

FinCEAL Initiative 2013 - 2018 External Assessment

Final draft

Abbreviations used

AKA	Academy of Finland
EDUFI	Finnish National Agency for Education
FC	FinCEAL initiative
FORMIN	Ministry for Foreign Affairs
HEI	Higher Education Institution
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
PI	Principal Investigator
RAG	Regional Advisory Group
SC	The Steering Committee
STI	Science, Technology and Innovation
TEM	Ministry of Employment and the Economy
UniPID	Finnish University Partnership for International Development

FinCEAL Initiative 2013 - 2018 External Assessment

First Draft Report

Summary

Finnish University Partnership for International Development (UniPID) and the University of Jyväskylä commissioned this external assessment of the FinCEAL Initiative. The FinCEAL has had three different project periods, each running for 2 years between 2013-2018. Finnish University Partnership for International Development (UniPID) has coordinated the FinCEAL Initiative which has been funded fully by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The FinCEAL (FC) has had three different project periods, each running for 2 years between 2013-2018. The first project period was named **FinCEAL** (2013-2014) and focused on Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), with a budget of 924 912 €. The second project period was called **FinCEAL Plus** (2015-2016) and Asia as a target region was added. The budget for the second period was 1 200 000 €. The third and still ongoing project period is called **FinCEAL Plus Continuation** (2017-2018) with a budget of 1 301 800 €.

The objectives of this assessment were to evaluate the achievements of the FinCEAL Initiative against its objectives and to assess its contribution to enhancing research and innovation cooperation with the target regions: Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The intended users and stakeholders of the assessment are the Ministry of Education and Culture (the funding agency), the UniPID network and its governing Board, the FinCEAL Plus Steering Committee and the broader scientific and science policy community.

Findings and Conclusions

The activities carried out by FC have been well targeted, relevant and effective. The focus and effectiveness of the activities has been developed over the different phases of FC to meet the needs of the scientific community and the changing Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) -environment. The grants provided by FC, i.e.: Event Grant, Open Travel Grant, PhD Travel Grant, Project Preparatory Grant, Research Visit Grant, and Targeted Travel Grant, have all been promoting the overall objectives of the project.

HEIs are not typically funding travelling to conferences or events, especially so for travelling outside the European Union region. FC has clearly found a niche, where the funding has made a huge difference. On the other hand, HEIs were happy to receive funding for building international networks, but they were not too keen to invest funds to these processes themselves, which meant that FC funding had even more importance. There has been no organisation to support the participation to the Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) -dialogue especially regarding 3rd countries, and FinCEAL was partly established to fill in this gap. Different institutions are quite active on the EU STI policies but focusing mostly on Europe. Participating to the policy dialogues was a challenge, since Finnish researchers are unaware of the science policy dialogues and processes between the EU, Africa and the LAC region. FC found out that they do not see direct linkages between the policies and research funding opportunities and are neither actively following nor seeking to participate in the policy processes.

International research funding is too competitive and there are easier ways obtain funding, which may explain the low number of proposals for EU -funded international projects. Project preparatory funding, networking events and research visit grants were all seen very helpful and supportive by those researchers who had utilised them. Ministry of Education and Culture objectives for the FinCEAL were somewhat at a different abstraction level if compared what the researchers need in practice. It is not possible for all researchers to work only with the best networks in the world, especially if the thematic areas and target regions have been set by the Ministry.

The FinCEAL Project Team has done exceptionally good work under constant pressure from unsure project -based funding, changing STI environment and lacking support from the coordinating universities. They have constantly developed the support mechanisms of the project and provided information for different ministries within very short time-frames. FC Project Team would have needed more concrete support for communication. The database InfoBank has been a good initiative but has not reached the objectives set by the project itself. This is mainly due to non-obligatory nature of the database and the lack of incentive for academics to feed in data from their projects.

