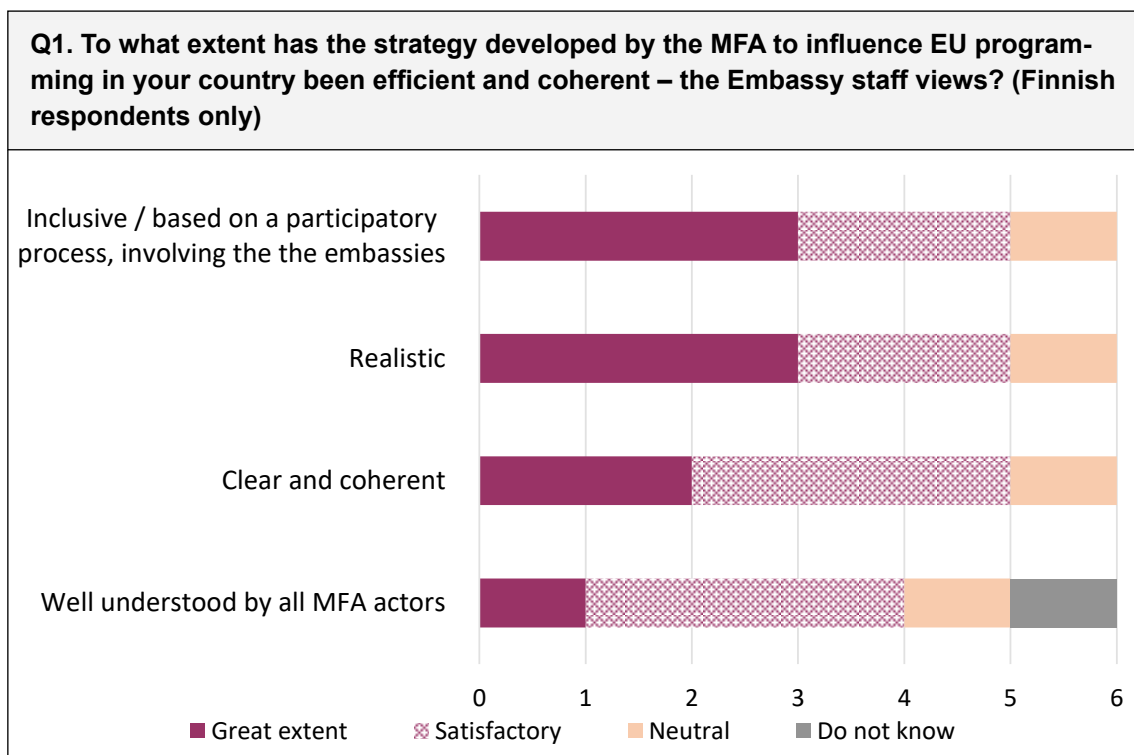


13.3 Survey results

Organising the MFA for efficient influencing ³⁰

When asked about the extent to which the Finnish influencing strategy had been efficient and coherent, six MFA respondents were overwhelmingly positive. Figure 6 indicates that respondents were either to a ‘great extent’ or ‘satisfied’ with the efficiency and coherency of the Finnish influencing strategy. Both, ‘inclusive’ and ‘realistic’ were broadly agreed upon to a ‘great extent’, while respondents found the influencing strategy both ‘clear and coherent’ and ‘well understood’ as mostly ‘satisfactory’.

Figure 6 Finnish strategy to influence



N = 6

MFA respondents were mixed in their opinion of budget and staffing levels. The majority were ‘neutral’ on the budget, while one found the budget levels, to a ‘great extent’ appropriate, and only one felt the budget was unsatisfactory. Views on staffing levels were more divided, with two respondents each either ‘satisfied’ or ‘unsatisfied’. On the question regarding ‘roles and responsibilities’ being clearly established and organised efficiently to influence the EU, MFA staff mostly agreed to a ‘great extent’ or responded ‘satisfactory’. Complementary information on human resources is presented in Box 3 below.

³⁰ This section of the survey was only targeting MFA staff in embassies and representations.



Box 3 Human resources complementary information

“Delegated funding arrangements and TE-work require human resources beyond normal staffing levels when volumes increase. Embassy of Finland in [our Embassy] has got one extra locally hired expert position on the basis on TE-work. Really needed!”

“[Our programme] might be fairly big in Finland’s development budgeting, but at the country level we are not among the big. We do a good job with our resources (especially thanks to super competent colleagues doing the work), but to really influence EU policy, we would have to have more resources.”

“It would be better to have more specialised staff.”

“The fact that we [also] cover [another country] from our embassy [...] (which on its own is very small) and the actual development projects are administered in Helsinki, means that we have very limited resources to engage with the EU on the country level.”

On the issues of the roles and responsibilities of embassies for influencing the EU, Questions 4-6 led to the following observations:

- While two embassy responses are positive about major changes in the past years in their roles and responsibilities to influence, there is criticisms about the short rotations and a further question regarding confusion over whose role it is to influence the EU in certain countries and settings.
- TEIs are specifically identified in one response as an important new area of work with the EU.
- Monitoring mechanisms are mostly recognised as a key component of country programmes, however there could be work done to make them more comprehensive.
- There is overwhelming agreement that embassies have participated actively in knowledge sharing and joint-working activities with the MFA.

The detailed answers to these questions are presented in Box 4 below.

Box 4 Detailed responses to questions 4–6

Q4. Have there been any major changes during the past years in the roles and responsibilities of the Embassy for influencing the EU?

- While preparing the Finnish country strategy for [...] for 2021-24 one of the strategic choices that we came up with was the enhanced cooperation with the EU. I think that through that process there is a strong buy in the Embassy to influence and work with the EU now.
- The ongoing major change would be the budding Team Europe Initiatives. There has been a lot of excitement about them in Helsinki and Brussels, but on the country level they are still taking form. They seem to be bringing a new important element to our EU work.



