



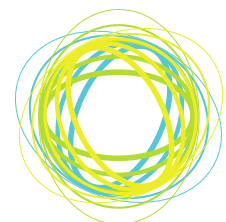
# FinCEAL Feasibility Study

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# I. Executive Summary

The FinCEAL Initiative started in 2013, funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MINEDU), with the aim of supporting the internationalization of the Finnish science community, specifically those in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Comprising three two-year project periods, the Initiative is coordinated by UniPID, the Finnish University Partnership for International Development, and implemented jointly by three member universities: the University of Jyväskylä (Africa), University of Eastern Finland (Asia), and University of Helsinki (LAC). The FinCEAL Initiative is at a critical stage. After three consecutive project periods, a Feasibility Study is needed to examine the impact of the Initiative and to re-evaluate the needs of the key beneficiaries and stakeholders vis-à-vis its aims. Through interviews with FinCEAL's key beneficiaries and stakeholders, this report analyses the current and future needs of FinCEAL's target groups and identifies ways in which FinCEAL should respond to these needs in the future, both in design and implementation. The study was built upon three broad questions: (i) what are the existing needs for support, (ii) what are the best modes for providing this support, and (iii) what are the different pathways forward for the FinCEAL Initiative?

Results from the interviews show that the project's funding for partnership building has proven to be one of the most beneficial activities of the initiative. Reduced funding for partnership and network building and the internationalization of research from the various research institutes and other funding agencies has made FinCEAL's ability to support these activities one of the most critical assets of the Initiative. Beyond the availability of the grants themselves, the strategic organization and management of the funding under the 'Partnership Support Instrument' to highlight the larger objective to which the smaller components contribute was highly appreciated. This has provided further clarity on the aims of the project. The other activities such as side-events and other events organized by FinCEAL were recognized for their ability to provide visibility to a large number of researchers and institutions – which has also been one of the primary objectives of the initiative. The results also highlight other bigger positive impacts like the role FinCEAL has had in contributing to and strengthening bilateral engagement and activities, increasing the visibility of Finland in the regions, in the bi-regional policy dialogues, and the general image of Finland.

The Initiative has had a recognizable positive impact. However, some aspects still require improvement and rethinking. Interviewees noted for instance, that the project preparatory grants were not ideal in their scope, which has been primarily to give seed money for preparing applications from EU-research funding instruments. Focus on EU-funding instruments is too limiting, particularly given the disappointing number of calls targeting the FinCEAL regions. A lack of support for educational cooperation activities – such as organizing joint courses, capacity building activities or training workshops for collaborators – were consistently mentioned as a deficiency in FinCEAL support. Interviewees also noted that facilitated active matchmaking and better connections with the Finnish embassies based in the regions were currently lacking. The need to increase and promote interaction between different sectors and communities was mentioned, for example, between Finnish ministry representatives and the scientific community, between researchers and Finnish politicians, and between the science and private sectors. Joint planning of activities and side-events with these government actors is effective and important in showcasing Finnish expertise.

Building up on the focus of the study, the two main questions remain, 'how should a future FinCEAL look (which activities should be maintained or included)' and 'how should it be implemented and supported?' The table below shows a summary of the key topics that emerged. It covers three

concrete issues – the current activities that cited as important to continue, other aspects to consider in the future, and the options for implementing the initiative. Besides the results summarised below, perhaps a more critical question to consider in the future is FinCEAL’s role in an already complex ecosystem and how it could be strategically positioned.

<p><b>Which activities should be maintained?</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Policy dialogues – in the context of MINEDU’s new international strategy for higher education and research 2017-2025, Better Together for a Better World, continuing this activity is important in enabling Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and research institutions expand their expert views in the international arena.</li> <li>2. Partnership support funding – The lack of institutional support for such activities and the absence of funding for these activities from other sources makes support for partnership building a continued need for the research community. The funding also contributes to the internationalization of the research and innovation systems – as well as supports ongoing activities – like the implementation of bilateral and multilateral engagements.</li> <li>3. Communication - the fact that partnerships with these regions are less supported within research institutions generally highlights the need for specific communication on these topics is necessary. Also noted is the role and importance of the Infobank as a networking and communication tool.</li> </ol>
<p><b>What should be added/changed?</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lengthening project periods - More long-term funding options would ultimately support the ability of FinCEAL to achieve its objectives. It would support future-oriented planning and development of activities, which could foresee and build on achievements.</li> <li>2. Increasing flexibility on the themes, types of activities, and instruments eligible for project preparatory funding support require re-consideration.</li> <li>3. Re-aligning the initiative to the changing and emerging policy frameworks - MINEDU’s international strategy for higher education and research 2017-2025 will serve as a key strategy to which FinCEAL links its future activities. A re-orientation of FinCEAL to the direction of the SDGs may be worth considering.</li> <li>4. Integrating social sciences and the humanities strongly and supporting a multidisciplinary approach.</li> <li>5. Activities that support the inclusion of Finnish HEIs into ‘the best’ global networks.</li> <li>6. Increase communication and sensitization on the value of bi-regional policy dialogues towards the scientific community.</li> <li>7. The communication aspects of the initiative could also be more effective to engage more people not traditionally known as the experts working with the target regions.</li> </ol>
<p><b>What are the options for implementation and support?</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Option 1: FinCEAL activities to be assimilated into the activities of one or multiple government institutions, essentially institutionalizing the activities.</li> <li>2. Option 2: Increasing funding directly to the HEIs, allowing them take over some of the activities and reducing the number of actors working in the current STI ecosystem.</li> <li>3. Option 3: Cooperative funding or co-financing of the FinCEAL Initiative and its activities.</li> </ol>

## II. Introduction

### a. Background

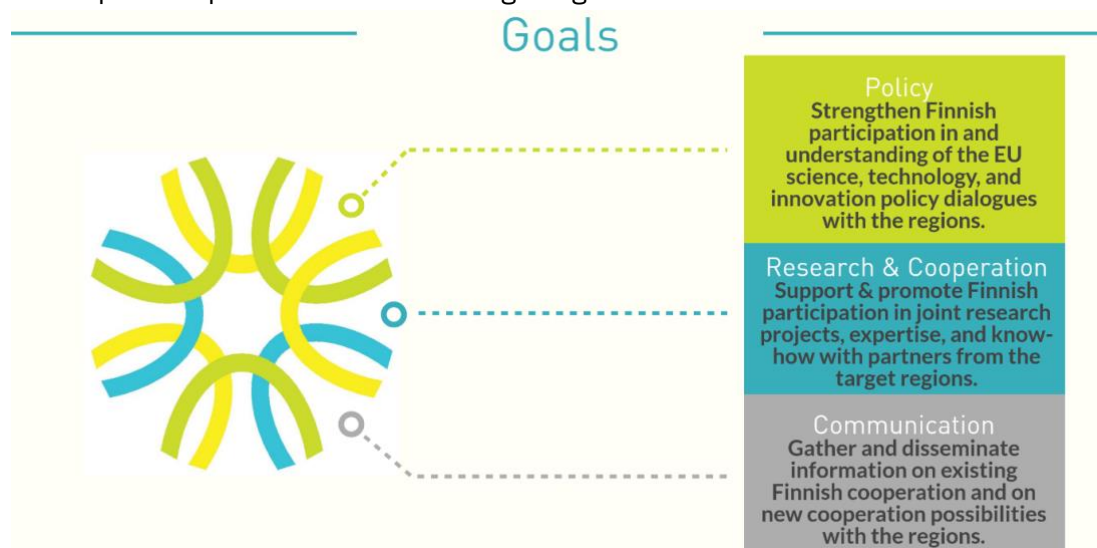
The FinCEAL Initiative started in 2013, funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MINEDU), with the aim of supporting the internationalization of the Finnish science community. Comprising three two-year project periods, the FinCEAL initiative has considerably increased the opportunities for undertaking cooperation between the Finnish and international scientific and research policy communities, specifically those in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), and to some extent, in Europe.

The Initiative is coordinated by UniPID<sup>1</sup>, the Finnish University Partnership for International Development, and implemented jointly by three member<sup>2</sup> universities: the University of Jyväskylä (Africa), University of Eastern Finland (Asia), and University of Helsinki (LAC).

The FinCEAL Initiative provides support at key moments in partnership building and policy making to leverage the expertise, knowledge, and success already existing in Finland for greater impact. Finnish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and research institutes are the main beneficiaries of the project and the main stakeholders are the Finnish ministries and other public bodies related to science, technology, and innovation (STI) and/or Africa, Asia, and LAC. There is currently no other instrument or mechanism providing similar support in Finland.

The specific aims of the initiative are to:

1. Strengthen Finnish participation in and understanding of the EU STI policy dialogues with the target regions;
2. Support Finnish participation in joint research projects with partners from the target regions;
3. Promote awareness of Finnish expertise and know-how in the target regions; and
4. Gather and disseminate information on already existing Finnish cooperation and on new cooperation possibilities with the target regions.



<sup>1</sup> UniPID is a network of Finnish universities, which supports the strategic global responsibility objectives these universities. UniPID strengthens and advances the interdisciplinary education, research, and societal impact of universities on global development.

<sup>2</sup> Aalto University, Åbo Akademi University, University of Eastern Finland, University of Helsinki, University of Jyväskylä, University of Lapland, University of Oulu, University of Tampere, and University of Turku.

Building on the priorities identified in the EU's bi-regional policy dialogues with the regions and the strengths of Finnish research, the components have the following thematic priorities:

- Africa: renewable energy, ICT, transport, health, food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture, climate change, and space;
- Asia: renewable energy, ICT, health, food security and safety, water management, cleantech, and nanotechnology;
- LAC: renewable energy, ICT for societal challenges, health, bioeconomy, climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable urbanization.



Beyond these thematic priorities, social sciences and the humanities and educational sciences are integrated into the priority areas as cross-cutting themes to better support the formation of multidisciplinary bi-regional research cooperation partnerships on global challenges.

FinCEAL implements a number of activities to fulfil the Initiative's aims:

- **Partnership Support Grants:** providing holistic support throughout the different phases of partnership building by providing small-small funding for organizing events/workshops, research visits from the target regions to Finland, mobility, and preparation of funding proposals.
- **Targeted Travel Grants:** small-scale mobility funds to support and enhance the participation of Finnish experts in key bi-regional science, technology, and innovation (STI) policy dialogues and events.
- **Thematic Networking Events:** Events organized by FinCEAL to highlight Finnish know-how, inform about the EU bi-regional processes and support networking in the thematic priority areas of the project.
- **Infobank:** a multidisciplinary database on Finnish research collaboration with the target regions. The Infobank can be accessed here: [www.unipid.fi/infobank](http://www.unipid.fi/infobank).
- **Policy Contact Point:** providing expert advice on national and EU policies and processes to national and EU actors.
- **Communication & Dissemination:** providing the Finnish scientific community with relevant information on the opportunities for collaboration, important policy processes, and relevant events of interest to the Finnish science community.

