

HEI ICI 2020-2024

Synthesis report 2021: Programme level results and progress

30.8.2022

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction..... | 2 |
| Background of the programme period..... | 2 |
| Overview of the progress in 2021 | 3 |
| Annual reporting discussions..... | 4 |
| Achievement of programme level results | 5 |
| Project management | 6 |
| Internal quality management | 6 |
| Financial management | 7 |
| Consistency with development policy..... | 8 |
| The Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA)..... | 8 |
| Cross-cutting objectives: Gender, reduction of inequality, climate sustainability..... | 9 |
| Agenda 2030..... | 10 |
| Communication and Dissemination | 10 |
| Annexes 1-9 The Result Frameworks of HEI ICI projects..... | 11 |
| Annex 10 Reported publications of HEI ICI projects..... | 11 |

Introduction

This is a summary report of second annual reports of the HEI ICI 2020-2024 projects (the 4th HEI ICI programme period). All nine projects submitted their reports by the end of March 2022. The reports were analysed and in May 2022 (weeks 20 and 21) EDUFI organised reporting discussions with each project to discuss the findings of the report related to content and finances. Moreover, the current status of project implementation was discussed as well as the participation of students in international cooperation. The discussions were joined by participants from Finnish and southern partner country HEIs. After the discussions, EDUFI prepared short project specific written feedbacks that were sent via the VA-system.

Background of the programme period

In total of 67 applicants submitted their proposals for the first stage HEI ICI call and nine projects received funding at the second stage in the 4th HEI ICI programme period.

Ministry for Foreign Affairs granted 11,2 million euros for the HEI ICI programme 2020-2024. The total budget including the self-financing share of the HEIs (20%) is 12,4 million euros. The aim of the cooperation is to support capacity to develop distance learning and improved access of higher education for students in the global south. One of the main objectives of the HEI ICI programme 2020-2024 is an improved capacity of open and distance learning in partner countries. In terms of the COVID-19 pandemic, the objective was timely, and supported well higher education institutions in the changing operational environment.

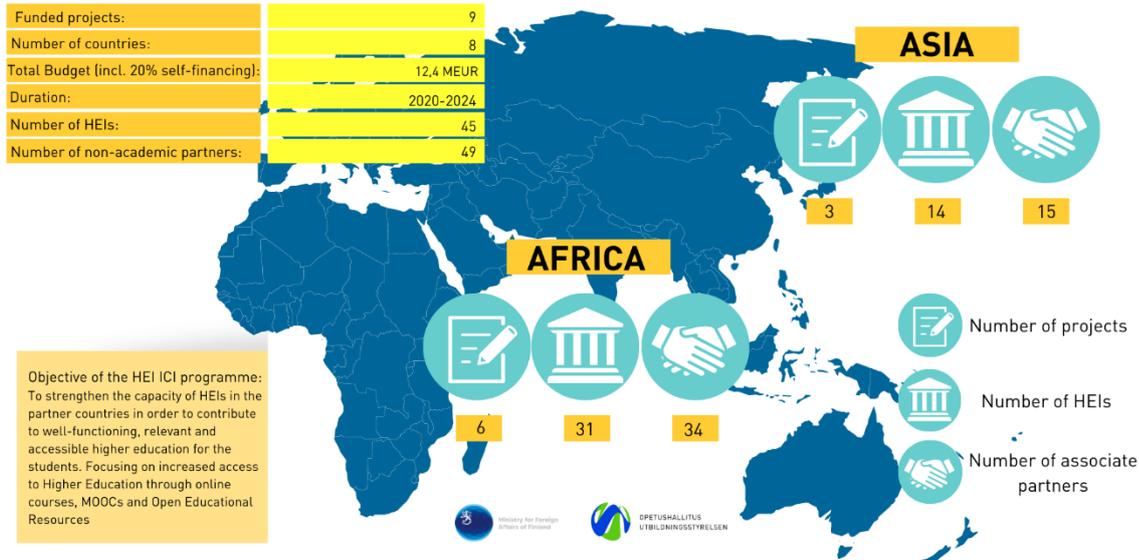
The selected projects develop digital learning environments such as MOOCs, study modules and distance courses. They will strengthen teacher's pedagogical capacity of digital and blended learning, develop digital learning platforms, improve IT skills and working life conditions of the HEIs.