- The short rotation system interferes with the work.
- It is not always clear whether it should be our geographical department (which is responsible for the development projects in [...]) or our embassy that should participate in certain events and other opportunities where influencing may take place.

Q5. Have any learning or monitoring mechanisms been put in place to monitor EU influencing work in the Embassy?

- Not in a comprehensive way. We of course discuss all aspects of the cooperation at our weekly team meetings.
- It is part of every staff member work.
- Yes, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning plan of the Country Program.

Q6. Has the Embassy participated in any knowledge sharing or joint-working activities with other units/departments areas within the MFA?

- Yes, we participate in all possible relevant joint activities.
- Yes, this is usually the case, cross the departments of the development and the country specific department
- RBM workshop (Tuloksellisuustyöpaja) ALI department, or jointly between ALI/ASA/ITÄ every year.
- Yes. Different working meetings, drafting the MFA's new Central Asia strategy and country programs together (very useful exercise).

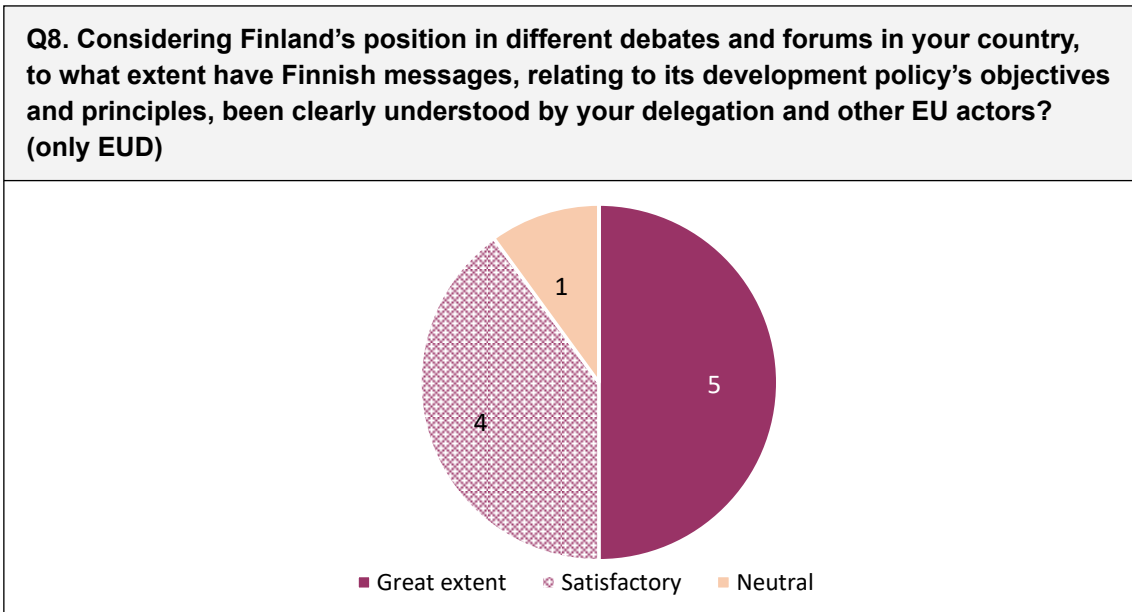
13.3.2 Finnish thematic priorities

Four out of the five Embassy staff are satisfied that their messaging is 'well understood' by EU actors. Similarly, Figure 7 demonstrates that EUD respondents reported that Finnish messaging was understood to a 'great extent' or to a 'satisfactory' level by the vast majority. It was also asked if EUD staff believed that other EU actors understood Finnish messaging, however respondents were not prepared to answer, stating predominantly that they 'did not know'.

Comparing the EUD responses (in this section) with that of the MFA, it appears that MFA staff are less confident that the EUDs understand the Finnish positions than EUD staff themselves. However, MFA comments relating to Finnish positioning are overall positive, suggesting that such a conclusion from such a comparison between the two may not really hold.



Figure 7 Finnish positioning – EUD



Box 5 Finnish positioning – EUD

“Finland was always an active contributor to the various debates in EU context underlining very well Finnish priorities. I cannot really comment on other EU actors.”

“Clear communication.”

“The Finnish colleagues have consistently managed to communicate their principles and objectives on several occasions both in bilateral meetings as well as multi stakeholder meetings.”

“You are asking whether Finland has been ‘understood’ – and this is clearly the case. The development counsellor is engaged, she communicates clearly, effectively and is friendly.”

“I have not had any bilateral conversations with Finnish colleagues regarding their policy positions. I cannot exclude that this happens at the level of ambassador.”

“Finnish messages have been understood to a great extent. There is strong coordination and cooperation at HoMs level and at Head of Cooperation level. To a large extent, Finnish messages and that of other EU MS were transposed to joint EU+MS messages.”

“My counterpart at Finnish embassy always speaks openly. The same applies to the Ambassador.”



13.3.3 Development policy influence (outcomes)

Regarding Finnish influence in comparison to other EU Member States, a clear message emerging from the responses to question 9 is that despite Finland's size, its influence and presence is felt. Some have mentioned that a lack of embassy staff reduces Finland's role and influence. However, this appears to have provided an opportunity to look to the private sector for support in partner countries. The detailed answers to question 9 are presented in Box 6 below.

Box 6 Detailed answers to question 9

Q9. How does Finland's influence on the EU's development policy and cooperation compare with that of other Member States present in your country?