## Activities



### b. Purpose

The FinCEAL Initiative is at a critical stage. After three consecutive project periods, the time is right to both examine the impact of the Initiative and to re-evaluate the needs of the key beneficiaries and stakeholders vis-à-vis the aims of the Initiative. If continued action towards these aims is justified, identifying strategies for making the activities more sustainable is critical for considering the future implementation of the FinCEAL Initiative.

The objective of the Feasibility Study is to better understand the needs of the FinCEAL target groups and to develop scenarios for ensuring the sustainability of FinCEAL. The study was built upon three broad questions: (i) what are the existing needs for support, (ii) what are the best modes for providing this support, and (iii) what are the different pathways forward for the FinCEAL Initiative?

This Feasibility Study will serve as a key input into the formulation of a *Sustainability Strategy for the FinCEAL Initiative*. An external assessment of the project will serve as the other key input into the development of the Strategy.

### c. Methodology and Scope

The Feasibility Study is a focused study, examining the needs and opinions of a narrow target group – the research and policy community involved in science, technology, and innovation cooperation with the Africa, Asia, and LAC regions.

This study draws on the responses from two main groups: (i) project beneficiaries and (ii) project stakeholders, the composition of which are described in detail below. The interviews were held either as face-to-face discussions or via Skype for Business. The interviews were conducted as semi-structured focus group interviews with pre-defined themes. Each interview was recorded with permission and transcribed. The questions for the Beneficiary and Stakeholder interviews can be found in Annex 1.

Assessment took an inductive approach and drew on the interview transcripts themselves to define a matrix of typologies for categorizing interview responses for each theme. This approach without hypothesis allows for descriptive interpretation and recognition of patterns in the interview responses.

### *Beneficiaries*

The project beneficiaries were selected for each regional component by the Coordinator of that component and selection was based primarily on familiarity with FinCEAL activities and aimed to be representative of the beneficiaries more widely. The possibility for bias due to the selection process is acknowledged; however, this was not considered to affect the aims of the study enough to prohibit their involvement, nor was it seen as justification for re-conceptualizing the study's design. In total, 10 beneficiaries were interviewed in 7 separate focus group discussions.

The beneficiaries interviewed come from all stages of the research career, from PhD candidate to Professor. Their work generally encompasses all the different kinds of work undertaken at universities, such as teaching, research, project development, partnership building, and managing degree programs. Strictly administrative work is the only type of university task excluded for the typical work of beneficiaries.

The beneficiaries have engaged in different kinds of cooperation with partners from the FinCEAL regions. Some have had long-term engagement, while others are developing new partnerships. In many cases, there was a mixture of the two as people with existing long-term partnerships in one region turned to the development of new partnerships in another region.

All of the beneficiaries had some kind of pre-existing knowledge of the FinCEAL Initiative and had received some form of support from FinCEAL at some point in the project period. Most also had taken part in some event organized by FinCEAL, received information from FinCEAL through the communication efforts, and/or interacted with the project in some other way that did not include the provision of financial support.

### *Stakeholders*

The stakeholders selected were those representing the FinCEAL Plus Continuation Steering Committee<sup>3</sup> and the UniPID Board. The interviewees were members of the Steering Committee as well as other relevant individuals within their organization, and members of the UniPID Board. In total, 21 interviewees took part in 6 separate discussions.

The stakeholders interviewed primarily represent ministries or independent government organizations. The exceptions are Universities Finland UNIFI and the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (ARENE), which are cooperation organizations for the universities and universities of applied sciences, respectively.

The scope of their work covers the FinCEAL themes, regions, and wider work. However, their scope also includes a number of areas that are more broadly related to FinCEAL context, such as development policy, education export, internationalization of higher education, internationalization of Finnish companies to emerging markets, etc.

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<sup>3</sup> The Academy of Finland, Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finnish National Agency for Education, Ministry of Education and Culture (observer), Universities Finland, Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Science, and Business Finland.



The institutions making up the stakeholder group play separate, but complementary roles. For example, the role of the MINEDU is to direct policy related to higher education and science policy, while the Academy of Finland is tasked with funding research, and the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) is responsible for supporting internationalization, among other things. These roles dictate how they interact with one another, but also how they interact with the scientific community. This complex landscape and the role and impact of these interactions will become clearer in further sections.

### III. Results

This section presents a summary and analysis of the findings from the interviews. The results from the beneficiary and stakeholder groups are reported separately. Conclusions arising from the analysis are presented in section III. Conclusions.

#### a. Feelings about FinCEAL

##### *Beneficiaries*

The FinCEAL activities were generally seen as useful and as filling specific gaps in the current funding landscape. While a number of FinCEAL activities were mentioned, the different components of the Partnership Support Grants were especially highlighted as being useful. The travel grants, for example, were seen as supporting the basic activities needed for partnership building, while the researcher visit grants were seen as useful means for further developing existing partnerships. The step-by-step nature of the grants, which start with basic support and are aimed at initiating partnerships and end with preparatory funding grants aimed at preparing proposals, was seen as a useful way of providing support along the stages of partnership building. Beyond the Partnership Support Grants, the side-events and other events organized by FinCEAL were appreciated for their ability to provide visibility to a large number of researchers and institutions.

Of the FinCEAL instruments discussed, only the project preparatory grants were criticized. For some of the interviewees, the focus of the funding on EU-funding instruments is too limiting, particularly given the disappointing number of calls focusing on the regions. Moreover, some found Horizon 2020 unattractive due to its structure, which funds large projects, and the substantial effort needed to both propose and implement the projects. Nevertheless, most interviewees acknowledged the importance of supporting Horizon 2020 funding and called for more flexibility in the instrument.

The beneficiaries interviewed identified concrete benefits from the FinCEAL Initiative for themselves and their institutions, but also for the wider scientific community and society. Many of the interviewees highlighted the building of new partnerships as one of the most critical benefits. The interviewees described how the creation of new contacts had led to new partnerships, which had led to proposal building for both EU-funding and other kinds of funding (see quotation from a beneficiary below). These partnerships had knock-on benefits as well, such as student exchanges, research visits, and others, many of which were not funded by FinCEAL. Beyond partnership and network building, the interviewees highlighted the sharing of data, gaining perspectives from outside Europe, and gaining a better understanding of the local context as other benefits from the FinCEAL Initiative. For the larger scientific community and society, interviewees mentioned the increased visibility of global problems and the research that is being undertaken in Finland and with partners from the Africa, Asia, and LAC regions to address these problems. At a time when funding for partnership and network building and the internationalization of research is not available from the research institutes themselves nor from other funding agencies, FinCEAL's ability of to support these activities was ultimately seen as one of the most critical assets of the Initiative.

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*It [FinCEAL Initiative] has benefited for me and, as I mentioned earlier, in very concrete ways, it's through these Horizon projects and project proposals. So I can mention at least two Horizon project proposals, one was coordinated by us,*

*one was coordinated by [a French university] as I mentioned earlier. These were through+... These were sort of by-products of relationships that we built during one of these FinCEAL visits. To an event or to a partner's premises. So very concretely built contacts which led to proposals. – A beneficiary*

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The interviewees were also able to identify areas where they would need support, which FinCEAL does not provide or that FinCEAL has not achieved. The absence of support for educational cooperation activities – such as organizing joint courses – and for capacity building activities – such as training workshops for collaborators – were consistently mentioned as a deficiency in FinCEAL support. Facilitated, active matchmaking and better connections with the Finnish embassies based in the regions were also mentioned as activities currently lacking, which would support the building of partnerships. Finally, the FinCEAL practice of prioritizing new applicants over those having already benefitted was criticised. The interviewees noted that partnership building requires an investment of both time and money over a long period. With the current funding possibilities (both institutional and external) for these kinds of activities, such restrictions ultimately negatively impact partnership building activities.

The overall consensus was that there is a need for a thematic focus for the FinCEAL Initiative. The interviewees also agreed that the current priorities basically work as they are large enough to encompass a range of disciplines and fields. However, criticism was aimed at the failure to better integrate social sciences and the humanities and, similarly, for inadequately supporting multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches. The interviewees suggested future themes could be considered in relation to the upcoming Horizon Europe, as well as the integration of social sciences and the humanities, and multidisciplinary as suggested earlier.

In the larger context of funding, the interviewees saw FinCEAL funding as filling critical gaps and providing a complement to existing funding (see quotation from a beneficiary below). The focus of the funding on the internationalization of research and partnerships was seen as unique and as providing an answer to short-term needs that allow for long-term planning. While the funding amounts are quite small, it was seen as supporting the preparation work for accessing larger funding. As a funding instrument, the beneficiaries praised the ease of application and reporting as well as the quick decisions and flexibility of the funding, making it a very approachable instrument for scientists. Finally, the funding itself served to make the scientific community more aware of the opportunities and policies related to research with partners from the Africa, Asia, and LAC regions.

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*FinCEAL can somehow complement what others are offering because FinCEAL provides support at the previous stage. Certainly, that is your niche, you know this kind of preliminary support for before when the actual collaboration takes off. And then additional funding is received from whatever like Business Finland through BEAM programme for example of Finnpartnership or whatever. So I think that is your niche. – A beneficiary*

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## *Stakeholders*

The stakeholders' view of the FinCEAL Initiative was understandably different in many ways from that of the beneficiaries. Despite these different perspectives, there were also a number of areas

of agreement. Like the beneficiaries, the different components of the Partnership grant were the most familiar for the stakeholders. They also appreciated the clustering of grants under the Partnership Support Grant to highlight the larger objective to which the smaller components contribute. Beyond the Partnership Support Grants, the stakeholders found that a number of the FinCEAL activities advance science, technology, and innovation cooperation. In particular, the activities FinCEAL undertakes in relation to STI policy processes were seen as useful. Such activities include acting as a policy contact point by collecting and disseminating information related to STI policies, organizing side-events, supporting expert participation in policy processes, and organizing pre-meetings for said experts. Activities aimed at increasing the visibility of Finnish research and expertise in the regions, such as side-events, and supporting networking, such as national events, were also seen as useful.

The stakeholders interviewed also identified needs that FinCEAL is not currently responding to and areas in which FinCEAL has not achieved its aims. The stakeholders felt more support would be needed to promote interaction between different sectors and communities. For example, between Finnish ministry representatives and the scientific community, between researchers and Finnish politicians, and between the science and private sectors. Joint planning of activities and side-events with these government actors could also be increased as the stakeholders considered such activities effective in showcasing Finnish expertise. Missing from the aims and subsequent activities to support the inclusion of Finnish HEIs into 'the best' global networks, which was considered potentially a valuable contribution to the overall landscape.