HEI ICI programme (read more on the [web page](#)) has three main themes: **Solving the global learning crises** (5 projects), **Climate change** adaptation and mitigation (2 projects) and **innovation** development to increase employability at large scale (3 projects).

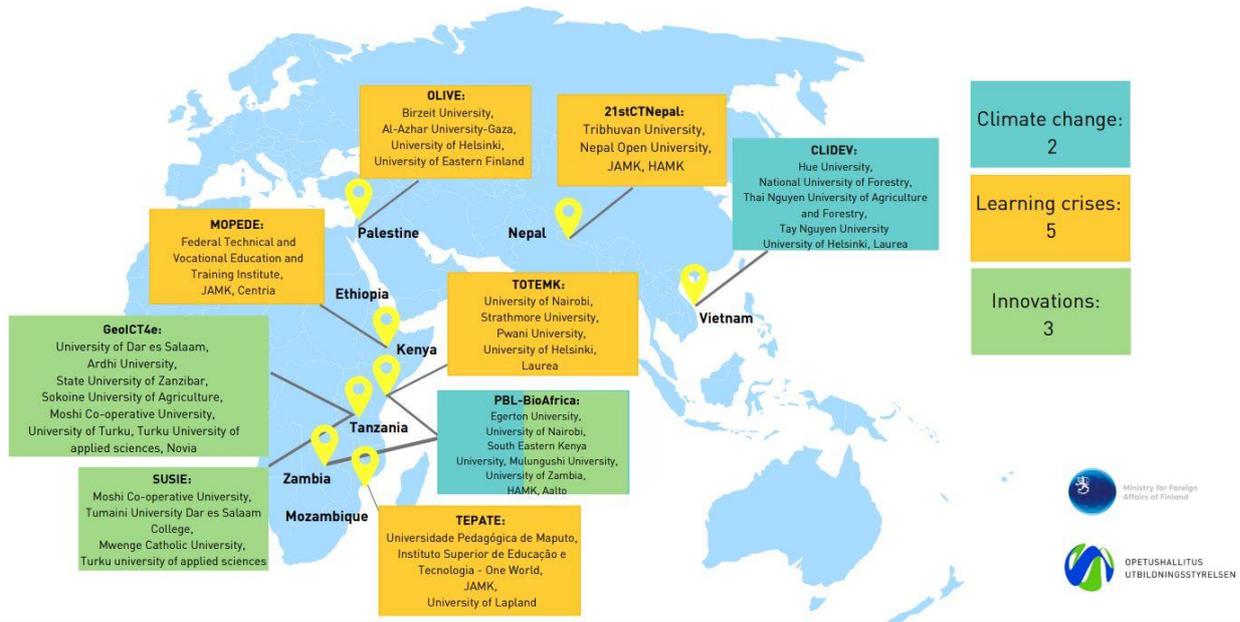
Selected projects operate in eight countries in Asia and Africa. Partner country institutions include HEIs from capital regions as well as smaller institutions from other regions. Partnerships also support thematic institutional networking between Finnish higher education institutions as in many projects, there is collaboration between universities and universities of applied sciences.

Moreover, multi-stakeholder cooperation is emphasized. In addition to academic partners, there are non-governmental organizations, ministries of education, other government organizations and private companies (for example ed-tech companies) involved from Finland and partner countries.