The full cost -model used by the universities has drawn more than half of the budget away from the activities themselves. Grants have not been distributed evenly and the coordinating universities have benefited more than the rest. More attention should have been paid to the budgetary model of the project and promotion of nationwide support in terms of grants.

FC has succeeded in contributing to the internationalisation of Finnish academia. The first aim of the FC was to strengthen Finnish participation in and understanding of the EU science, technology, and innovation (STI) policy dialogues with the target regions. The tireless efforts and expertise of the FC Coordination Group have visibly been very effective in finding out about the possible events for policy dialogues and attracting Finnish experts participating to these events with the help of the targeted travel grants.

Participation for preparation of joint international proposals for funding for research projects or joint events has been the second objective for FinCEAL. It is clear that without the support from FC many joint proposals would not have happened at all. This is particularly the case when the researchers preparing joint proposals are not yet senior academics with an established position and funding possibilities.

Promoting awareness of Finnish expertise and know-how in the target regions has been the third overall objective for FinCEAL. In this the FC Project Team has achieved remarkable results considering the small staff resources of FC. The side events organised by FC have been good examples in promoting the know-how of Finnish research and expertise and have attracted experts from the regions. The cooperation with the Finnish Embassies and their STI counsellors is an example which could be a model which should be continued in the future.

Gathering and disseminating information on already existing Finnish cooperation and on new cooperation possibilities with the target regions was the fourth overall objective. The FC Project Team has organised numerous events for information sharing, provided a lot of information on their website and created and maintained the InfoBank, a project database. FC Newsletter has been published frequently and is being ordered by considerably large group of academics. Social media channels are also followed These have been successful and reached a large number of audiences.

FinCEAL has achieved amazing results especially if we keep in mind that the project has had first only two and later three fulltime coordinators. The number of grants provided, the number events organised, the amount of information and policy briefs shared etc, have been very impressive. Interviewed stakeholders have recognised that FC has made Finnish research community visible in the target regions and have been able to effectively organise side-events where researcher and other participants have been able to meet.

FinCEAL has clearly contributed to the internationalisation process of Finnish scientific community. At this stage it is difficult to say what has been the overall impact of FC in the internationalisation process due to complex and diverse nature of international co-operation in academic research community. However, FC seems to have found a role where there is a gap in certain parts of the processes of international co-operation.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has announced that changes in funding of FinCEAL are ahead. There is a strong feeling among the interviewees that the FC Coordination Group has gathered a unique construction of knowledge and expertise related to the target areas of FC. It would be a great loss if this expertise would disperse and disappear without continuation.

1. Introduction

Finnish University Partnership for International Development (UniPID) opened a call for tenders to perform an external assessment of the FinCEAL Initiative. The FinCEAL has had three different project periods, each running for 2 years between 2013-2018.

The objectives of this assessment were to evaluate the achievements of the FinCEAL Initiative against its objectives and to assess its contribution to enhancing research and innovation cooperation with the target regions: Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The intended users and stakeholders of the assessment are the Ministry of Education and Culture (the funding agency), the UniPID network and its governing Board, the FinCEAL Plus Steering Committee and the broader scientific and science policy community.

The specific objectives of this assessment were to look to answer the following questions:

1. How has the project contributed to the internationalization process of the Finnish scientific community?
2. How has the process evolved and what has been learnt, and how has it contributed to the stated objectives?
3. How relevant and effective have the activities been?
4. What results have been achieved? (effectiveness, impact, cost)
5. How could things be done better in the future?
6. Are the results sustainable?

The Assessment has been conducted using a combination of methods. The documentation provided by UNIPID/FinCEAL Core Group has formed the basis for the qualitative content analysis. The findings are based on the interviews and desk study of the materials provided by FinCEAL core group. These materials include official reports by FC (interim and final reports for the first two phases and interim report for the third phase), feedback from grantees gathered by FC, impact booklets done by FC, statistics of grants given, and financial reports. The semi-structured interviews with the project management team, beneficiaries (scientific community), and stakeholder groups (e.g. representatives from the Steering Committee Meeting, funding agencies and/or ministries) were conducted either by the UniPID Project Manager, UniPID office or the assessor. The assessor met with the UniPID/FinCEAL Core Group in Jyväskylä in April for discussions and interviews. An additional group of 10 beneficiaries were selected from the list grantees by the end of 2017. The selection was conducted by using randomising tool¹ after grantees had been organised in alphabetical order.