- Very positive engagement given the size of the mission. Clear objectives and priorities.
- Finland is an active member in the EU but also other coordination groups and as such influences the debate as well as the positions taken. Finland is generally amongst the most active MS.
- Given the absence of a bilateral development cooperation programme between Finland and [...], Finland's influence is lower than those who still have such programmes (e.g., Germany and France). However, Finland is still influential in a number of sectors in [...] due to strong private sector presence and linkages and global financing mechanisms.
- In [...], only Germany, France and Finland have embassies and SNV programmes. I'd say that from this group Finland may be the most influential. (MFA)
- Sorry but to me 'influencing' has a negative connotation – why would we want to be influenced by 27 member states? I don't see our role to be the result of member states influence. I see the role to coordinate and improve joint impact, efficiency and effectiveness.
- Dialogue via video conference and in the future during their visit. They also attend HoM's meeting.
- Considering our relative size as a donor, we are active and visible and have impact, thanks to the excellent colleagues in the Embassy's development team. (MFA)
- MS are invited to comment locally on the formulation of the annual action document. They also have this opportunity at HQ level during the adoption process. There are some MS whose positions are more familiar than Finland's.
- Finland is part of the Nordics and also in relation to some other small or midsize countries: very similar approaches
- With the Team Europe approach, we influence each other. Rather than looking into the differences, we are having dialogues on how to synchronise approaches (e.g., GESI). Very often the question is on timing (of cooperation programmes) instead of disagreement on policies or content. Finland has surely positively influenced the EU's approach to GESI and human development while other EU MS have different focal sectors in [...].



- The fact that Finland withdraws from ODA in [...] reduces its voice but its private sector approach is very much appreciated
- No clear basis to assess that. (MFA)
- Compared to those countries that actually have an embassy on the ground, our influencing is more limited. Compared to those that cover [...] from [outside], the influencing varies. Some member states like the Netherlands have many smaller scale projects that the embassy administers, and they have very active engagement. Others have a very limited footprint. We are somewhere in the middle and are just launching two smaller scale [...] projects. (MFA)

Regarding formal and informal channels of influence, respondents identified a range of different formal and informal bilateral channels of communication that contributed to influencing and consensus building (question 10), for example: from HoM, HoPs and HoC meetings and discussions, bilateral informal communications, through to the collaborative production of strategies/papers, and joint exercises. Detailed responses to question 10 are presented in Box 7 below.

Box 7 Detailed responses to question 10

Q10. Can you identify any formal or informal communication channels that Finland has used to influence EU development policy and cooperation in your country? If yes, please provide an example to illustrate your answer.

- Both formal communication channels (EU development meetings) as well as informal bilateral were used.
- Finland uses the formal channels described above but also reaches out at bilateral level to discuss various issues of mutual interest.
- Monthly participation in EU Heads of Mission meetings and active participation in EU Development Counsellors meetings (plus other EU coordination meetings). Finnish contributions to the on-going work on Working Better Together as Team Europe.
- HoC- meetings, joint field trips, HoM-level discussions, participation and inputs in EU:s preparatory work on various strategies/papers, sectoral work and cooperation, etc. (MFA)
- As I said I don't like the concept of 'influencing'. I don't like to be influenced by anyone really. What is happening is that we have at least monthly (sometimes more often) meetings where we *jointly* work on issues with the view to come out with a coordinated approach or even support something jointly (example COVID-19 response where all MS and the EU Delegation joined forces, resources, communications, and other)
- HoM's meeting Bilateral outreach
- EU HoCs meetings and their related exchanges are a key forum for influencing. (MFA)
- Finnish personnel at the EU institutions have been used as networking and then influenced through



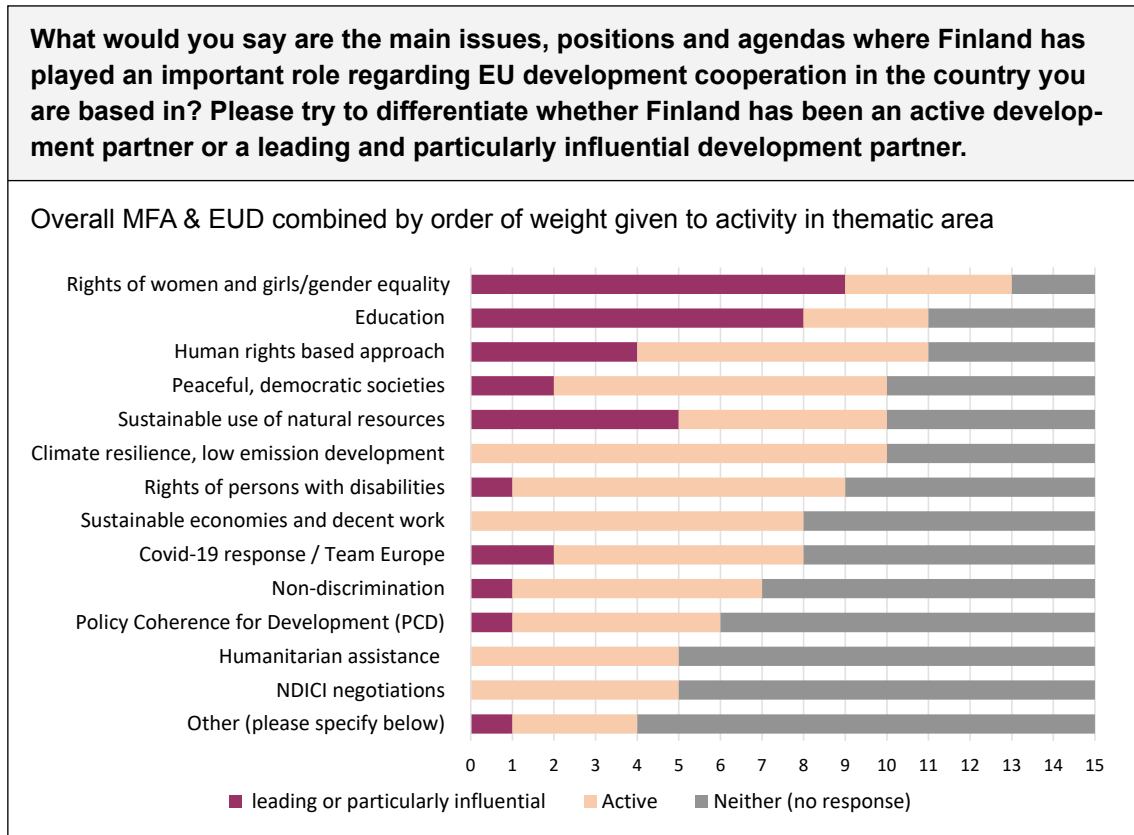
- We do have formal channels when colleagues brief us about strategic orientations of Helsinki and a very frequent informal communication channel. Very often, the exchange is 'what if', for example if Finland continues on WASH would the EU continue supporting that sector? So, the communication is rather informal to find consensus.
- The EUD and the 7 EU MS present in [...], including Finland co-drafted the multi-annual annual programme 21-27 governing EU-[...] partnership. Finland participated actively in the joint programming exercise.
- Influencing takes place in HoMs, HoPs and HoCs meeting, within the European Joint Strategy and its Results Oriented Framework. Also, as part of and linked to joint programmes (Education JFA, PEGASE, West Bank Protection Consortium etc.). (MFA)
- Meetings with EU delegation and other MS during visits to [...]. Meetings with other intl. actors and stakeholders. Participating in joint exercises like the recent conflict analysis exercise. (MFA)