HEI ICI Key figures



HEI ICI projects on a map



Overview of the progress in 2021

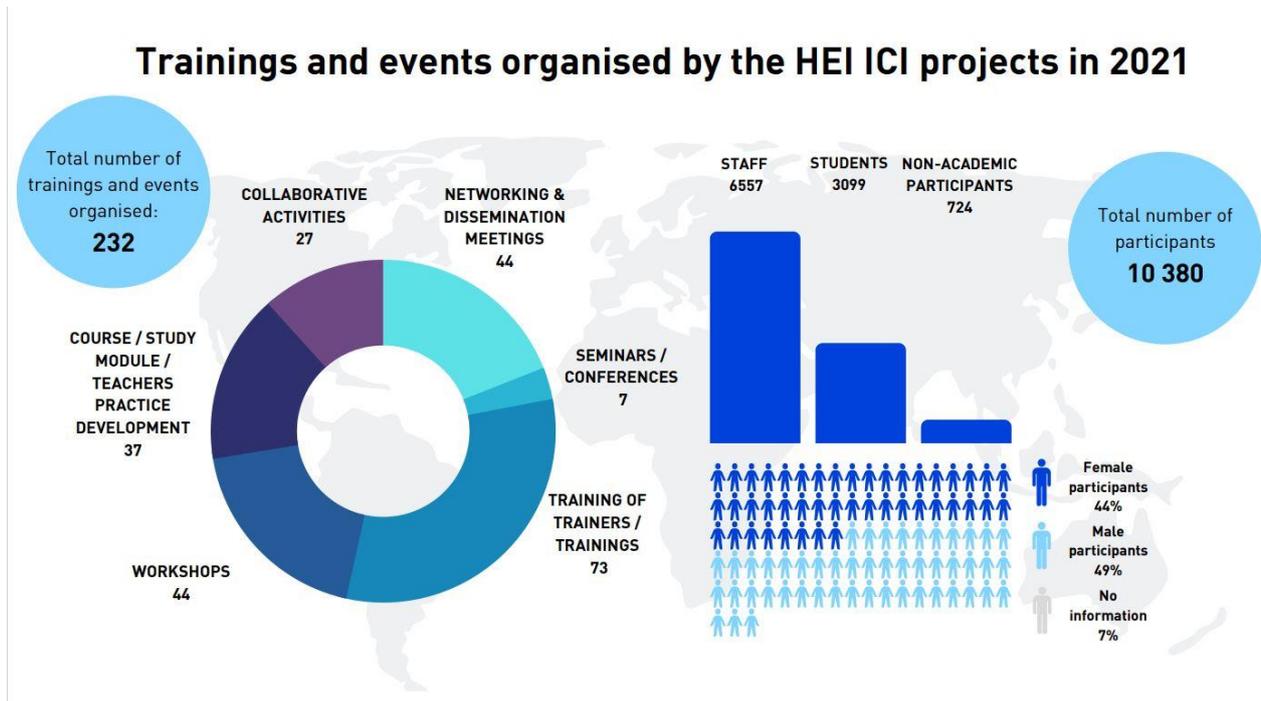
Naturally, the COVID-19 has had major impact on the HEI ICI programme and implementation of the HEI ICI projects. The workshops planned to organise on site have been forced to organise mostly online in 2021.

Despite the travel restrictions and the fact that the new projects did not meet face to face during the beginning of the programme period, the HEI ICI projects have demonstrated good progress and were able to start the implementation online according to the work plans.

In total, the projects have been able to organise many trainings and events in 2021. Among the various activities organised by the projects, the major focus has been towards training of trainers/trainings

followed by workshops, and networking and dissemination activities as shown in the figure below. The projects have also specifically focused on development of courses/study modules/ teacher practice development along with collaboration activities. There has been a few number of seminars and conferences organised by the projects.

Most participants in these events were the staff of higher education institutions followed by students whose number is almost half as compared to that of the staffs. The number of non-academic participants has been smaller. Furthermore, there is a slight difference between the percentage of male and female participants though there are more male participants than female.



Annual reporting discussions

In the online reporting discussions/follow ups in spring 2022 EDUFI team discussed also about the present situation and made the following observations:

- In general, activities implemented according to the preliminary plans, projects catching up the delays caused by the COVID.
- After the reporting year 2021, the situation has changed significantly in many projects in the spring. Face to face meetings and trainings held and specially in the autumn very lively cooperation.
- Challenges: security issues, strike, purchases of the equipment, HEIs totally closed due to COVID, huge workload waiting, difficulties to report against the programme level indicators.
- One project is sure that they need to apply extension time.
- Other projects informed that at the moment it seems they do not need extension or if they do, it is going to be short.