FinCEAL is not a development project *per se* but can be seen having similar features due to focus regions and the role of STI in development agenda at least in Africa. UniPID is coordinating FinCEAL and the mission of UniPID is:

¹ <https://www.random.org/>

*"UniPID is a network of Finnish universities, which supports the strategic global responsibility objectives of Finnish universities. UniPID strengthens and advances the interdisciplinary education, research and societal impact of universities on global development."*²

The methodology used, and questions designed for the Assessment have been modified from DAC/OECD evaluation principles, which are commonly used for evaluating development assistance. Modification is necessary due to the nature and limited scope of the Assessment and the fact that FinCEAL is not a development project. So-called results chain -approach³ has been modified for the purposes of this assessment. Based on the ToR and FinCEAL -documentation the input, activities and outputs have been assessed based on the data collected for the assessment. What comes to outcome and impact (following the DAC/OECD descriptions), it is seen very difficult to assess or evaluate these within the budgetary framework and planned schedule for this assessment. Some achievements of the project can be seen as outcomes of the project.

Input is here seen as the financial, human and possible material resources used for the FinCEAL Initiative. **Activity** consists of actions taken or work performed through which inputs, such as funds and other types or resources have been used to produce specific outputs. **Output** is formed from the products which in this context could be for example, scientific articles, networks, publications, project proposal, partnership agreements which have resulted with the support of the Initiative.⁴ The OECD/DAC Glossary defines outcome as *"The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs."*

However, as the Ministry for Foreign Affairs points out in their guidelines for Results Based Management *"The short and medium-term outcomes, however, may in addition to the direct effects of the project also be a consequence of factors beyond the control of the project, i.e. the outputs contribute to the outcome."*⁴ This is the case also with FinCEAL. To determine what has been the amount of contribution of FinCEAL to the possible outcomes is already more complicated. However, some attempts are made to this direction, keeping in mind the limitations that this study has no means to assess the other possible factors which may have affected to the possible outcomes of FinCEAL. This could mean, for example, all the other inputs and activities by the HEIs, UniPID, different ministries, individual members of academia, etc., for achieving the same goals FinCEAL has had.

² http://www.UniPID.fi/en/page/12/UniPID_strategy/

³ Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management. OECD/DAC. 2010

⁴ Results Based Management (RBM) in Finland's Development Cooperation - Concepts and Guiding Principles. Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2015.

The following presents the agreed timeline for the Assessment.