Figure 8 breaks down perceived involvement as 'leading and particularly influential', 'active' or 'no response' of Finland in specific thematic areas. In particular, Finland was widely perceived to have a leading role in 'rights of women and girls/ gender equality', 'education' and 'sustainable use of natural resources'. Furthermore, Finland is seen an active participant on matter such as 'humans rights-based approach', 'climate resilience and low emissions development', 'rights of persons with disabilities', 'sustainable economies and decent work' and 'COVID-19 response/Team Europe'. Finally, Figure 8 suggests that Finland is seen as less involved³¹ (neither leading nor active) in matters such as 'non-discrimination', 'policy coherence for development', 'humanitarian assistance' and 'NDICI negotiations'. Regarding the 'other' category, two EUD responses mentioned Finland's involvement in private sector development/promotion.

31 This could be dependent on geographical context and thematic foci in those counties.



Figure 8 Finland as a (leading) actor (both MFA & EUD)



* Mentioned under Other: Private sector development/promotion and contribution to the Working group on Transitional justice.

Comparing Figure 9 and Figure 10, EUD and MFA's perceived involvement of Finland in certain thematic areas are examined, using 'leading and particularly influential', 'active', or 'no response' as the indicators. This comparison is not easy as the MFA response rate is low. Nevertheless, the two groups mostly agreed on what level of influence or activity was present in different thematic areas. MFA officials appear to see Finland as a leader in education, however less than half of the EUD respondents agreed with this. Furthermore 4 out of 10 EUD staff didn't believe that Finland played either a leading or active role in 'human rights-based approach', while MFA respondents all stated that Finland was either 'leading or partially influential' or 'active'. On 'rights of persons with disability' MFA staff responded that they were active but not leading, while only half of the EUD staff saw Finland as taking a leading or active role. In addition, Box 8 presents unsuccessful attempts at influencing observed by the survey respondents.



Figure 9 EUD responses on Finland as (leading) actor by order of activity in thematic area