The theme “student’s participation in project activities the following comments were made from the projects:

- Students are the main target beneficiaries - students and alumni involved in the curriculum development. Projects are trying to involve as many students as possible in the project

- Students are part of experiences, student challenges, writing articles, assisting in creating the digital content, taking care of incoming students' programme.
- In general student organizations are part of the boards/councils of the universities as in Finland. Student unions are vibrant in African universities.
- Can EDUFI be matchmaker/facilitator between the Finnish and southern Student Unions?

Achievement of programme level results

For the HEI ICI programme period 2020-2024 there are five programme-level indicators of which Indicators 1 & 2 measure impact and outcome of the programme. The indicators 3-5 are indicators set by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs as the MFA has been assigned to report to the minister annually and to the parliament every fourth year on the advancement of the major programmes like HEI ICI. These indicators are based on the Sustainable Development Goals and the same indicators are used also in other development cooperation instruments funded through the MFA.

As reporting period covers the first full year of implementing of the programme period, indicators measuring impact and outcome are slightly out of the scope as the curriculum development and other major capacity building processes did not yet start.

Indicator 3 measures number of higher education institutions reached through measures aimed to increase their capacity. Basically, all HEIs in partner countries are calculated under this indicator and additionally, the HEI ICI project activities may reach other HEIs in the region even if they are not official partners of the projects. So far 99 HEIs in partner countries have been reached.

For indicator 4 there is significant growth since the result in 2020 was 0 and in 2021 already 3768 of teachers and teacher education students have participated in pre- or in-service training. Also in terms of the indicator 5 the projects have increased the number of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) partnerships with education and research institutions and private sector actors.

| Indicator | Target | Results 2021 |
|---|---|-----------------------------|
| 1: The benefit to students in terms of passed new training (number of students who have passed education equivalent to min. 5 ECTS). (IMPACT) | Over 30 000 students | 693 (in 2020 no results) |
| 2: Number of faculties, schools or equivalent in the partner universities where capacity building process (curriculum updating, pedagogical updating, a training package equivalent to 5 ECTS credits, administrative upgrading etc) has been finalized and approved by the university administration. (OUTCOME) | Approximately 88 schools or equivalent in the partner | 15 (in 2020 no results) |
| 3: Number of educational institutions, incl. higher education, | Approximately over 50 HEIs | 99 |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| reached through measures aimed to increase their capacity | | (in 2020 33 HEIs in partner countries reached) |
| 4: Number of teachers and teacher education students who participated in pre- or in-service training | Over 13 000 teachers, and teacher education students | 3768 (in 2020 no results) |
| 5: Number of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) partnerships with education and research institutions and private sector actors | No target available | 274 (in 2020 12 STI partnerships created) |

Project management

As a positive side effect of the pandemic, the projects have had time for proper organisation of the project management procedures. All projects have put special attention in planning the project coordination and management as effective and transparent as possible. Several project management tools are in use and the communication between the partners have been active using distance connections. Projects have implemented several new methods to build shared understanding.

According to the reporting discussions with the projects, project management procedures including financial management seem to be rather clear for all partners.

The function of the Project Board is to monitor project progress and to support the cooperating HEIs in carrying out the activities. The Project Board takes actions if there is a risk that the stated objectives of the project are not adhered to. The Board also approves the possible significant changes in the Project Document and the annual reports before they are submitted to EDUFI.

In each project the members to the board have been invited based on the needs, scope, stakeholders, and structure of the project. The chair of the board comes always from the southern partner institution. Projects have reported that depending on the structure of the project management the project board is meeting at least once in a year. Several meetings in a year is the most common procedure. In many projects the responsibilities are divided between the members of the board and project management is supporting all activities.

A person from each participating HEI is nominated as a coordinator. These persons ensure that the activities are implemented as planned. The coordinator of the Finnish coordinating HEI is the contact point for the MFA and EDUFI.

Internal quality management

According to the rules written in HEI ICI programme document HEI ICI projects are expected to organise and plan the data collection for monitoring purposes during the inception phase. Monitoring needs to be organised so that it feeds relevant and timely information to the decision-makers. Direct feedback from stakeholders in seminars and training sessions should be collected and the key observations discussed jointly. Use of qualitative and process indicators is recommended especially for locating changes in working methods, attitudes, and commitment. Self-evaluation workshop using participatory methods should also, according to the rules of the programme be organised, within the second year of the project implementation.

