



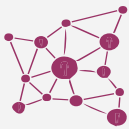
Ministry for Foreign  
Affairs of Finland

# Evaluation of the Finnish Development Policy Influencing in the European Union

## Thematic brief – Education

### 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.

## 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.

## 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



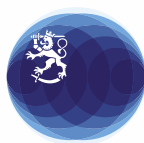
With the EU increasing its commitment to GPE, Finland has largely met its main objective under education, which is to strengthen the EU's global role in education development policy.

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.

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For the full report, see [MFA's website](#).