The stakeholders interviewed identified a number of benefits from the FinCEAL Initiative, both for their own institutions and for the larger STI landscape. Several stakeholders suggested that FinCEAL activities have improved the quality of proposals received for their own funding mechanisms. Several interviewees also mentioned the role of FinCEAL in contributing to and strengthening bilateral engagement and activities. Joint collaboration, increasing the visibility of Finland in the regions and in the bi-regional policy dialogues, and the general image of Finland were also identified by the interviewees as benefits of the Initiative. FinCEAL has also played an important role in enabling Finnish participation in bi-regional STI policy dialogues at a more profound level than would be possible without the support from the Initiative. Funding for the research community for this type of activity is rare, so FinCEAL funding has created the opportunity for engagement in a way that would be otherwise almost impossible. From a larger perspective, FinCEAL promotes the creation of better linkages and understanding between Finnish researchers and those in the regions and contributes to Finland's response to global challenges.

The stakeholders interviewed also criticised elements of the FinCEAL Initiative. Related to the bi-regional policy dialogues, FinCEAL's success in making these processes understandable for the Finnish research community and in convincing the research community of the value in participating in them was questioned. The effectiveness of communication and outreach activities was also questioned, particularly with FinCEAL's ability to engage more than the 'usual suspects' (see quote from stakeholder below). A more stringent critique was made, however, of FinCEAL's role in an already complex ecosystem. Within Finland alone, a number of institutions, organizations, and networks already exist that support research and research collaboration in different ways. This picture is already murky, and rather than add another actor into this environment, funds should be concentrated in existing organizations. While FinCEAL's activities were generally seen as being important, some stakeholders felt these should be adopted by existing governmental institutions – either as a package or as separate activities – to both create a more simplified ecosystem of research funding and support and to ensure the long-term sustainability of the FinCEAL activities.

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*We don't actually have that much of straight connections [to academia]. Because usually what we do is we discuss with the rectors, with the members or chairs of the boards of the higher education institutions, with Academy of Finland, with colleagues, and we don't actually... I don't even remember when, where we would have been very actively involved in, for example, organizing some kind of... the themes of some disciplines have these regular meetings with some of... well in some disciplines, but not even in all. And then it depends very much on, for example, when we are preparing a delegation for some of the ministers or even the president of the republic, then we might get some direct feedback when we ask directly we know. Then there are some, general, I don't know, the usual suspects, [name] kind of people, who are very active also towards us. – A stakeholder*

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The interviews with the stakeholders did not touch much on the themes used in FinCEAL. However, one suggestion was made to solve some of the challenges related to the integration of social sciences and the humanities. Incorporating various themes into the Open Travel Grants (one of the components of the Partnership Support Grants) and using the Targeted Travel Grants to support the most important policy dialogues would make the FinCEAL activities more accessible and still provide key support for Finland's contribution to the policy dialogues.

Within the larger context of funding instruments, the stakeholders interviewed considered the FinCEAL funding quite similarly to the beneficiaries. They saw FinCEAL funding as filling gaps and providing complementary funding to existing funding opportunities. They also considered FinCEAL funding to be applicant-friendly – quick, flexible, and attractive (see quote from two stakeholders below). They, too, highlighted the role of smaller grants in supporting the preparation and success of larger proposals. A number of the stakeholders expressed in even stronger terms than the beneficiaries the impact of the grants on the Finnish research community. The stakeholders felt that FinCEAL played an integral role in the willingness of Finnish researchers to find partners from outside Europe. From the point of view of one stakeholder interview, a realistic picture of Finnish researchers actively participating in Horizon 2020 with partners from the regions does not exist without FinCEAL.

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*And just to comment, regarding those grants in general, it's very flexible funding, compared to Academy's funding, FinCEAL has this ongoing call and it doesn't take many months to receive the decision. – Stakeholder 1*

*I also see that those, both those grants, they are really important, because we are not talking about big money, but the impact is much bigger than it looks like if you compare it with the figures. And also, I'm attracted by the success rate, because in the last call you funded 51 projects out of 84, at least, so it's very applicant friendly also. – Stakeholder 2*

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## b. Research and Collaboration

### *Beneficiaries*

The motivation for researchers to start collaboration with researchers from Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean provides an interesting insight into the ways an initiative like FinCEAL might support this work. The motivations as expressed by the interviewees are disparate. Some start collaboration with partners from one of these regions because they are originally from that region. Others expressed an interest in collaboration with partners from developing or transition countries as the reason behind their cooperation, while still others mentioned the potential created by working with partners with different perspectives. Some mentioned the role these partnerships can play in addressing Finland's global responsibility activities, while others were motivated by other related activities, such as a supervisor's pre-existing research collaboration, education export, or student mobility, to start research collaboration with partners from the regions. The single most cited motivation, however, was the interest to conduct research that has impact by addressing societal challenges and solving problems that affect the globe.

Beyond the motivation needed to undertake these partnerships, different kinds of support are needed to initiate and develop partnerships. The beneficiaries interviewed mentioned the importance of support from their own institution and from national government stakeholders, including policy and decision makers. Funding, including from the collaboration country, for developing long-term, continuous actions was also highlighted by the interviewees. The beneficiaries interviewed also felt that a community of peers that can provide mutual support, share information, and shared professional interest is important for supporting partnership development. The most frequently cited need was contact with the partners. Face-to-face, regular contact, and the time to develop relationships with the partners, were seen as a critical for building collaboration with partners from the regions (see quote from a beneficiary below). Such regular contact has the added benefit of supporting the development of reliable, committed partners, which are also important for the success of the collaboration.

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*A lot gets done when you meet potential collaborators face to face. You are able to achieve more, you are able to be a bit more concrete, you are able to understand the context as well a bit more better than, you know, through e-mail or teleconferencing. But obviously, the region we're interested in, Africa... in terms of subsidizing the problem and making it a bit more easier to meet with counterparts from there, that for me has been key, especially, in a region where, you know, for these African counterparts you don't tend to meet them in sort of mainstream conferences very often. – A beneficiary*

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The question of how best to fund these partnerships is a core question for this study. From the beneficiaries' point of view, different kinds of funding are needed. Flexible funding, with a low threshold for accessing it, was seen as important for the development of partnerships. At later stages, funding ideally comes from the countries of all the partners involved. Reciprocity is important and can support the development of partnerships based on a more equal basis, for example, by moving away from an approach to research collaboration where one partner undertakes research while the other provides data.

To better understand the potential opportunities offered by engaging in collaboration with partners from the region, it is worthwhile to understand what Finnish partners have to give to these partnerships as well as what Finland has to gain from them. Training; access to information; resources; technology; solutions; different kind of knowledge ideas, and concepts were all mentioned as inputs Finnish partners bring to partnerships. As for what Finland has to gain, the beneficiaries mentioned: researcher mobility; access to data, information, knowledge and ideas; knowhow and new approaches to problems; visibility; and different ways of working. The need for these bi-regional partnerships to be equal and mutually beneficial was also highlighted by the beneficiaries.

Some barriers to cooperation were also mentioned, though not very elaborated due partly to the nature of the interviews themselves – qualitative focus group discussions, guided by the interviewees and the conversation – which did not allow for all of the questions to be asked during the interviews. It may be also partly due to the fact that the beneficiaries interviewed are currently involved in active partnerships with counterparts in the regions and have perhaps less to say on what might stop others from being able to build similar partnerships. However, based on the discussion, the lack of support at an institutional level was the main barrier cited (see quotation from a beneficiary below). Institutional support was seen as not only the services available from the institutions to support such activities, but also about the funding available from the institution to undertake them. The beneficiaries felt that institutional leadership still does not consider partnerships with counterparts from these regions important enough for institutions to provide the necessary support to support the development and maturation of these partnerships. Results from other activities undertaken by the FinCEAL initiative<sup>4</sup> coincide with these results. In particular, the lack of funding is consistently seen as a barrier for developing and sustaining long-term research collaboration with partners from the regions.

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*Internationalization is one of the measurements of success of the universities, but especially in regards to young researchers, they don't have a mechanism to support that this research is developed... further in the context of international collaboration or, like, guide them through small grants. And actually, the grants are really small if you consider the budgets of universities and benefits they receive from engaging in international collaboration. – A beneficiary*

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At the national level, the beneficiaries felt that a number of key actions would be needed to support the internationalization of research collaboration. Strengthening the communication and coordination between ministries was seen as one of the key needs in this regard. The interviewees felt that the current environment has too much internal fragmentation, leading to difficulties understanding the landscape and related responsibilities of the different institutions (see the quote from a beneficiary below). Some beneficiaries suggested strengthening Team Finland as one means of ensuring better coordination between the ministries and better prioritization of efforts. Other suggestions included: better integrating research findings into policy, supporting more open access to ministries and policy makers, and developing new instruments for funding cooperation.

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<sup>4</sup> Forthcoming FinCEAL Policy Brief on Latin American and the Caribbean

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*I think there's a lot of fragmentation between different policies. Not just between countries but between our different ministries that create the policies. ... You have the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, you have the Ministry of Education and Culture, you have the Ministry of Environmental Affairs, you have the agricultural ministry, you have TEM. And they all have their own agendas and sometimes it's really difficult to kind of even understand where they're coming from. – A beneficiary*

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### *Stakeholders*

Understanding the existing interaction between the stakeholders and the research community serves to also clarify the role of the stakeholders in the larger landscape of bi-regional cooperation on STI, but also in relation to the research institutions and researchers themselves. In general, the stakeholders reported that institutional cooperation between their organizations and the scientific community is common. There is cooperation at an institutional level and with the leadership of the Higher Education Institutions or research institutes and their supporting personnel. However, interaction with individual members of the scientific community is usually restricted to specific circumstances or contexts. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs' studia generalia lectures are an example, and the interviewees also reported interaction in informal contexts. The exception to this is EDUFI, which has more direct interaction with the scientific community through their role in coordinating funding instruments such as HEI ICI and Erasmus Plus.

Although interaction with the scientific community is not extensive, the stakeholders identified the kinds of input that would be beneficial from the scientific community. Many of the suggestions related to the synthesis and compiling of information. This could be as policy briefs, information packets on specific topics, or even foresight activities (see quote from a stakeholder below). This highlights the stakeholder community's need for information that the scientific community has access to, but which is time consuming or difficult for the stakeholders to access or process. Beyond this, the stakeholders also emphasized the need of receiving elaborated input from a variety of experts rather than individual inputs.