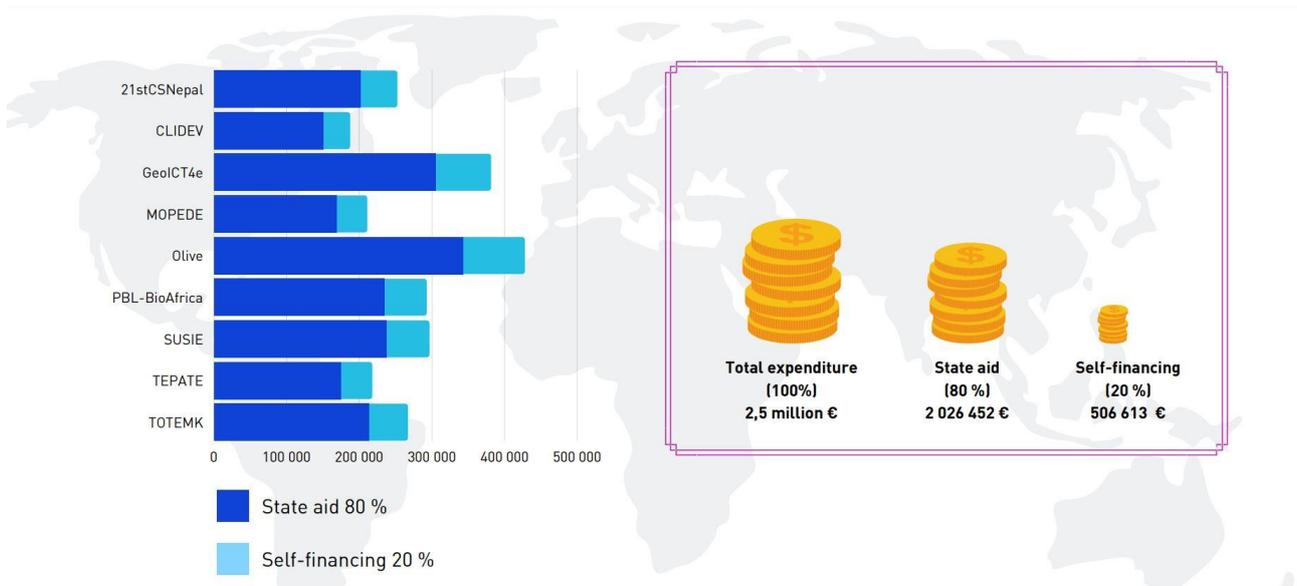
In the annual reports all HEI ICI projects have reported that they have a plan for internal monitoring. The quality assessment is done by separate working groups, Quality Assurance Team (QAT), Quality core team, Quality Platform etc. or it is part of organizational processes.

The findings observations are reported to the Project board at least annually. In one project the first self-evaluation workshop is to be held already in September 2021 which will focus on quality assurance and monitoring good practices.