Timeline for FinCEAL Assessment

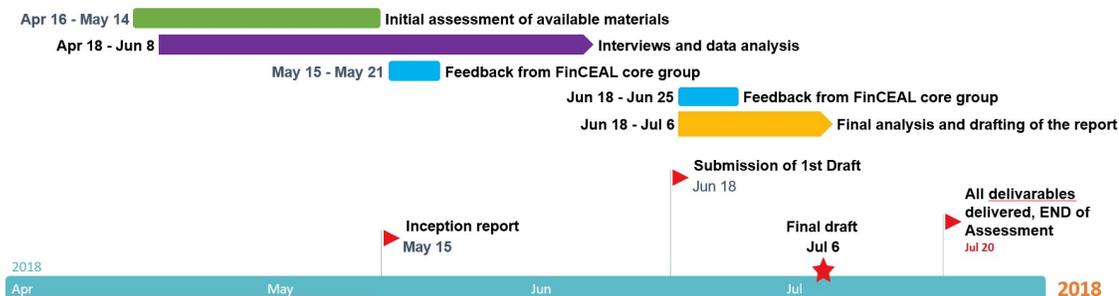


Figure 1. Timeline for the Assessment

2. Overview of the FinCEAL initiative

Finnish University Partnership for International Development (UniPID) has coordinated the FinCEAL Initiative which has been funded fully by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The FinCEAL (FC) has had three different project periods, each running for 2 years between 2013-2018. The first project period was named **FinCEAL** (2013-2014) and focused on Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), with a budget of 924 912 €. The second project period was called **FinCEAL Plus** (2015-2016) and Asia as a target region was added. The budget for the second period was 1 200 000 €. The third and still ongoing project period is called **FinCEAL Plus Continuation** (2017-2018) with a budget of 1 301 800 €.

The UniPID coordination unit, which is housed at the University of Jyväskylä, has coordinated the overall effort for FC. University of Jyväskylä has also coordinated the Africa component, University of Helsinki has coordinated the LAC component and University of Eastern Finland the Asia component. The project employs three coordinators and some funds are also allocated for the UniPID Project Manager’s salary. However, the universities pay the salaries of the PI’s and there is no contribution from the project for their salary. The aims of the FC have developed from the initial plan and in the current (the third) phase they are to:

1. Strengthen Finnish participation in and understanding of the EU science, technology, and innovation (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.

The project has had a Steering Committee in all three different phases. The chairmanship of the Steering Committee has changed in each project period. In the first period of the

project, the Chair was the Academy of Finland; and in the second, Tekes was the Chair. Currently the Steering Committee includes representatives from the following organisations:

- Universities Finland UNIFI (Chair),
- Academy of Finland (Vice-Chair),
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs,
- Ministry of Employment and the Economy,
- Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (ARENE),
- Tekes, (From 1.1.2018 Business Finland)
- Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI, invited to join the Steering Committee as a new member for the 2017-2018 project period), and
- Ministry of Education and Culture (observing member).

During the first phase the project formed Regional Advisory Groups (RAG) for the Africa and the LAC components and later also during the first Asia phase. The RAGs consisted of between 5 to 11 senior researchers from different Finnish institutions who are experts in one or several thematic focus areas of the project. Thematic areas to which the support of FC has focused have been defined in the EU bi-regional STI dialogues for each of the regions:

- Africa: Food security, Health, Climate Change, Renewable energy and Information Society;
- Latin America and the Caribbean; ICT, Bioeconomy, Renewable Energy, Health, Biodiversity and Climate Change and Sustainable urbanization;
- Asia: ICT, Food security, Health, Cleantech, Renewable energy, Water management, Nanotechnology.

The original idea was to use the RAGs regularly during the project. However, the RAGs were mostly used as a group in the first phase and later they developed into networks of experts which the regional coordinators have been using according to their needs, meeting either virtually or individually with the RAG members. The organisational structure is described in Figure 2.