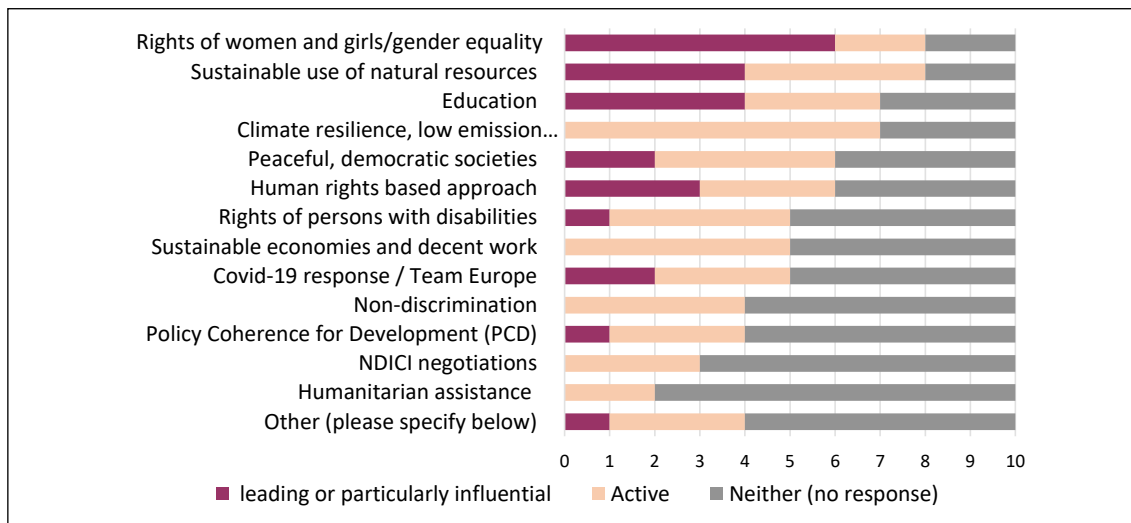
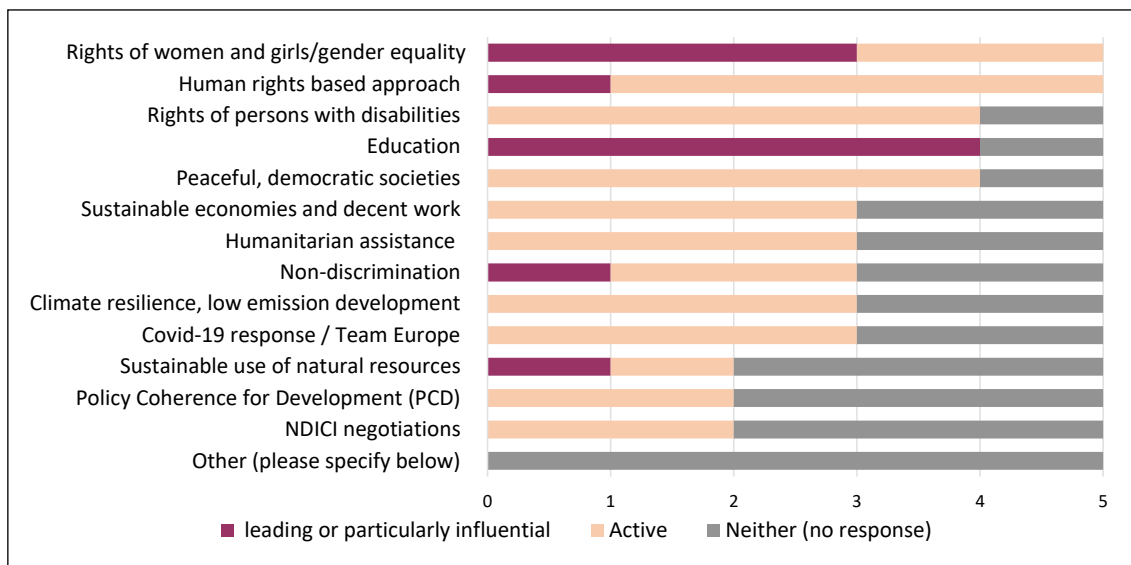


Figure 10 MFA responses on Finland as (leading) actor by order of activity in thematic area





Box 8 Unsuccessful attempts at influencing (Question12)

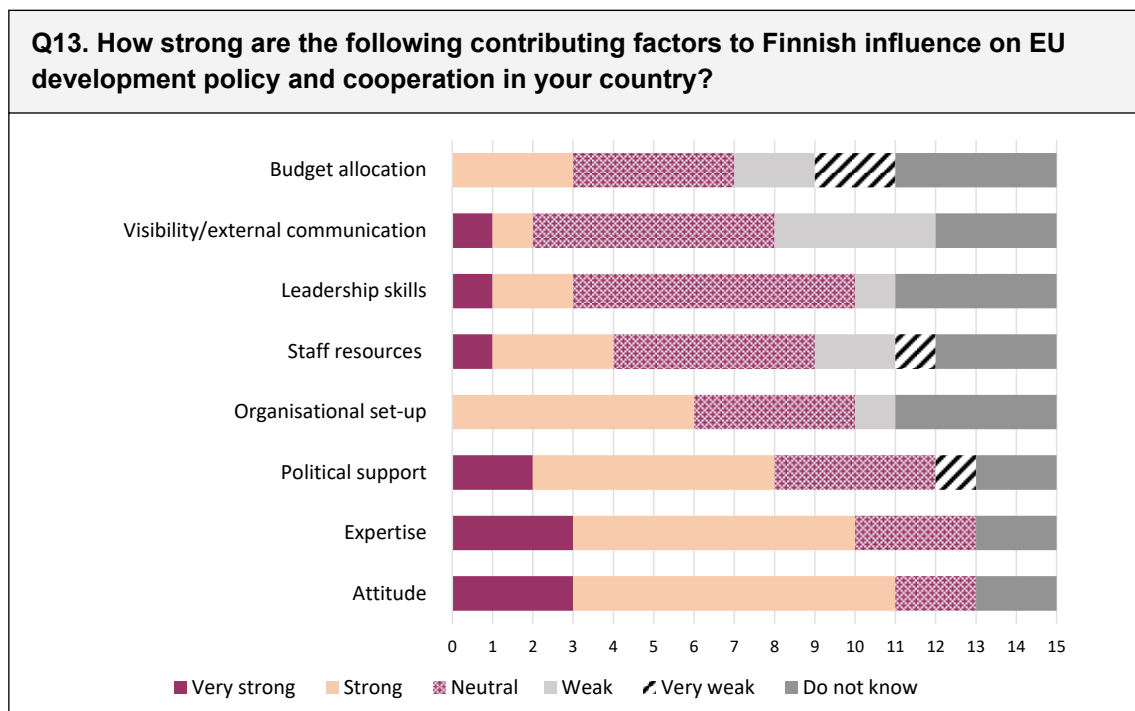
Would you say there are issues or debates in which Finland has tried but has not succeeded in taking a leading role or being influential?

- In this country there are so many issues that it is impossible to lead in all sectors in EU context (even if areas are seen as priority in the national context)
- Considering our limited resources, we have to be selective
- Perhaps human rights section
- Finland has taken several leading roles, e.g., on education, GESI, human development (WASH) and very committed. I have not observed that Finland did not bring forward a debate in the focal sector
- EU's planned conditionality (incentive indicators) in NDICI (PEGASE program) linked to textbooks: influencing the Commission has not succeeded so far.

13.3.4 Effectiveness of influencing outcomes

Figure 11 shows how certain attributes have contributed to Finland's influencing on EU development policy. 'Attitude' and 'expertise' appear to be the strongest contributing attributes. 'Political support' was also perceived as strong, however one respondent reported it as 'very weak'. All other attributes had a fairly mixed response with 'visibility/external communication' and 'budget allocation' being the weakest attributes.