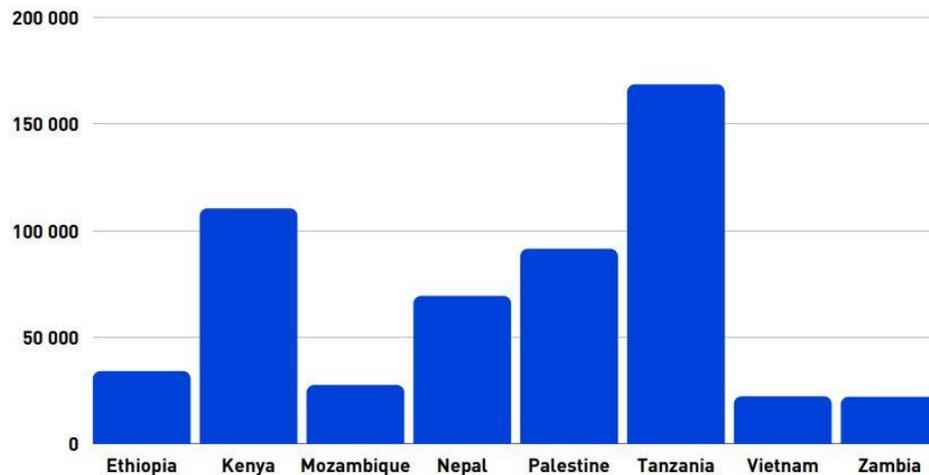
Financial management

The total expenditure of the HEI ICI projects in 2021 was about 2,5 million euros of which 80 % was covered by the MFA funding and 20 % by self-financing. The average usage of the budget 2021 is about 70 % which is higher than in 2020. Several projects have unused money for the first two years due to the COVID-19 and postponed travelling and activities. However, all the projects said during the annual discussions that they can speed up the activities in the upcoming years and catch up the planned schedule. Only one project estimated that it would like to apply for an extension if it is possible.

The average usage of the total budget is about 23,42 %. As mentioned above, the projects have unused funds from first years, but the project cycles have also been planned so that the budgets will increase year by year towards the end of the programme.



The share of the expenditure by the Finnish higher education institutions compared to the southern partners had narrowed from previous year. The share can be expected to narrow even further in the following years as several projects reported that setting up the project administration have taken time and delayed the payments to the southern partners.



Consistency with development policy

The main goal of Finland's development policy is to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities. Finland's development policy and development cooperation are guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted within the UN in September 2015. The 2030 Agenda includes 17 different goals and Finland is committed to reaching them both at home and in its international cooperation. Finland's development cooperation supports this commitment. In accordance with the above-mentioned principles, the HEI ICI Programme supports Finland's development policy, cooperation objectives and guidelines.

The Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA)

Respect for human rights and their promotion is a principle that guides the planning and implementation of Finland's development policy and development cooperation to ensure that even the poorest know their rights and are able to act for them. It is equally important that the authorities are aware of their human rights obligations and have the capacity to implement them (<https://um.fi/goals-and-principles-of-finland-s-development-policy>).

The Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) entails the systematic integration of human rights as a means of development cooperation. Human rights principles are considered and applied in all phases of the project cycle. The minimum level is that all Finnish development interventions are human rights sensitive, which requires a basic assessment of human rights to ensure sufficient awareness of them. It also seeks to ensure that the intervention does not contribute to discriminatory structures, norms and practices. Human rights progressive interventions usually require cooperation with different stakeholders including state authorities as well as inclusion of right-holders in the process.

The HEI ICI projects are advised to screen their project cycle based on the human rights principles, in particular ensuring possibilities of beneficiaries to participate on equal manners, with a gender sensitive lens. This is to ensure that all processes and information on the projects are transparent and the activities do not contribute to any indirect or direct discrimination.

In the final application phase, all HEI ICI projects were asked to describe the strategic choices made to address HRBA and cross-cutting objectives as part of their project document. In the annual report of 2020, all nine HEI ICI projects reported various activities demonstrating how human rights principles have been applied in the project and how they guide the implementation of HEI ICI projects. Most often the projects reported on activities in accordance with the human rights principles of inclusion and transparency as well as participation and accountability.

The commitment to adhere to the principle of participation and inclusion has been demonstrated in all projects through a joint planning process since the very beginning. For example, it is reported that the project plan is based on local needs and the partners have been involved in the process from the beginning, which contributes to accountability and strong ownership in the administration at the partner university. Also, inception phase studies included wide and open participation from all the partner universities. One of the HEI ICI project has established the joint Code of Conduct to guide their cooperation and express their commitment to, among other things, respect for human rights.

Projects have reported several good practices to ensure participation and inclusion of rural, vulnerable, and socially excluded communities. For example, experts on rural development and humanities are involved in the planning of the joint learning module together with technical expertise. Students from the above-mentioned communities are also encouraged to join project activities, for example, by announcing activities on various social media channels or creating a special quota to ensure their participation.