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*We would need like policy brief kind of information. That is something that we could deliver and we could discuss even with the highest level of the ministries. It's so that we, quite often we need very practical things to solve. But for a more strategic use we would need, like, policy briefs. How are things, what is the Finland's point. The facts. But it's not from a single researcher, we cannot call it from them. – A stakeholder*

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The stakeholders' perspective differs from that of the beneficiaries, focusing more on the larger strategic goals of collaboration. This clearly stems from their different position within the national landscape. For the stakeholders, collaboration with the partners plays an important role in highlighting Finland's interest in other kinds of cooperation with the countries, such as private sector cooperation. Larger types of collaboration with specific countries or regions is easier to initiate when active engagement already exists between scientific communities. The stakeholders also acknowledge that this cooperation is not only scientific, but it creates other kinds of opportunities, such as researcher mobility, talent attraction, and education export, among others.



The stakeholders also identified a number of barriers to cooperation. At a policy level, the stakeholders noted that policy trends in both Finland and the partner countries affect the kind, amount, and themes of collaboration. Moreover, the strategies and policies of the HEIs themselves can pose barriers (while also creating opportunities). HEIs engage in their own strategic level relationships, which cannot and should not be influenced by external actors. Partnerships may require large investments in resources, not only funding, but also human resources and time. Lack of these resources, and particularly lack of funding can pose a barrier to the development of active engagement. External conditions also can pose barriers. Issues like accessing permits, navigating bureaucracy, dealing with changing personnel, and differences in working cultures were seen as particularly problematic. Finally, the awareness of the partner country of Finland and what Finland has to offer may pose a barrier. Finland is one of many countries seeking to engage more meaningfully with partners from the regions, so Finland must also be able to make a strong argument for which cooperation with Finland is beneficial from both a scientific and a strategic perspective.

Designing support mechanisms for enhancing international research collaboration is difficult. Practical issues, such as availability of resources and technical issues, such as legal frameworks, often dictate the scope and design of such mechanisms. Freed of such restrictions, what might a mechanism look like? The stakeholders did not have a comprehensive view but identified the different features such a mechanism would have. The features mentioned included:

- funding for all teams involved in a partnership;
- participation on an equal basis at all phases of project preparation and implementation;
- competitive procedures;
- addressing local needs and solving problems;
- long-term;
- ministries' active policy engagement with their counterparts in the partner countries;
- bigger frameworks for activities, such as joint research centres;
- a balance between a top-down and bottom-up approach;
- co-designed or challenge-style;
- facilitated matchmaking for cooperation; and
- pragmatic.

### c. Policy

#### *Beneficiaries*

The beneficiaries were also asked to describe their interaction with policy makers. Understanding how they view the relationship between researchers and policy makers gives greater insight into the needs for better supporting the interaction between these actors. The beneficiaries' responses ranged from some reporting constant and ongoing cooperation with policy makers to others indicating that such cooperation is rare. Attending events, such as those organized by the FinCEAL initiative, was the most frequently cited means for meeting and discussing with policy makers. Following this, interaction arising from project work was the second most cited manner of interaction. Other reported channels were through work with international Non-Governmental Organizations and public consultations. Those with more extensive collaboration described a familiarity with policy makers, supported by their participation in official delegations or serving in an expert role for the Finnish government. Conversely, those with less cooperation reported feeling a distance from policy makers, suggesting that an inner circle exists of those who are asked to

contribute to and comment and policies, the selection of whom is not transparent (see quotation from a beneficiary below).

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*Sometimes there is this impression that it's a closed group. Policymakers sit with one group, decide something, and they pass it on to you. So it would be welcome to have a bit more interactions and calls for comments or things like that to sort of to dispel that belief. – A beneficiary*

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The beneficiaries' motivation to work with policy makers proved to be less varied than the kinds of interaction taking place. The majority of responses focused on the interest of influencing government policies, decisions, guidelines, and funding priorities. Personal interest and the wish to make research relevant were also frequently mentioned. One beneficiary highlighted FinCEAL as a useful intermediary between the scientific and policy communities, commenting that such work allows for collective rather than individual input.

The opportunities for interaction with policy makers relate closely to the means, described earlier. UniPID and FinCEAL activities, events, and project activities were all mentioned. Generally, the beneficiaries interviewed noted that the research community must be the active agent to create such opportunities for interacting with policy makers.

The barriers described by the beneficiaries provide an interesting counterpoint to the opportunities. While events were cited frequently as a means for interaction, the beneficiaries also commented that policy makers often do not participate in these events despite being invited and sometimes even arranged according to their schedules. Although project activities were mentioned as one opportunity for interacting with policy makers, beneficiaries also reported either not knowing who to contact or a lack of response from policy makers as barriers. Beyond these, a lack of resources, unclear processes, and mind-set were also mentioned as barriers to greater cooperation, as was the impression that the policy community is a closed one that discourages such interactions. For a number of the beneficiaries interviewed with an international background, not being Finnish or not speaking Finnish well enough was seen as a barrier for their active engagement with policy makers in Finland.

How, then, can interaction between the research and policy communities best be supported? For the beneficiaries interviewed, joint events and workshops were the clearest answer. Face-to-face interactions provide the opportunity to discuss and influence in a way that other kinds of interaction cannot. At a more fundamental level, the need for policy makers to have an interest in receiving this input was highlighted. Interaction with the policy community is meaningless if both sides are not engaged (see quotation from a beneficiary below). More active engagement from the policy and funding community was also seen as important for ultimately increasing the interaction and champions who promote this engagement could be useful for building momentum in both the science and policy communities. Co-creation of activities and finding ways to make the science community's input visible – showing what was done with the input received – were also mentioned as ways to support collaboration. Here too, the beneficiaries cited FinCEAL as an important means for supporting interaction between researchers and policy makers.

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*I have noticed myself that they [policymakers] are not coming to these meetings even though you invite them, they have all kinds of excuses. Somehow, then,*

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*university research and development and policymaking, they are different camps. And you need to make some language between them. It is difficult to see how fast and when results will come up if you take a professor and a member of parliament to discuss, they have different worlds, different result objectives. – A beneficiary*

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### *Stakeholders*

For the stakeholders, there is a value in cooperation with the scientific community. The stakeholders interviewed highlighted the role science can play in describing trends and needs, demonstrating why a policy should be enacted or a project should be funded, and for input into larger policy processes. Cooperation with the scientific community also supports relationship building and the acquisition of knowledge, which is in itself important.

The stakeholders also identified barriers to cooperation between these communities. While some commented that not enough cooperation is currently taking place to be able to identify barriers, others cited a lack of resources, opportunities, and mediums for collaboration as key barriers. The challenge of communicating between the two communities, with the information flow not working as it should, was also mentioned. Mediating organizations could support this, but the stakeholders described an overall lack of mediating organizations or challenges finding the ‘right’ mediating organizations as problematic. Moreover, the roles of the institutions in the national STI landscape makes active collaboration with scientists difficult. The institutions themselves have mandates, roles, and restrictions that influence the framework for how they can interact with scientists, and which may make such cooperation difficult. Finally, science in its most basic sense has little to do with policymaking. For cooperation with scientists to be fruitful, the science itself must be re-packaged in a way that is relevant for policy work, which is a difficult task.

Activities that support interaction between the communities must, then, be able to overcome some of these barriers. Policy briefs, discussions, events, and other face-to-face interactions were seen as important means for engaging with both the scientific community but also for communicating scientific results in a way that is more relevant for policy makers. Joint strategy or foresight activities were also seen as a way for engaging in collaboration, as was working with other relevant organizations.

## d. Potential Pathways

### *Stakeholders*

Looking to the future, it is useful to explore with the stakeholder community the opportunities and possibilities for continuing the FinCEAL Initiative. The beneficiaries were not asked about potential pathways forward as none of the beneficiaries are in a position to decide on future funding, including from their own institutions. That said, a number of the beneficiaries interviewed made suggestions for ways to make the FinCEAL Initiative sustainable. Seeking funding from government institutions and the private sector were the most frequently mentioned.

The stakeholders saw two primary paths forward. The first was for the FinCEAL activities to be assimilated into the activities of government institutions, essentially institutionalizing the activities. This option was seen differently by different stakeholders. Some argued for taking FinCEAL activities as a whole and moving them to an institution that can take over the implementation. The challenge here was identifying an institution with a mandate to implement all, or even a portion, of

the activities that FinCEAL currently undertakes. Others argued for splitting the FinCEAL activities up and moving them to different government institutions, with the mandate to fulfil that kind of role. For example, the mobility funding would be transferred to the EDUFI; preparatory funding, the Academy of Finland; STI policy work, MINEDU; etc. A third path was also found, with the suggestion of increasing funding directly to the HEIs, allowing them take over some of the activities and reducing the number of actors working in the current STI ecosystem. The stakeholders noted that the drawback of this ‘assimilation’ model is that organizations outside of the government are more agile and flexible, able to implement activities in a way government organizations simply are not.

The second option identified by the stakeholders was for cooperative funding or co-financing of the FinCEAL Initiative and its activities. The thought here was that other ministries, private foundations, and companies could contribute to the funding of FinCEAL, making it possible to fund FinCEAL activities in the longer term. Positioning funding as related to Finland’s contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) would also make funding possible from the Prime Minister’s Office. The drawback to this model is the possibility of the FinCEAL initiative turning into something else as it must respond directly to a larger set of needs from the funders.

Ultimately, the stakeholders interviewed viewed the FinCEAL initiative as a unique mechanism, not only in Finland but in Europe. Some suggested that due to this uniqueness, funding for the Initiative will always be periodic and on a project-basis.

The stakeholders were asked about the opportunities for funding from each of their organizations. While all responded favourably to the continuation of the FinCEAL Initiative (or its activities), most were unable to identify direct funding opportunities from their organizations.

## IV. Conclusions

Drawing on the outcomes presented in the previous section, this section draws conclusions on the existing and future needs of the beneficiary and stakeholder communities and reflects on the feasibility of the continuation of the FinCEAL Initiative.

### a. Summarizing the needs of the beneficiary and stakeholder communities: is FinCEAL still needed?

One of the main aims of this feasibility study is to better understand the needs of the beneficiaries and stakeholders of the FinCEAL Initiative, helping to answer the question of if FinCEAL is still needed. Based on the results described in the previous section, the needs of the beneficiaries in relation to the Initiative's four main goals will be summarized.

#### *Policy Dialogues*

The FinCEAL Initiative's first aim is to strengthen Finnish participation in and understanding of the EU STI policy dialogues with the target regions. FinCEAL has been addressing this aim through two main activities: serving as a policy contact point and by offering Targeted Travel Grants. As a policy contact point, FinCEAL communicates information to the research community about the EU's bi-regional STI policy dialogues and the priorities and opportunities arising from these and provides and collates the scientific communities' input into the Finnish contribution to these dialogues. The Targeted Travel Grants provide funding for researchers and experts representing the Finnish scientific community to participate in policy-relevant events selected by the FinCEAL team.