Figure 11 Contributing factors to Finnish influence





Comparing Figure 12 and Figure 13, EUD and MFA respondents' perspectives on contributing factors to Finnish influence do not differ greatly. However, the most negative factor was different: EUD staff reported budget allocation as being Finland's weakest attribute, while four out of five MFA staff did not perceive budget allocation as a negative contributing factor. Two MFA respondents even suggested that budget allocation was a 'strong' contributing factor for Finnish influence. Figure 13 suggests that MFA staff, highlighted 'staff resources' as being the most negative factor contributing to poor Finnish influence. Ultimately, Embassy staff are likely to have a greater idea about internal staff resources than EUD staff which is likely to be reason for the difference between the two organisations' perspectives.

Figure 12 EUD's perspective only on contributing factors to Finnish influence (Q13)

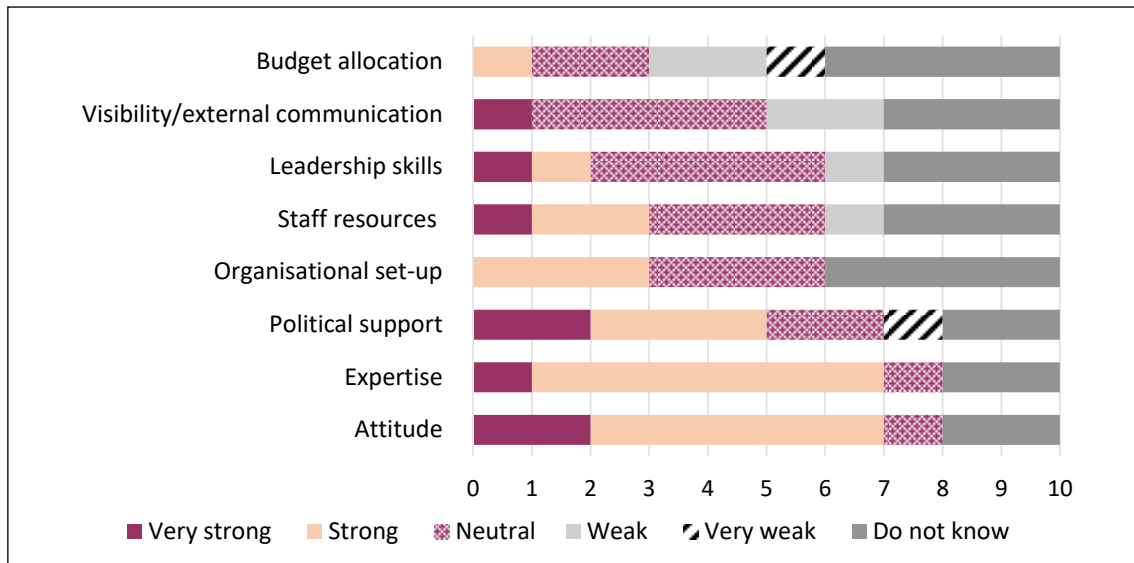


Figure 13 Finnish Embassies' perspective only on contributing factors to Finnish influence (Q13)

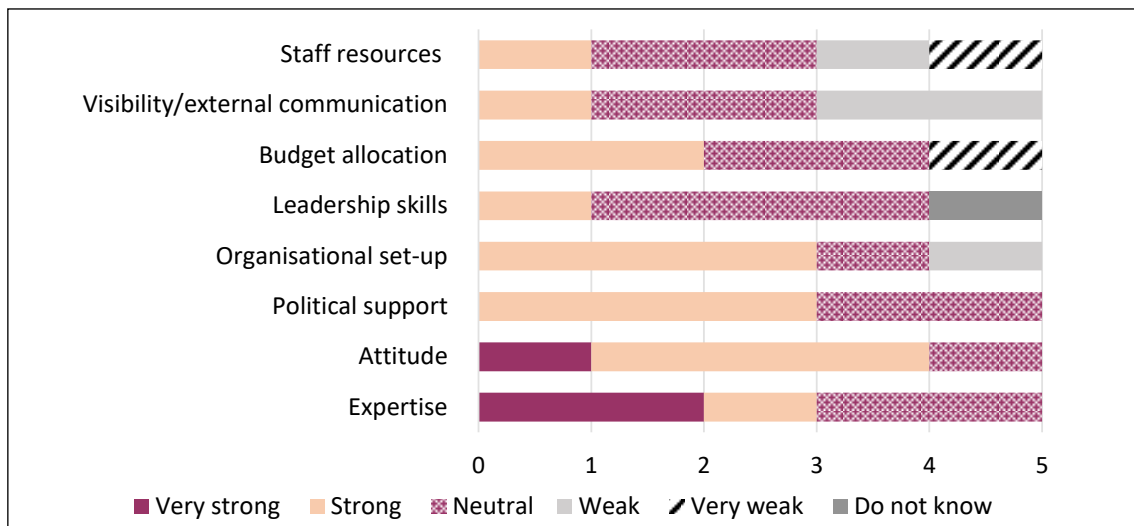
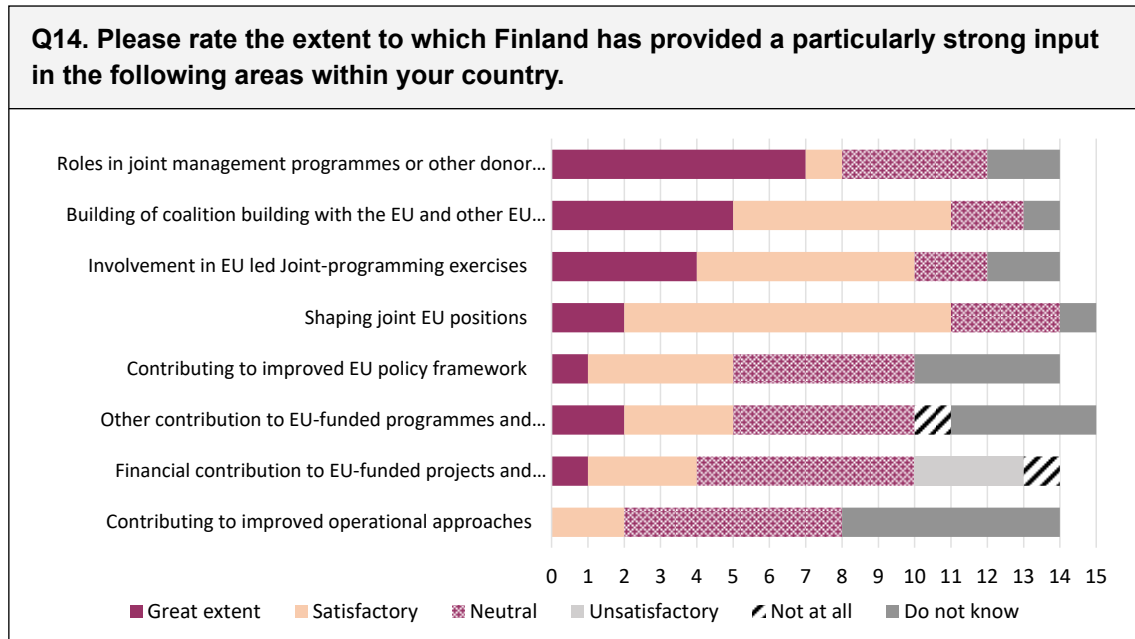




