



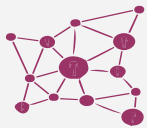
Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland

Evaluation of the Finnish Development Policy Influencing in the European Union

Thematic brief – Governance and human rights

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"*.

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.

Conclusions on Finland's effective influencing

Significance of verified outcomes



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.

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).

Conclusions on Finland's contribution

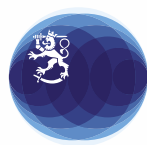


Finland has partly achieved its objectives of influence in the area of governance and human rights, by contributing technical expertise, and by leveraging its own experience, both in terms of HRBA and taxation.

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.

Extracted from: Evaluation of the Finnish Development Policy Influencing in the European Union – VOL 2, 2022/5B



Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland

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