*Dimensions of FinCEAL policy dialogue activities*

The interviews with the beneficiaries touched only briefly on the bi-regional policy dialogues. It's obvious that for the research community, these dialogues are quite removed from their daily work and are thus not one of the areas they view as the most important for the continuation of FinCEAL. Nevertheless, several beneficiaries identified FinCEAL's role as mediating between the scientific and policy communities as important. The beneficiaries understand, in vague terms, the role the bi-regional policy dialogues play, but are not very interested in engaging with them on an individual level. Rather, the majority seem to prefer receiving the key information from these dialogues and utilizing FinCEAL as a mediator.

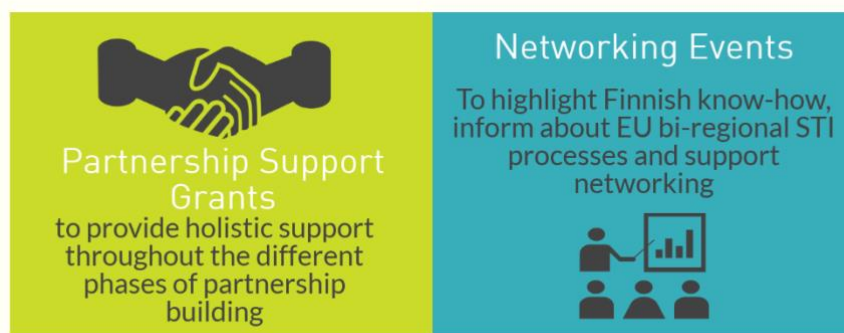
From the perspective of the stakeholders, the bi-regional policy dialogues with the regions are important for only a few of the stakeholder organizations, and most particularly for the MINEDU. Despite this, the stakeholders do understand the reasoning behind better linking the Finnish stakeholder community to the development and implementation of these dialogues. Feedback

from the stakeholders suggests that this activity is seen as primarily as a means of supporting Finnish engagement in these dialogues at a level that would not be possible without the FinCEAL support. The stakeholders expressed doubt whether FinCEAL has been able to effectively communicate the role of these policy dialogues and an argument for participating in them to the scientific community. This critique should be taken into consideration in future iterations of the project, but also speaks to the continued need for this type of work to be undertaken.

The future need for this policy contact point role are affected significantly by strategic activities of the stakeholders. FinCEAL has facilitated a rather active engagement of Finland in the bi-regional policy dialogues with Africa, Asia, and LAC, particularly when compared to other European Member States of similar size and economy. Without FinCEAL support, it is difficult to see how this level of engagement could be maintained. In this sense, the strategic emphasis the MINEDU places on Finland's participation in these dialogues will ultimately impact the future needs. MINEDU's new international strategy for higher education and research 2017-2025, *Better Together for a Better World*, outlines seven goals for promoting internationalization. Goal 5, "The Finnish message is heard internationally", aims to "...have a pool of experts versed in presenting Finland's views in the international arena and they will formulate the message of Finnish higher education and research and ensure that the agreed policies are carried through at all levels."<sup>5</sup> This goal would seem to speak to the intention of MINEDU to continue the strong engagement with the policy dialogues and to further strengthen the Finnish scientific community's participation in these dialogues. In this sense, the need for these activities could be foreseen in the future as well.

### *Partnership Building*

FinCEAL's second aim is to support Finnish participation in joint research projects with partners from the target regions. The primary method for addressing this aim is the Partnership Support Grants, which provide funding for different kinds of activities that support partnership building.



*Dimensions of FinCEAL partnership building activities*

Based on the feedback received from both the beneficiary and stakeholder community, it is clear that support for partnership building is one of most critical areas of the Initiative's work. The beneficiaries reported both the development of totally new partnerships and the maturing of existing ones as a result of the FinCEAL grants. While partnership building in itself is important, the results from these partnerships show the added value of international collaboration. FinCEAL reporting shows that partnerships developed with the support of FinCEAL have led to joint publications, teaching, supervision, events, and projects. Moreover, the visibility of Finnish researchers and research increases with the development and implementation of these

<sup>5</sup> <http://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/4154572/YMP-en-net.pdf/ab74d6b2-a48f-49ee-9563-6313f87198ae/YMP-en-net.pdf.pdf>

partnerships. Yet, the beneficiaries also reiterated the continued need for support for partnership building. The lack of institutional support for such activities and the absence of funding for these activities from other sources makes this support a continued need for the research community.

Indeed, the stakeholders interviewed also identified partnership building as one of the core activities that FinCEAL implements. They see its importance not only for the research community, but also for supporting their own activities. Partnership building with partners from Africa, Asia, and LAC addresses these organizations' strategic goals – like the internationalization of the research and innovation systems – as well as supports ongoing activities – like the implementation of bilateral and multilateral engagements. The importance diverse and quality research and innovation partnerships can have on the work and strategic engagement of the stakeholders indicates the importance of continuing support for partnership development.

Looking to the future, the kinds of partnerships the Finnish research community will have with partners from Africa, Asia, and LAC will diversify. Collaborative research with partners from these regions is taking place in quickly expanding fields of inquiry and with different kinds of aims and including different kinds of actors, which means that the support for building these partnerships will continue to be important into the future. The role of international cooperation in Horizon Europe, the European Commission's next Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, is not yet known, but the expectation is that the support for international research collaboration will continue. Along with the new mission-oriented approach<sup>6</sup>, Horizon Europe presents an opportunity for the Finnish research community to further develop its scientific collaboration with partners. The ability of the Finnish community to exploit these opportunities will rely strongly on the maturity of their partnerships and their being prepared for the new ways of working in Horizon Europe. This, too, suggests that support for partnership development will be important in the future.

### *Visibility*

The third aim is to promote awareness of Finnish expertise and know-how in the target regions. FinCEAL pursues this aim in a number of ways. The mobility grants given by FinCEAL have served this purpose by supporting a large number of researchers based in Finnish institutions to attend meetings, conferences, and other strategic events, where they represent both their own work and institution, but also the Finnish scientific community in general. The Coordinators themselves also serve this aim, acting as ambassadors for the Finnish research community when they attend strategic events, such as policy dialogues or regional meetings. However, FinCEAL's primary means for addressing this goal is by organizing side-events alongside important policy or thematic event and by engaging with key stakeholders from the regions on issues related to the regional themes. The side-events have been organized, for example, alongside a Finnish minister's trip to the region and designed to align with the themes and aims of that visit.

As was mentioned in regard to partnership building, meeting, discussing, and sharing with partners from the regions is a crucial component to increasing the visibility of Finnish research and expertise around the world. Such events serve to not only showcase what Finland has to offer, but also directly links the partner region's or country's scientific experts with Finnish ones. The beneficiaries clearly understand this and value the role these activities have played in enlarging the visibility of themselves and their institutions, but the visibility of Finland more widely. Moreover, these events not only create space for networking between the scientific communities, but also between the science and policy communities of both Finland and the partner region or country. Based on the

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<sup>6</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/designing-next-framework-programme/mission-oriented-policy-next-research-and-innovation-framework-programme\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/designing-next-framework-programme/mission-oriented-policy-next-research-and-innovation-framework-programme_en)

interviews, both beneficiaries and stakeholders view these events as one of the primary means for interacting with each other. Considering the reported dearth of cooperation between these two communities, the need for this kind of engagement seems to be ongoing.

For the stakeholders, these events also take on strategic relevance. As countries in Africa, Asia, and LAC are becoming more demanding about the partners with whom and how they engage in international partnerships, the image and visibility of Finland becomes more important than ever. The stakeholders understand this and understand the dichotomy of the argument that needs to be made: cooperation with Finland must be both scientifically interesting and strategically useful. South Africa, China, and Brazil are good examples of countries from each of the regions with strong global interest in scientific collaboration, robust existing research and policy collaboration, and world-class research institutions. What sets Finland apart from the other countries interested in cooperation? As a small country, how can Finland stand out in the competition for the best partners? Side-events like the ones FinCEAL organizes are one way of answering those questions and highlighting both the relevance and usefulness of cooperation with Finnish scientists and Finland more generally.

The future needs in this area are, much like for the policy dialogues, very much linked to Finland's strategic aims. Should cooperation with partners from Africa, Asia, and LAC continue to be important – whether it be scientific, economic, trade, development, or some other kind of cooperation – then the importance of the visibility of Finnish expertise and knowhow will continue to be valuable. Scientific collaboration serves to open doors for other kinds of cooperation, it helps to establish a shared trust and understanding that can be the basis for future cooperation, regardless of the sector. MINEDU's intention to continue to develop and support international cooperation is clear in its new strategy. The internationalization of innovation systems and existing bilateral Memorandums of Understanding with counterparts from the FinCEAL regions speak to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment's continued interest in supporting this collaboration. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs' responsibility for Finnish development cooperation policies and United Nations activities would also suggest their interest and need for supporting Finnish visibility into the future.

### *Communication*

FinCEAL's final aim is to gather and disseminate information on already existing Finnish cooperation and on new cooperation possibilities with the target regions. This is implemented through the FinCEAL Infobank, which is a collection of Finnish research projects with partners from the regions, and communication and dissemination materials, such as the FinCEAL newsletter and website.



*Dimensions of FinCEAL communication activities*



The beneficiaries referred to the FinCEAL newsletter, in particular, as a way of keeping on top of relevant event and upcoming calls. Continued engagement with social media tools was seen as important for future communication with the scientific community. The diverse and complex nature of the STI policy and funding landscape, particularly those focused on Africa, Asia, and LAC, and the nature of research funding ensure that communication on these activities will always be important. Moreover, the fact that partnerships with these regions are less supported within research institutions generally highlights the need for specific communication on these topics.

The stakeholders reported using the FinCEAL Infobank as a way of collecting information, particularly before official visits or before receiving guests from one of the regions. The need for this information is ongoing and saves significant time and energy for the stakeholders. The potential for better synergizing communication activities between the actors was suggested and such activities could be seen in the future.

As Horizon 2020 winds down and the planning and preparation for Horizon Europe becomes more prominent, the need for communicating the rules for participation, opportunities, and other key information in the future becomes crucial. The Finnish scientific community interested in cooperation with the regions will require information on the role of international cooperation with third countries in Horizon Europe, particularly as this cooperation is considered niche by research and innovation offices within higher education institutions and by EU Research and Innovation Programmes (EUTI) within Business Finland.