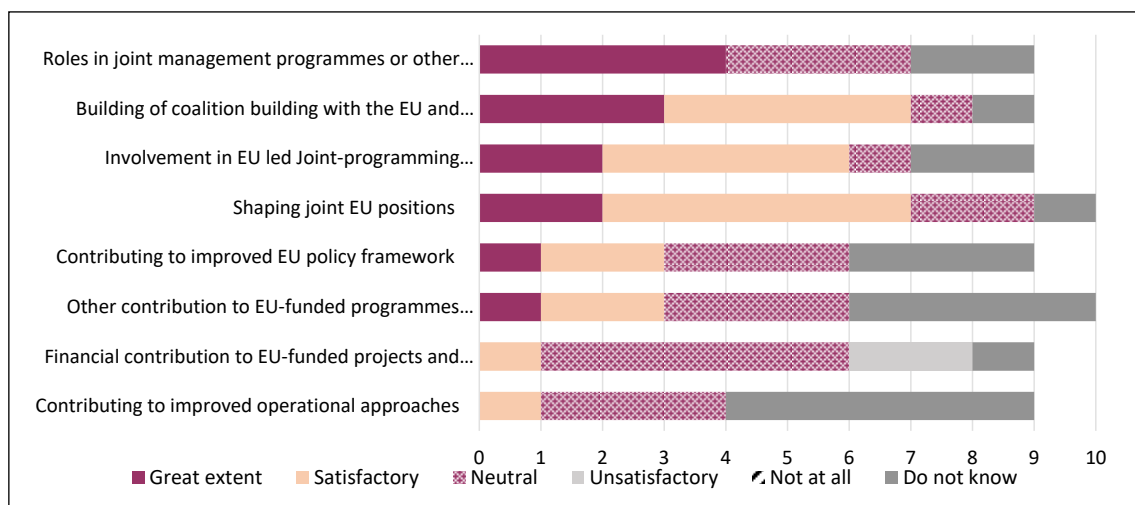
Figure 14 shows the level of input provided by Finland within the countries of the respondents. Overall, Figure 14 demonstrates that Finland has ‘to a great extent’ contributed to management and donor coordination structures, while contributing ‘to a great extent’ or ‘satisfactorily’ to ‘EU led joint programming’, ‘coalition building with the EU or other EU MS’ and ‘shaping EU joint position’. Figure 14 suggests that areas of improvement include ‘contribution to EU funded programmes and projects’ and ‘financial contribution’ to those projects.

Figure 14 Strength of Finnish input in partner countries



Comparing Figure 15 and Figure 16, EUD and MFA’s perspectives of Finnish input in partner countries do not differ greatly. Comments suggest however, that this question does not necessarily tailor to country specific situation. Complementary information is presented in Box 9 and Box 10.

Figure 15 EUD only perspective on strength of Finnish input in partner countries (Q14)