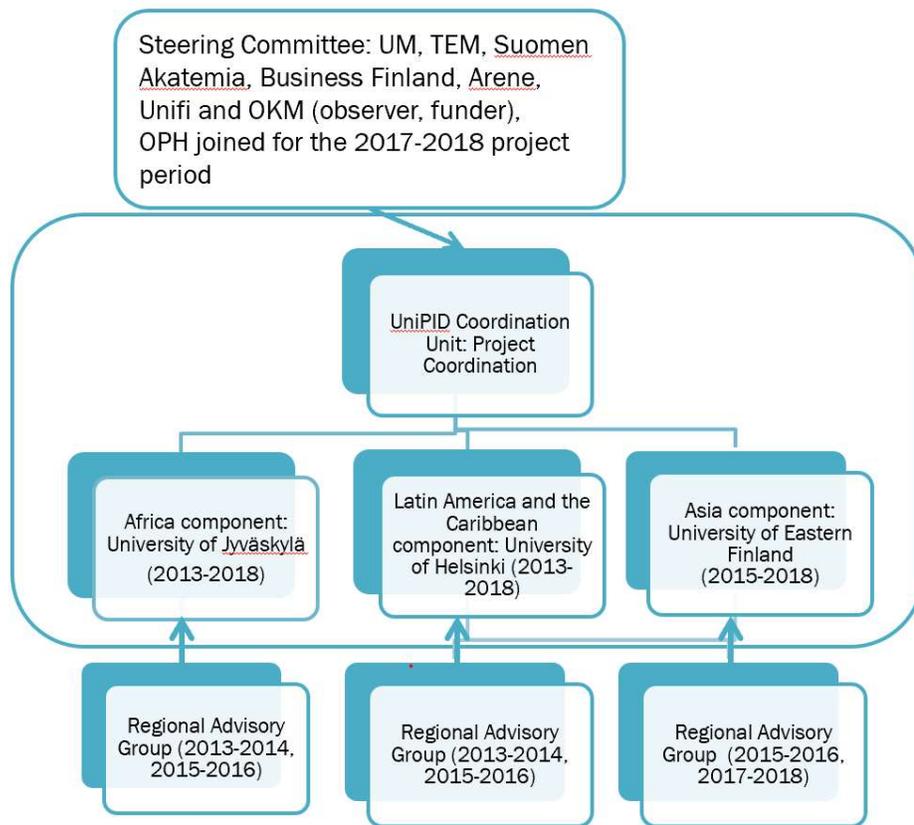


Figure 2. The organisational structure of FinCEAL (provided by the FC)

FinCEAL has carried out large variety of activities in all three phases. The activities included in the first and the second phase included travel grants for members of academia to travel for events, meetings or conferences. FC also provided grants for research teams to prepare applications for EU-funding. FC has organised networking events and provided grants for organising events. FC has created and managed InfoBank -database, providing information about projects carried out by Finnish institutions focusing on or with partners from FC target regions. FC has also acted as a policy contact point for stakeholders providing expertise on national and EU policies and processes connected with the target regions of FC. In the third phase FC introduced "Partnership Support Instrument", which consolidated several activities undertaken in the previous FinCEAL projects – namely, the Event Grants, Open Travel Grants, and Project Preparatory Grants – and added a new activity – Research Visit Grants – to provide holistic support throughout the different phases of partnership building.

3. Key findings and conclusions

This chapter discusses the key findings of the assessment and brings in also the conclusions made by the assessor. The chapter is organised so that it answers the main questions set in the ToR for the assessment, however the titles have been modified from the original questions.

3.1 FinCEAL Activities and their Relevance, Effectiveness and Cost

The activities carried out by FC have been well targeted, relevant and effective. The focus and effectiveness of the activities has been developed over the different phases of FC to meet the needs of the scientific community and the changing Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) -environment. One issue which would require a longer time perspective to assess is the continuity and sustainability of the activities started with FC support. To evaluate the continuity would require data collection from the home institutions of the academics and the academics who have been supported by the FC.

Open Travel Grants

The Open Travel Grants have been an important form of support towards the objectives of FC. Altogether FC has awarded 167 Open Travel Grants by the end of 2017⁵. 22% of the funding for different types of grants or 165406 € were used for Open Travel Grants. 62 of these grants were for PhD -students, which is a remarkable support for the PhD -students, who normally have more difficulties in obtaining external funding. The Open Travel Grants were in practice funding for travel to attend events, conferences or meetings relevant to the FinCEAL objectives and themes. Applicants, who were individuals from HEIs of research institutions identified the events themselves and justified their participation through an open call process.