Although the FinCEAL Initiative has made significant progress towards its aims, both the beneficiary and stakeholder communities seem to have ongoing and future needs that can benefit from FinCEAL activities. This may partly be attributed to the current realities of the academic and scientific sectors. Funding is scarce, and research funding is already stretched thin, and thus resources for partnership building are modest. In addition, the changing context of STI collaboration creates ongoing and future needs for both beneficiaries and stakeholders. The policy dialogues, funding mechanisms, and trends in cooperation are evolving and thus the need for support to respond to these changes is evolving as well. Thus, one can reasonably conclude that the activities implemented by the FinCEAL Initiative are indeed still needed.

#### b. Designing the future: how can FinCEAL meet existing and future needs?

If the FinCEAL activities are still needed, must they be designed in exactly the same way to meet the existing and future needs? During its three cycles of projects, the FinCEAL Initiative has adapted its activities to fit with emerging needs or re-designed them to better address existing needs. The evolution to the Partnership Support Grant is a good example of this. In the first FinCEAL project, the constituent grants were treated as separate instruments. As the initiative progressed, event grants and research visit grants were added to address requests articulated by the research community. The current phase of the FinCEAL Initiative has grouped these different grants together under one instrument as they all ultimately support partnership development. If the FinCEAL Initiative continues into the future, such adjustments will surely have to be made as well. More fundamental questions, however, must also be addressed about the design of the FinCEAL Initiative.

#### *Increasing Flexibility*

The FinCEAL Initiative has been praised by beneficiaries and stakeholders alike for its flexibility. Despite this flexibility, limitations have been placed on a number of the Initiative's activities. While the need to implement some restrictions to ensure the impact of the initiative is obvious, it is

nevertheless worthwhile to consider if these restrictions support FinCEAL's aims, or if increasing flexibility even more would better serve the Initiative. Based on the feedback from both beneficiaries and stakeholders, restrictions on the themes, types of activities, and instruments eligible for project preparatory funding support require re-consideration.

FinCEAL focuses its activities around specific thematic areas, which are linked to the priorities in the policy dialogues and the Finnish expertise for each of the regions. The thematic frame under which FinCEAL operates has been a source of consternation for some, in particular for researchers from social sciences and the humanities. These researchers have a hard time finding their place within these themes and thus feel excluded from the support offered by FinCEAL. The beneficiaries interviewed all acknowledged the need for limiting the FinCEAL activities and most were comfortable with the chosen themes. However, these beneficiaries were all those who received funding for FinCEAL. Discussions undertaken with the UniPID Board, for example, have highlighted this challenge.

In addition to the thematic frame, FinCEAL also limits support to activities related to research cooperation. However, results from both the interviews with the beneficiaries and reporting from grantees shows that a number of other kinds of activities are taking place in the frame of these partnerships, which ultimately support the aim of joint research, but are currently not funded by FinCEAL. These activities include education cooperation – such as holding joint courses – and capacity building activities – such as research training. FinCEAL does not currently support these kinds of activities, but they arguably play an important role in helping researchers to find joint research interests and potential areas for research cooperation.

Of the grants offered by FinCEAL, the Project Preparatory Funding has posed the most difficulties for both the Coordinators and the beneficiaries. For the Coordinators, the grants have been under-utilized, resulting in challenges to use the allocated budget. For the beneficiaries interviewed, the limitations placed on the grants make them difficult to exploit. Only proposal preparations for EU funding instruments are eligible for funding according to FinCEAL rules. Yet, many beneficiaries expressed an unwillingness and hesitancy to apply for projects from European funding mechanisms. Other feedback given by the beneficiary community has indicated that the grant size is relatively small compared to the grants offered by other institutions for similar activities, which has resulted in a small number of applications, particularly for the Asia component. While the importance of Horizon 2020 is not in doubt, other international funding mechanisms could provide support for Finnish researchers within the frame of the Initiative. Widening the scope of what could be supported by FinCEAL Project Preparatory Grants could serve to increase both the amount of international partnerships and the percentage of those that acquire external funding to support their activities.

Looking to the future, there is a strong argument to be made for increasing the flexibility of the Initiative. Re-envisioning the thematic basis for the FinCEAL activities, in particular, should be considered. As Horizon Europe seems to be headed in the direction of a mission-oriented approach targeting global challenges, cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary cooperation will become even more essential. The thematic areas will no longer adequately respond to Europe's largest research funding instrument. Moreover, the importance of focusing on themes directly responding to the thematic priorities of the policy dialogues no longer makes sense. The policy dialogues have evolved significantly in the time six years since FinCEAL's initiation and will continue to evolve in the future. Limiting the themes – or in reality, expanding the current themes to include future thematic priorities – to provide specific support for the policy dialogues does not support the development of Finnish research and expertise in other fields and areas of inquiry, which may

become important in the future. The argument for widening the scope of activities to include education cooperation and capacity building activities is less clear. While there certainly is a demand for funding for these types of activities from the FinCEAL beneficiaries, careful consideration should be given to the whether this expansion would provide sufficient impact toward the Initiative's aims to justify the expansion. Finally, changing the Project Preparatory Grants to also support the preparation of proposals to international research funding mechanisms beyond the European Union could be considered. Supporting partnership building that results in proposals to international funding mechanisms, particularly when they are prestigious, is good for everyone. However, careful consideration would have to be given to defining the framework of eligible funding mechanisms.

The need to limit the scope of the activities and beneficiaries is recognized. The small amount of funding simply cannot support all the researchers' interests while still providing support to the bi-regional policy contexts to which FinCEAL relates. Other limiting frames should still be applied, helping to ensure that an oversubscription does not occur. For example, Targeted Travel Grants could correspond thematically to the policy processes FinCEAL responds to, while Open Travel Grants could become thematically open. This solution would simultaneously support the Finnish response to the changes expected in Horizon Europe, further the development of research partnerships, and ensure continued support to the bi-regional policy dialogues. Furthermore, increasing resources to the Initiative to support this expansion in its support should be considered.



Photo by: Heikki Eriksson

### *Lengthening Project Periods*

Funding for the FinCEAL Initiative has taken place in three consecutive two-year project periods. Such short project periods mean that significant time and energy is spent setting up and closing down the activities and administrative components. Even when the activities do not change substantially, there is still the requirement to open new calls, update project materials, communicate to the research community about the closing and re-opening of project periods, etc.

The administrative considerations are even more challenging. The projects must be both officially opened and closed according to the rules of the university, which affects how funds are spent. A new cooperation agreement must be made between the implementing universities for each project period. New contracts must be written for staff for each project period, which can take long enough that staff members may not have a signed contract at the start of the project. These issues have an impact on the outcomes of the project, but also cause a substantial amount of work and take away from the Coordinators' ability to work on the Initiative's core activities, such as awarding grants, planning events, or improving communications. The periods where the future of FinCEAL is unknown creates uncertainty for the Finnish research community, particularly because FinCEAL operates within a niche that addresses a critical gap in funding. The uncertainty considerably lessens their mandate and ability to engage in strategically important activities, events or policy processes that go beyond the scope of a project period. Furthermore, it becomes impossible to effectively plan medium- to long-term activities, and adequately maintain international partnerships and networks that have taken years to establish.

More long-term funding options would ultimately support the ability of FinCEAL to achieve its objectives. It would support future-oriented planning and development of activities, which could foresee and build on achievements. FinCEAL would be more agile and able to respond to changes in the national and bi-regional policy and STI environment, including requests for cooperation from ministries and other government stakeholders. Longer periods of funding would also support the development and maturity of strategic relationships with the stakeholder community and help strengthen FinCEAL's role within the Finnish STI landscape.

### *Changing and Emerging Policy Framework*

On a national level, the publication of MINEDU's international strategy for higher education and research 2017-2025 will serve as a key strategy to which FinCEAL links its future activities. The strategy is implemented by an action plan, which outlines activities to be undertaken, the responsible actor(s), and timeframe. FinCEAL's aims are closely related to those of the strategy, and the activities can support a number of the activities outlined in the action plan. As the implementation of the strategy gets underway, FinCEAL can play an important role in addressing specific components of the strategy and its action plan and may be crucial for supporting under-developed activities. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs' development policy and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment's innovation policies, and their related strategies, will also continue to serve as key policy frameworks for the FinCEAL Initiative. As these change, evolve, or produce new initiatives, FinCEAL could and should be seen as a potential actor for implementing parts of these policies and strategies. Beyond these Ministries, FinCEAL should be agile, able to respond to the changing policy environment and emerging policies, strategies, and initiatives that are relevant to the FinCEAL activities and aims.

On a more global level, the bi-regional policy dialogues have served to provide the thematic and funding framework to which FinCEAL generally responds since the inception of the Initiative. However, in this time, the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have emerged as a major international framework for cooperative action. The emergence of the SDGs has also meant the re-orientation of national and international policies in order to better link with the objectives of the SDGs and to implement activities towards their achievement. As FinCEAL considers future needs, a re-orientation of FinCEAL to the direction of the SDGs may be worth considering. Such a pivot would have two major advantages. First, it would support the Finnish national response to the SDGs, providing a clear benefit for both the research communities and the governmental actors. Second, this benefit would have the added value of potentially making

FinCEAL more attractive to other governmental funders. Certain drawbacks can also be identified – such as the resulting loss of direct support to the bi-regional policy dialogues – but this could be taken into consideration for future discussions.



Photo by: Heikki Eriksson

### c. Implementing FinCEAL: who benefits, how, and who

Some fundamental questions were raised in discussions with the beneficiaries and stakeholders. The first focused on who really owns the FinCEAL initiative. For an initiative such as FinCEAL, the question of ownership is linked to who benefits from the FinCEAL activities. The second question addressed the means of implementing the FinCEAL activities, and the third dealt with which actor is the right actor to implement these activities.

#### *Who Benefits from FinCEAL?*

The FinCEAL Initiative is designed to support activities and actors at different levels of the Finnish STI ecosystem. At the policy level, FinCEAL provides benefits to a number of national ministries, a summary of which is provided in the table below. One overarching benefit of FinCEAL is the increased national coordination, information sharing and dialogue among different actors of the Finnish STI landscape in questions pertaining to STI cooperation with Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. This directly supports all members of the FinCEAL Steering Committee, as well as indirectly supports the wider STI community.