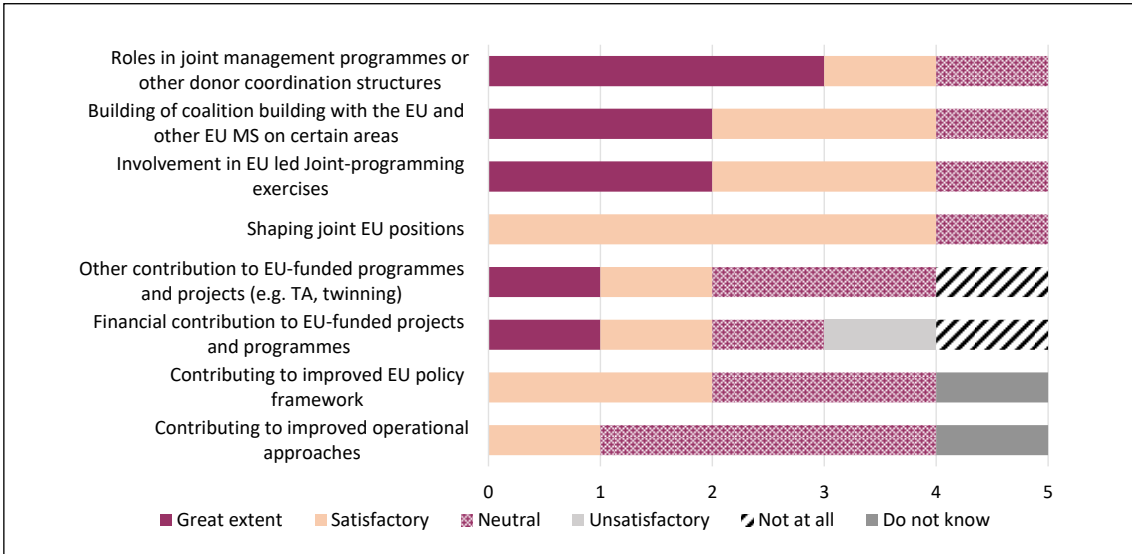




Box 9 Complementary information on strong Finnish input (EUD)

*“EU and Finland are jointly co-leading the sector coordination group on Education”.
 “Some of the options above do not apply to the [...] context as we do not operate within a bilateral framework with the [...] authorities. This precludes options such as Twinning or joint programming.”*

Figure 16 MFA only perspective on strength of Finnish input in partner countries (Q14)



Box 10 Complementary information on strong Finnish input (MFA)

“From the financing point of view the EU contributes to our programmes to a great extent (there was no option for this above!), we less so to EU’s programmes ([...] jointly financed with EU, Finland and Germany).”

“It is not so easy to make a strong impression among so many other big players.”

Box 11 Finnish input in other areas

- Do you think there has been a strong Finnish input in other areas not listed above?**
- Private sector development
 - GESI, development of local budget/implementation systems



13.3.5 Overall assessment and lessons learned

When asked 'do you think Finland has influence as development actor', the overwhelming response from, both EUD and MFA staff, is that Finland is 'a bit' influential as a development actor. When comparing the two, there is no difference with the majority stating 'a bit' while two EUD and one MFA staff member stated, 'a lot'. As the comments in Box 12 suggest, this question could usefully have had a broader range of possible answers. Some respondents suggested that Finland's influence is small in comparison to others, however their contribution is significant in specific areas and significant relative to the country's size.

Box 12 Strengths and Weaknesses complementary information

"Due to its clear focus in areas of engagement it manages to have influence."

"There should be an option between Yes a lot and Yes a bit. Considering our limited resources can't say that a lot, but we have been in our focus areas quite active."

"But I do think Finland engages always in a very professional, friendly and constructive way."

"Women, Education, Nature are all sectors where Finland has been playing a bigger role."

"Finland's main achievement as a development actor is to walk the talk with commitment and strategic, long-term vision."

"Finland has, relatively speaking, more influence than impact from our development funds alone (relatively minor funds), especially in education, but also politically (other areas of political & policy dialogue)."

Box 13 Recommendations

Do you have any recommendations to improve Finland's influence on EU's development cooperation and policy?

- Finland has always been a proactive and pleasant partner to work with.
- Stronger in-country presence
- Finland already plays an active and constructive role with regard to the EU. Maybe in future having more joint implementation will strengthen the cooperation.
- The reduction of Finnish Embassy staff working on development cooperation from two to one limits Finland's influence on EU's development cooperation and policy.
- There is always room to enhance synchronising and coordinating HQ level and country level influencing. Focus on joint strategic goal setting: why do we do it and what do we want to achieve? HQ feedback important. Should also facilitate appropriate human resources.



- don't have 'influence' as an objective, have 'constructive engagement' as an objective :-)
- Walk the talk. If you make something a priority (e.g., school meals), immediately allocate resources (money) to do something about it. Otherwise, it's just a lot of hot air.
- More staff to be allocated to specific sectors where Finland would like to make a big difference
- It would be good that Finland keeps presence with ODA.

13.3.6 Conclusions

MFA response rate was low (five responses), even after several reminders. As a result, data collected from embassy staff was less likely to indicate trends, patterns, and conclusive evidence. Furthermore, this poor response rate made it hard to conduct comparisons between EUD and MFA responses.

MFA staff were overwhelmingly positive about the effectiveness of the Finnish influencing strategy with respondents emphasising its coherence and inclusiveness. However, MFA staff also reported budget and staffing levels were not a contributing factor to effectiveness of influencing EU development policy in their respective countries. More specialised staff, longer rotations and improved monitoring mechanisms would improve the effectiveness of EU influencing.

The effectiveness of the influencing process in relation to Finnish thematic priorities was positively assessed by EUD respondents acknowledging that Finnish messaging was well understood. However, MFA staff reported to be less confident on their own messaging. Both MFA and EUD agreed that the same level of influence and activity was recognised in the relevant thematic areas, with the minor exception that EUD staff did not see Finland taking a leading or active role in forwarding the 'human rights-based approach'.

The clear message emerging from EUD responses, when assessing outcomes related to Finnish development policy influencing, was that despite Finland's size its influence and presence is felt. Finland has achieved this through utilising a range of different formal and informal bilateral channels of communication, for example by taking a lead in consensus building exercises on a range of topics among EU delegations and MS embassies. Furthermore, the EU delegations identified the attitude and expertise of the Finnish staff as two strengths helping to contribute to Finland's influence. Ways that may further improve effectiveness include increasing funding to EU funded programmes and projects, and greater budget allocations to embassies, which could also help address a reported shortage in staff resources.



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³² A full bibliography and list of persons interviewed can be found as annexes in Volume 1.



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