The interviewed grantees point out that the HEIs are not typically funding travelling to conferences or events, especially so for travelling outside the European Union region. FC has clearly found a niche, where the funding has made a huge difference. This is something to consider for future, since there are no obvious funding sources for this kind of scientific travel if you are not in a specifically funded project directed to the target regions of FC. As one of the interviewed grantees said:

" nowadays especially when we have a lack of funding from the university to go to conferences or visit universities, especially outside the European Union, the travel grant is amazing." Beneficiary

The benefits from the Open Travel grants, which were typically relatively small amounts, can be huge. Most of the grantees who have answered either to the follow-up questionnaire sent by the FC or in the interviews have stressed the fact that they have continued the co-operation started with FC funding. In many cases the networks formed with the support of

⁵ Data provided by the FC in 19.4.2018

FC had already or were at least planning to submit funding proposals to various funding mechanisms, as the following quotations demonstrate.

"So the FinCEAL funding has provided opportunities to meet and networking and getting to know each other and we have prepared now two applications hoping to get the funding that would be in educating and networking in topic of X⁶." Beneficiary

"We have already started apply new H2020 project with X Partners X. We are also planning new proposal submission for h2020 X call on August 2016" Beneficiary

One thing to keep in mind is that most of the networks formed seem to have been of the interest of an individual academic, and only part of these networks involved many academics from the Finnish institution and were part of the institutional strategy. In other words, the HEIs were happy to receive funding for building international networks, but they were not too keen to invest funds to these processes themselves, as one of the interviewed beneficiaries points out.

"It was a great thing to have such a mechanism to support this type of collaboration when actually the university itself were very happy to have external collaboration, international collaboration, not only external to the university as locally but also external to the university as internationally. So, they were very happy to do it but there was no funding for it." Beneficiary

Targeted Travel Grants

The Targeted Travel Grants (N=914) have been the main focus for FC in terms of funding spent during the three phases. More than one third, 37% of the funding for grants, or € 282070 has been used for this purpose. The funding has been directed for travel to attend events or meetings relevant to the FinCEAL objectives and themes, with a focus on policy relevance. The FinCEAL team identified the events and grantees were selected either through targeted call processes or based on their specific expertise. The main reason for this intensive focus was coming from the Ministry of Education and Culture, which has been funding the project. MEC felt that since there was no organisation to support the participation to the Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) -dialogue especially regarding 3rd countries, FinCEAL was established to fill in this gap. Different institutions are quite active on the EU STI policies but focusing mostly on Europe. As one of the interviewed stakeholder phrased when asked about the role of FC:

"The increase of interest and knowledge of Finnish researchers. Visibility and role in the EU -dialogues - there are no other actors in Finland who could have taken the same role as FinCEAL in the EU STI -dialogues - by participating actively to discussion and workshops etc." Stakeholder

⁶ Names of institutions, countries or specific research topics have been replaced with X to protect the anonymity of the interviewed persons.

MEC wanted to ensure Finnish input into the dialogues and in this way also support the internationalization of Finnish research community.

"There have been a few public consultations for example on future EU funding programmes. Being able to respond to that a bit more comfortably or with a bit more background knowledge is possible when you've attended those events..." Beneficiary

The above quotation tells about the intended outcome, where an academic has utilised the background information gained by participating to the policy dialogue. However, in most cases, those individuals who were participating the events seemed to think that mostly they had gained by networking and not so much by understanding or participating to the policy dialogue. This was one of the results gathered by FC from the grantees after their travel. As the FC team writes in the final report for the first phase:

"It quickly became clear that most researchers in Finland were unaware of the science policy dialogues and processes between the EU, Africa and the LAC region. They did not see direct linkages between the policies and research funding opportunities and were neither actively following nor seeking to participate in the policy processes." (FinCEAL Final Activity Report, 16)

Some interviewed felt that participation to policy dialogue should not even be the aim for researchers, but instead:

" I think that it would be nice that if somebody else is representing me for example in EU and figuring out the next research areas in the next 20 years or so. So, I think it might not need to be me personally. And in that sense again FinCEAL as a representative in these issues is great." Beneficiary

The interviewed beneficiaries felt largely that the policy making -level is very distant to their own everyday work. Some also told that it is difficult to understand the policies and especially the variation different Finnish ministries seem to have in their policies. This must have an effect on the willingness to commit oneself to a policy dialogue -meeting, since time is also an issue for researchers.