MINEDU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for <i>engagement with the EU's STI policy dialogues</i> with the target regions:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ expert participation in events, workshops, or meetings organized in support of these dialogues</li> <li>○ policy inputs from the Finnish scientific community and FinCEAL coordinators</li> <li>○ events organized to increase the visibility of Finland in the policy dialogues</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Showcasing Finnish expertise</i> and the Ministry's engagement with the target regions through organizing side-events alongside the Ministry's activities or visits in the region</li> <li>• Increased <i>visibility of Finland</i> in the target regions through expert visits, delegations, events etc.</li> <li>• <i>Easy access to expert and project information</i> through the FinCEAL Infobank and the FinCEAL coordinators</li> <li>• Contributing to the <i>achievement of MINEDU's strategic goals</i> through supporting internationalization of Finnish research and innovation cooperation</li> <li>• Support for <i>national networking</i> among scientists through events and joint delegations</li> </ul>
FORMIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for <i>engagement with the international policy dialogues</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ expert participation in events, workshops, or meetings organized in support of these dialogues</li> <li>○ policy inputs from the Finnish scientific community and FinCEAL coordinators</li> <li>○ events organized to increase the visibility of Finland in the policy dialogues</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Support for <i>bilateral engagement</i> with countries from the target regions</li> <li>• <i>Showcasing Finnish expertise</i> and the Ministry's engagement with the target regions through organizing side-events alongside the Ministry's activities or visits in the region</li> <li>• Increased <i>visibility of Finland</i> in the target regions through expert visits, delegations, events etc.</li> <li>• <i>Easy access to expert and project information</i> through the FinCEAL Infobank and the FinCEAL coordinators</li> <li>• Contributing to the <i>achievement of FORMIN's strategic goals</i> through supporting research partnerships that examine issues related to development cooperation and the development of research capacities in the target regions through the development of research partnerships</li> </ul>
MEAE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S for <i>the implementation of institutional bilateral activities</i> with countries from the target regions</li> <li>• <i>Showcasing Finnish expertise</i> and the Ministry's engagement with the target regions through organizing side-events alongside the Ministry's activities or visits in the region</li> <li>• Increased <i>visibility of Finland</i> in the target regions through expert visits, delegations, events etc.</li> <li>• <i>Easy access to expert and project information</i> through the FinCEAL Infobank</li> <li>• Support for increased <i>cooperation between research and the private sector</i></li> <li>• Contributing to the <i>achievement of MEAE'S strategic goals</i> by supporting the internationalization of the Finnish innovation system</li> </ul>
Ministries related to FinCEAL's thematic priorities <sup>7</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributing to the <i>achievement of strategic goals</i> by supporting research cooperation and the development of quality research in the thematic areas</li> <li>• Support for the <i>development of Finnish expertise</i> in the thematic areas</li> <li>• Increased <i>visibility of Finnish expertise</i> in the thematic areas</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> Such as the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

FinCEAL has also supported the work of national agencies implementing the policies and strategies defined by the Ministries, a summary of which is provided in the table below.

AKA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for the <i>development of quality research partnerships</i> with the target regions</li> <li>• Support for <i>the preparation of proposals responding to research and innovation calls from public to public networks</i> with participation from Finland and the target regions, such as proposals to LEAP-Agri, ERA-Net LAC, and the Transatlantic Platform for Social Sciences and the Humanities</li> <li>•</li> <li>• Support for <i>information dissemination</i> about multilateral funding calls in which AKA is participating such as the bi-regional ERA-Nets</li> <li>• Increased <i>visibility of Finnish expertise and research</i> in the target regions</li> </ul>
EDUFI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributing to the <i>internationalization of Finnish HEIs</i></li> <li>• Supporting the <i>development of research capacities</i> in the target regions through the initiation and maturation of research partnerships</li> </ul>
Diplomatic Missions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for <i>engagement with the international organizations</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ expert participation in events, workshops, or meetings organized in support of these dialogues</li> <li>○ policy inputs from the Finnish scientific community and FinCEAL coordinators</li> <li>○ events organized to increase the visibility of Finland in the policy dialogues</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Supporting <i>research partnerships</i> that examine issues related to development cooperation</li> <li>• <i>Easy access to expert and project information</i> through the FinCEAL Infobank and the FinCEAL coordinators</li> <li>• Support for identifying Finnish key note speakers or other experts to invite to specific events in the regions</li> <li>• Increased <i>visibility of Finland</i> in the target regions</li> </ul>
Business Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for the <i>development of quality innovation partnerships</i> with the target regions</li> <li>• Support for the <i>preparation of proposals responding to research and innovation calls from public to public networks</i> with participation from Finland and the target regions</li> <li>• Increased <i>visibility of Finnish expertise and research</i> in the target regions</li> <li>• Support for increased <i>cooperation between research and the private sector</i></li> </ul>

Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) and research institutes (RI's) have benefitted significantly from FinCEAL activities. In terms of funding, FinCEAL has distributed almost €965 000<sup>8</sup> in grants to researchers and other employees of Finnish HEI's and RI's. Through support for individual researchers, FinCEAL has contributed to the achievement of HEI's and RI's strategic goals and implementation of institutional strategies. These not only respond to the priorities they have identified, such as their profiling fields, but also to those targets imposed by MINEDU, such as those related to internationalization activities. FinCEAL has contributed to increasing the visibility of these institutions, the research taking place at the institutions, and the experts based in the institutions both nationally and internationally. Importantly, FinCEAL grants have served to fill gaps in existing funding for activities that directly support the work of the institutions, such as

<sup>8</sup> Approximate, as of August 2018.

partnership building, proposal writing, and interaction with policy. FinCEAL events and delegations have also significantly strengthened national networks among scientists working in specific fields with the target regions.

**Individual researchers** are the main beneficiaries of the FinCEAL Initiative. A majority of FinCEAL's activities directly support opportunities for researchers to initiate and develop partnerships with partners from the target regions, publish joint articles, prepare proposals for research funding, showcase their research and its outcomes, gain access to new data, influence policy processes, and to learn about relevant events, publications, and upcoming calls. Early career researchers have derived specific benefits from FinCEAL's targeted support activities which have facilitated their participation in strategic conferences and events that advance their careers and benefit their host institutions.

**The private sector** has also benefited from FinCEAL activities. FinCEAL has made a distinct effort to support cooperation between the research and private sectors in research and innovation. Private sector companies have been able to showcase their products and services in the target regions, including to policy makers in Finland and the regions, in ways that would otherwise be difficult. For example, FC+ Asia side events in China, Singapore and Japan have made it possible for "academic start-up" companies to establish new connections with potential customers and market their know-how in the region. Moreover, FinCEAL has created opportunities for the private sector to interact and form mutually beneficial partnerships with research actors in both Finland and the target region, bringing potentially huge benefits for the development of private sector activities and services.

The table below shows these benefits in another way, by identifying the main and secondary beneficiaries of each of the FinCEAL Initiative's services and activities. The beneficiaries included are: (i) Researchers, which refers to Finland-based researchers; (ii) Research partners, referring to partners of Finland-based researchers; (iii) HEIs and RI's, referring to Finnish institutions; (iv) Ministries and policy-makers, referring to Finnish governmental institutions; (v) Funding agencies, referring to Finnish public funders; and (vi) the private sector.



	Service / Activity	Description	Main Beneficiary	Secondary Beneficiary
1	Partnership Support Grants	An instrument providing holistic support throughout the different phases of partnership building by offering small-scale funding for building and maintaining the Finnish scientific community's research and innovation cooperation initiatives with their peers in the target regions.	Researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEIs and RI's</li> <li>• Research partners</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Travel Grant</li> </ul>	Bottom-up mobility grants to facilitate the participation of the Finnish research community in thematic conferences, networking meetings, international dissemination events, and other events strategic for strengthening cooperation with partners from the region.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event Grant</li> </ul>	Grants to support the planning and implementation of workshops, seminars, conferences, or other types of events related to the themes and science, technology, and/or innovation cooperation with Asia.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Visit Grant</li> </ul>	Grants for Finnish research institutions to invite partner researchers from the regions for short-term visits.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Preparatory Funding</li> </ul>	Grants to support the preparation of applications for research funding from EU funding schemes.		
2	Targeted Travel Grant	Top-down mobility grants to facilitate the participation of the Finnish research community in regionally significant science, technology, and innovation meetings, policy dialogue events, or scientific conferences, workshops, or networking events within the project's regional theme areas and pre-defined by the FinCEAL Initiative.	Researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministries and policy makers</li> <li>• Funding agencies</li> <li>• HEIs and RI's</li> <li>• Private Sector</li> </ul>
3	Thematic Networking Events	Events organized by the FinCEAL Initiative to facilitate Finnish researchers' networking and partnership forming with strategic partners from the target regions as well as to showcase Finnish expertise.	Researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research partners</li> <li>• Ministries and policy makers</li> <li>• Funding agencies</li> <li>• Private sector</li> </ul>
4	Infobank	A platform and database to increase cooperation, transparency, and information sharing among the Finnish research community and especially those working with Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.	Ministries and policy makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researchers</li> <li>• Research partners</li> <li>• Funding agencies</li> </ul>
5	Policy Contact Point	Expert advice on national and EU policies and processes to national and EU actors.	Ministries and policy makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding agencies</li> <li>• Researchers</li> <li>• HEIs and RI's</li> </ul>

6	Communication & Dissemination	Providing the Finnish scientific community with relevant information on the opportunities for collaboration, important policy processes, and relevant events of interest to the Finnish science community.	Researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministries and policy makers</li> <li>• Funding agencies</li> <li>• Private sector</li> <li>• HEIs and RI's</li> </ul>
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## *Means of Implementation*

The need for continuing the FinCEAL activities clearly exists; however, it is also clear that alternative arrangements could be designed for implementing these activities. Funding on a project basis is not ideal and the institutionalization of these activities could provide long-term funding that would allow for the strategic development of the FinCEAL activities. At the same time, a number of actors already exist within the national STI landscape who are already implementing activities related or similar to those that FinCEAL carries out. For example, EDUFI currently supports student and researcher mobility, most research organizations already provide funding for preparing proposals, MINEDU undertakes policy activities related to the bi-regional STI policy dialogues, and so on. Transferring the FinCEAL activities either as a whole or split between the existing actors could be one solution for making the FinCEAL activities more sustainable.

Moved as a whole, the FinCEAL activities could be placed in an organization that is already undertaking a number of activities similar to that of FinCEAL. This move would serve to support the work of the organization receiving the FinCEAL activities while also reducing the number of disparate actors in the ecosystem. Institutionalizing the activities into one actor would support the long-term planning and development of the activities, while also increasing the likelihood of the good coordination of the activities and achievement of the original aims. Despite these advantages, a few substantial questions, barriers, and disadvantages exist to this approach. The first question is whether this is even feasible. Each of the actors within the national STI landscape have a mandate that directs their activities. Do any of these organizations have the mandate to take the FinCEAL activities as-is? Would they want to? Beyond the question of feasibility, the issue of funding is still relevant. It is not a given that MINEDU would provide the organization with a larger budget (assuming they already receive their budget from MINEDU), and if not then funding for these activities would have to be taken from something else. More importantly, new institution's own aims and strategies could have an impact on the implementation of the FinCEAL activities, potentially changing the nature of the grants.