The human rights principle of transparency in the HEI ICI projects is described in several ways in the reports. All the projects emphasize wide and equal access to the project documentation, development work, goals and activities. Virtual meetings and shared online platforms are considered significant online tools to ensure open and transparent communication between all the HEI ICI partners as well as availability and access to information. Freedom of expression was noted in a report stating that the local media was freely reporting on the virtual kick-off meeting. In order to provide all the necessary information and knowledge in the current situation where cooperation is fully virtual, projects have introduced joint project management tools, video instructions, recordings of meetings and presentations to ensure everyone has equal access to information in an appropriate way.

When reporting on accountability in projects, projects emphasize shared leadership as well as differentiated levels of responsibility and authority. Projects also ensure that everyone has their own role in certain activities and that they are part of a team. All the partners are also accountable for certain activities or assignments by mutual agreement.

Cross-cutting objectives: Gender, reduction of inequality, climate sustainability

All development cooperation activities take into account the cross-cutting objectives of Finland's development policy. Gender equality is one of the values and principles guiding Finland's long-term action in the development. By integrating a gender perspective into all development interventions, it is possible to identify different roles and responsibilities for women and men as well as access to, for example, information, resources and decision-making.

All the HEI ICI projects have considered the gender equality throughout the whole project cycle from the joint planning to the inception phase. The projects are also requested to provide annual gender-disaggregated data on training and events and the expected results of the projects are gender-disaggregated. On the annual report 2020, the HEI ICI projects have reported on improving and considering gender equality. To ensure gender equality, a number of concrete and conscious actions have been taken in the projects.

The projects have set targets for women's participation in training and project activities. Some projects aim for more active participation of female students, others have set gender quotas and others pursue gender equality goals by choosing female junior staff members for training.

Also promoting awareness on gender equality in a gender-sensitive manner has been reported, for example, women and men are targeted in their respective areas of interest. Awareness is also raised in the form of a workshop and gender-sensitive learning material that is accessible to all. All the projects reported

that they are trying to ensure gender balance in projects teams, trainers, participants and key expert teams. Also gender disaggregated data is collected.

One of the projects mentioned that they have started planning a mentoring programme and training track into the project for women. Particular attention will also be paid to young women and their encouragement to pursue expertise and careers in technology, working alongside senior experts in more responsible roles.

Agenda 2030

As Finland's development policy and development cooperation are guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the HEI ICI projects are also in line with the Agenda2030. Already in their application, the projects have listed the SDGs they have linkages with. During the 2020 reporting discussion the projects elaborated the strategies of HEIs on sustainable development/Agenda2030 and how they are visible in the HEI ICI project and the overall development of the teaching and research of the institution.

The projects are contributing and have linkages through their activities to several sustainable development goals. Naturally all projects are contributing to SDG 4 Quality Education and with its sub-goals (especially 4.3, 4.4., 4.5 and 4.7). Especially the five projects under the learning crises theme have special focus on SDG 4 but all the other projects are also strongly connected to this goal. All the HEI ICI projects have also linkages with SDG 17 (Partnership for the goals and SDG 5 Gender equality. The projects under the climate change theme contribute to SDG 13 Climate Action and the projects under the innovation theme has strong linkages with SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. In addition to these goals, the picture below shows all the SDGs that the projects have linkages with.



Communication and Dissemination

The HEI ICI project took a strong focus towards internal and external communication from the very beginning of the programme period. As the projects have not been able to meet face to face, virtual tools and platforms are the main communication channels for project partners to discuss and decide on important matters. For internal communication, projects have regular online meetings and in some cases these meetings are recorded to be reviewed later if necessary. Besides official project meetings, many are organising more casual virtual coffee breaks to catch up with other project members. These are important moments to get to know each other and, to create mutual trust among partners when there have not been possibilities to meet physically.

All projects have created communication and dissemination plan for the programme period and have launched a project web page that functions as a main communication platform. News or blog posts are regularly posted by all projects. Also, social media channels mainly Twitter and Facebook but also Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn are actively used to promote ongoing projects. To enhance visibility projects have participated in different webinars to disseminate information on project activities for stakeholders.

Annexes 1-9 The Result Frameworks of HEI ICI projects

Annex 10 Reported publications of HEI ICI projects