"And they all [different ministries] have their own agendas and sometimes it's really difficult to kind of even understand where they're coming from. I know we now have Team Finland which is kind of supposed to group everyone together. But I'm not convinced from a research perspective where policy-wise we are. What is Finland's policy, what is Finland forwarding?

Except though, enhancing exports. Because that seems to be the message right now, whenever there is a Team Finland delegation going somewhere. They're advocating through exports and not that much for research collaboration, which can hurt research."

Preparatory Funding: Grants were issued for teams to prepare an application for EU research funding. Teams were selected through an open call process. In total, 21 Preparatory Grants have been awarded, amounting to € 90695, this being 12% of the total amount of funding. When thinking about the time-span of five years, the awarded 21 grants

does not seem much. There are probably many reasons for this, since the interviewed beneficiaries clearly had mixed feelings about the possibility for receiving this kind of grant. Some of the beneficiaries clearly saw this as something that the universities do not normally fund, and welcomed the FC -funding warmly:

"I think the first time in my career I was able to get some professional help for a couple of months besides my research duties and teaching and everything, so I was able to put there many figures and administrative stuff." Beneficiary

On the other hand, many of the interviewees expressed concern about the difficulty of applying for EU-funding, naming the Horizon 2020 -programme as an example. The interviewed researchers also indicated that since EU-funding is very competitive they are not willing to put in the effort for applying because there are other, easier ways for getting funding. The third reason could be that the HEIs have their own priorities, and it looks like the geographical regions supported by FC may not be on top of the list for many of the HEIs in Finland.

"And for me in my situation it's not something that's I would say critical for me to get a Horizon grant, there are easier I would say research funds available to my area than Horizon, so in that sense the FinCEAL grant preparation hasn't been useful to me at all." Beneficiary

"...the competition with for example the horizon 2020 and those kind of funding is so demanding that we don't have much of resources to prepare those kind of funding documentation." Beneficiary

Networking events

FinCEAL has organized or supported the organization of networking events in the themes of the project, as well as info sessions and training events. Events were organized both in Finland (national networking) and in Europe and the regions (international networking). International stand-alone events and side-events have been very important in increasing visibility of Finnish expertise internationally and in the regions.

FC has received practically unanimous appreciations from the research community both for organising and supporting networking events. The motivation for organising and supporting the networking events has been to support and facilitate the creation of new networks for scientists and disseminate information on funding and other issues related to cooperation with the regions. One of the aims of the project has also been to enhance the Finnish scientific community network locally. FC has also gathered information and feedback from scientists for continuous development of projects activities.

"The joint funding helped us meet a university in X [country]. 1.5 years later, our department is benefiting from this facilitation. Local experts from the X [university] have visited Finland, and we have submitted 3 project proposals, getting better and better each time. A

partnership has already been formed, and we believe that a long-term partnership can be formed. This would not have happened without FinCEAL+ and its networks." Beneficiary

Building networks takes time and this has also been noted by the interviewed beneficiaries. Some of the interviewed beneficiaries felt that this is not properly understood by the funding organisations which normally would not continue to fund the build-up of a same network for many years.

"I'm really grateful for it, I have really built an amazing network of people which now we are having proposals for EU CELAC for example. But these networks didn't happen over one or two years, actually it has been continuous work over several, four or five years now. Um so there has been, there needs to be investment from it and that is to build these types of things, this type of relationship. And that has been the main role of FinCEAL so far." Beneficiary

Many of the interviewed academics also felt that one needs to have a strong motive to work with the FC target regions. In some cases, it is a question of the location and the specific area of research and/or of partnering with the local scientists, who may have the best knowledge of the area of research. The only possible way of doing trustworthy research is to partner with locals, as the following quotation demonstrates.