Moved in pieces, the FinCEAL activities could be separated and placed within the relevant governmental organization with a mandate to carry out such activities or with the universities themselves. As with the above option, this would serve to institutionalize the activities and reduce the number of actors. As the activities would be transferred to those organizations with a clear mandate to implement those kinds of activities, the organization would certainly have the right to undertake the work. Like with the previous option, this also poses some substantial questions, barriers, and disadvantages. The biggest issue with this option is the potential loss of coordination between the activities, as well as the loss or fragmentation of the expertise, tacit knowledge as well as national and international networks created within the Initiative so far. In the current framework, FinCEAL is able to implement the activities according to the strategic aims of the project and responding to the needs of both the stakeholders and the beneficiaries. Parcelling the activities and re-distributing them would almost certainly lead to the loss of this overall strategic coordination and know-how accumulated over the years.

## *The Implementing Actor*

The question over the means of implementation naturally leads to the question of who should be responsible for implementing the FinCEAL activities. Due to the nature of the Initiative, government actors are a natural choice. Yet, none of the government organizations would have both the same beneficiary and stakeholder community and the organizational mandate to implement these activities. If the FinCEAL activities were split, they could certainly be placed in organizations that would fit; however, such a move would risk significantly reducing the ability of the activities to

achieve their goals as well as the overall coordination needed to achieve the larger aims of the projects.

The universities, in particular the coordinating universities, are another obvious choice. Despite numerous efforts, the universities do not seem to be willing to take on the FinCEAL activities as part of their strategic institutional activities. The terms under which the strategic agreements are written between the universities and the ministries is vague enough that the universities can fulfil their agreement without taking any ownership of FinCEAL. It seems to be that the development of scientific partnerships with counterparts from Africa, Asia, and LAC are still not strategically important enough to attract the needed investment and attention from the universities. The same can be said for the policy work focusing on the bi-regional science policies. Unless there is a larger shift in the strategic orientation of the universities, they are not likely to institutionalize these activities. Moreover, the mandate for one university to carry out national activities and/or act on behalf of the whole Finnish scientific community is a large question without a suitable answer. While universities can potentially take on this kind of role as a center for excellence or as an institute tasked with national responsibilities, such a route would be complex.

It is indeed true that the national STI ecosystem is a complex one with many organizations undertaking different activities, with different needs, and a variety of beneficiaries. A table of activities undertaken in Finland related to STI is included below and highlights one aspect of this ecosystem. The FinCEAL Initiative, in many ways, sits in the center of that ecosystem by addressing existing needs of both its stakeholders and beneficiaries. Because the ecosystem is indeed so complex, FinCEAL will only ever be able to partially fulfill the needs of these different organizations and beneficiaries. Despite this, FinCEAL is also very much on the outside. As a project based in a university network, it does not have access to the internal information and processes that governmental organizations have, nor does it have the mandate that comes with being part of the government. However, being external to the government also allows the Initiative to respond to the needs of its beneficiaries and stakeholders, respond to requests, and implement activities in a fast, flexible, and agile manner. This would simply not be possible if implemented by a governmental organization or as a single university. As a network, UniPID is able to effectively mediate between the scientific and policy communities and undertake advocacy work to both communities. UniPID is also able to serve the larger scientific community, not only researchers or one university. For these reasons, it is hard to see another actor better able to implement the FinCEAL Initiative to fulfil the current and future needs of its beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Area	Activity	MINEDU	FORMIN	TEM	AKA	Business Finland	EDUFI	HEI's	FinCEAL
Policy	Participation in STI policy dialogues	✓							
	Policy comments	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Facilitating expert participation								✓
	Facilitating expert comments								✓
Research, Innovation, & Education	Research & innovation funding				✓	✓			
	Researcher mobility								
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For partnership building (including partner travel to Finland)</li> </ul>								✓
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For research or innovation activities</li> </ul>				✓	✓	✓		
	Research capacity building						✓		
	Teacher mobility								
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For partnership building</li> </ul>								
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For education cooperation</li> </ul>						✓		
	Funding for event organization								
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For partnership building</li> <li>For research, innovation, or education activities</li> </ul>				✓	✓	✓		✓
Funding for proposal preparation						✓		✓	✓
Networking	Side-event organization		✓			✓			✓
	Facilitating networking at policy events								✓
	National networking events organization	✓					✓		✓
Communication	Informing about relevant policies and dialogues	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Informing about relevant events	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Informing about relevant research, innovation, and/or education funding				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Informing about research, innovation, or cooperation projects					✓	✓	✓	✓

## V. Way Forward

There seemed to be a strong consensus amongst both the beneficiaries and the stakeholders interviewed that the FinCEAL Initiative provides important support for the Finnish scientific community, including the Ministries and other institutions supporting Finnish science, technology, and innovation. This conclusion was also reached in an external assessment conducted of the FinCEAL Initiative<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, this study finds that the aims and activities are still relevant in the current state of international scientific cooperation with Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Yet, the way forward is challenging, due in part to questions about who should fund FinCEAL and who it should implement it. This feasibility study cannot answer all those questions, but it can provide the basis for discussions about a future iteration of the FinCEAL Initiative.

Based on the results from this feasibility study, a strategy will be formulated using a two-tiered approach. The first is to re-approach MINEDU about the possibility for future funding of FinCEAL. The second is to approach key governmental stakeholders to consider jointly funding the FinCEAL Initiative. The strategy will clearly outline the activities to be implemented and suggest new activities that may provide further added value.

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<sup>9</sup> FinCEAL Initiative 2013 – 2018 External Assessment, Osaile Company

# Annex I: Interview Questions

## Beneficiaries

### INTERVIEWEE INFORMATION

- What is your position?
  - Which field and which FinCEAL theme, if any, are you involved with?
  - With which countries are you collaborating?
- How would you characterize your interaction with policy makers, funding agencies?
- What is your relationship with the FinCEAL initiative?

### RELATIONSHIP / FEELINGS ABOUT FINCEAL

- What FinCEAL activities are you most familiar with?
  - Are these useful? Could they be improved?
  - Are there other instruments that would add value?
- What FinCEAL instruments or activities have you found most useful for advancing your STI cooperation? What is lacking?
- Do you consider the FC+ thematic areas satisfactory from the point of view of the research community as a whole? If not, what is lacking?
- How do you think you or your institution has benefitted from FinCEAL activities?
- How do you think the scientific community has benefitted from FinCEAL activities?
- What do you feel has been missing from FinCEAL or has not been achieved?
- How do you view the role of FinCEAL funding in the larger framework of Finnish funding instruments for international STI collaboration?
  - How important is FinCEAL in this overall picture?
  - What will happen if these grants are no longer available?
- How do you see the role of FinCEAL in the larger STI landscape?
  - How does this landscape change if FinCEAL does not exist?
  - What will happen to the policy dialogue if FinCEAL does not exist?

### RESEARCH & COLLABORATION

- What is your motivation to collaborate with the focus regions of FinCEAL?
- What do you need in order to undertake research? Create and maintain international partnerships?
- What are the best ways to fund research collaboration with partners from the FinCEAL regions?
- What are the main opportunities in collaborating with partners from the regions?
  - What does Finland have to gain from partnerships with these regions?
  - What does Finland have to give to partnerships with these regions?
- What do you feel are the main barriers for collaboration with partners from the FinCEAL regions?
- What would you like to see happen on a policy or national strategic level that would support your collaboration with international partners?
- What do you feel would be the most important means of support to enhance your cooperation with the regions?

- If you suddenly had an unlimited amount of money and time, where would you allocate it to enhance your cooperation with the region(s)?

### **POLICY**

- How do you normally interact with policy or policy makers in your area?
- What is your motivation for interacting with policy or policy makers?
- What do you feel are the main opportunities for interacting with policy / policy makers?
- What do you feel are the main barriers for interacting with policy / policy makers?
- What do you feel would be the most important means for supporting interaction policy / policy makers?

## Stakeholders

### **INTERVIEWEE INFORMATION**

- What is your position?
  - Which field and which FinCEAL theme, if any, are you involved with?
  - With which countries are you collaborating?
- How would you characterize your interaction with the scientific community?
- What is your relationship with the FinCEAL initiative?

### **RELATIONSHIP / FEELINGS ABOUT FINCEAL**

- What FinCEAL activities are you most familiar with?
  - Are these useful? Could they be improved?
  - Are there other instruments that would add value?
- What FinCEAL instruments or activities have you found most useful for advancing STI cooperation? What is lacking?
- Do you consider the FC+ thematic areas satisfactory? If not, what is lacking?
- How do you think you or your institution has benefitted from FinCEAL activities?
- How do you think the scientific community has benefitted from FinCEAL activities?
- What do you feel has been missing from FinCEAL or has not been achieved?
- How do you view the role of FinCEAL funding in the larger framework of Finnish funding instruments for international STI collaboration?
  - How important is FinCEAL in this overall picture?
  - What will happen if these grants are no longer available?
- How do you see the role of FinCEAL in the larger STI landscape?
  - How does this landscape change if FinCEAL does not exist?
  - What will happen to the policy dialogue if FinCEAL does not exist?

### **RESEARCH & COLLABORATION**

- How would you characterize your interaction with the research community?
- What do you consider to be the most important themes for collaboration with the regions?
- What kind of input from the scientific community would be beneficial for your work?
- What are the main opportunities in collaborating with partners from the regions?
  - What does Finland have to gain from partnerships with these regions?



- What does Finland have to give to partnerships with these regions?
- What do you feel are the main barriers for collaboration with partners from the FinCEAL regions?
- If you had unlimited time and money, what kind of support would you design for enhancing collaboration with the regions?
- In your opinion, what is the best means for supporting collaboration (i.e. large projects, small grants, other?) with partners from the FinCEAL regions?

#### **POLICY**

- Do you think there is value in cooperation with the scientific community on STI policy?
  - If so, what is the specific value?
  - If not, why?
- How do you normally interact with the scientific community in relation to your policy work?
- What is your motivation for interacting with the scientific community?
- What do you feel are the main opportunities for interacting with the scientific community?
- What do you feel are the main barriers for interacting with the scientific community?
- What do you feel would be the most important means for supporting interaction with the scientific community?

#### **POTENTIAL PATHWAYS**

- What would be the ideal future funding for FinCEAL?
  - If the ideal situation is not possible, what would be a suitable alternative?
  - What would be the worst?
- If the FinCEAL activities had to be reduced to a few core activities, what would be the most important activities to keep?
- Does your institution have any opportunities for funding for the FinCEAL activities?
  - If yes, what are they and what is the timeline?
  - If not, do you have any suggestions for potential funding for FinCEAL activities+