"And they have because they are natives, of course they have different kind of knowledge of their ecosystems and they can really tell us what is going on. For example, in the X so if some laws or if the laws are working or not because there's X happening all the time. They know. They just know better. And if we are just here, studying X, we just cannot neglect the views of people who know what is happening in the country no matter what the official reports are telling us." Beneficiary.

The next quotation shows, that the Finnish researchers or institutions cannot just go and choose whatever they want to do and with whom. This can be seen, in the worst case, as a colonial act.

"... people, as they're getting more aware of their rights and trying to push away from this kind of colonial outlook are being a bit careful about what information they want to share, what data they want to share. And that they need to be recognized as full partners, real partners. So it's not a case that "we go to country X and then do the research there" but we actually do participate in equal footing." Beneficiary

There is also a dilemma, since FC objectives have been targeted to certain regions, but at the same time at ministry level, the objective should be to work only with the best. What if the best ones do not want to work with Finnish researchers or institutions, but with those ones they consider to be the best? In many cases the Finnish HEIs and individual researchers may not be the best in their field. It is also unclear how these "the best" are defined and who would have the capacity to do that?

"What we have been now formulating, in the vision work for example, is that the Finnish researchers should be involved in the best networks. That's the kind of precious, the most advantageous networks." Stakeholder from ministry.

Event Grants were introduced with the LAC Research Visit Grant Pilot Call at the end of the first phase in 2014, and based on the positive experience from that call, Event Grants were introduced for all three regions in the second phase 2015-2016. Some 13% or 100950 euros of the awarded funding has gone for the 32 awarded Event Grants. Event grants were mostly used to arrange events with an aim of strengthening existing partnerships between the Finnish institutions and their partners. According to the feedback gathered FC, most of the funds were used in the practical arrangements of the events and supporting the travel costs of the speakers. Researchers reported the benefits of organizing the events as important in kick-starting the process of planning joint projects with participants, but also in maintaining the existing partnerships and disseminating research results.

"The event enabled us to present the lessons learned from previous projects and elaborate new possibilities for upcoming research and capacity building calls. It also enhanced current partnerships as new members of the teams were able to join the event. The seminar provided significant insights on local needs and priorities for upcoming projects and supported a more equal and balanced cooperation. The Finnish research activities in the X region and X are, sadly, diminishing due to reduced funding, and thus it is crucial for the key actors to maintain contacts and cooperation there." Beneficiary

The FC Regional Coordinators have also received informal feedback from the researchers that the maximum amount of the Event Grant, which has been 4000€, has been considered to be too small. This may have had an effect on the amount of applications for this grant type.

The Partnership Support Grants

In 2017-2018 the Partnership Support Grants -instrument was introduced as a new instrument, which consolidates a number of activities undertaken in the previous FinCEAL projects – namely, the Event Grants, Open Travel Grants, and Project Preparatory Grants – and adds a new activity – **Research Visit Grants** – to provide holistic support throughout the different phases of partnership building. Research Visit Grants were also piloted by the LAC component in a pilot call in 2016, and based on the positive response, implemented in the continuation phase. 11 Research Visit Grants have been awarded, which is 5% of the total grant funding. These funds offer a more flexible approach for supporting partnerships, with the aim of increasing the number of consortia applying for external funding. This approach puts into context the horizontal nature of the support that FinCEAL has been offering to the research community, from partnership building to proposal writing.

"It's so difficult these days to get travel money because universities don't have their own travel money for inviting researchers or having their own researchers travel." Beneficiary

" I also got funding from FinCEAL to invite people from Latin America to come to visit us in Finland. Which was excellent opportunity from a reciprocity point of view. So, um we have visitors from Brazil, Chile and Mexico for one week at XX, to meet other you know teachers and staff and so on at XX and then meet each other and talk about applications and teaching and teacher mobility and these kinds of things. And we established this network and we have WhatsApp groups and so forth." Beneficiary

The following Figure 3. Provides an overall picture of the proportion of different grant types provided by the FC.

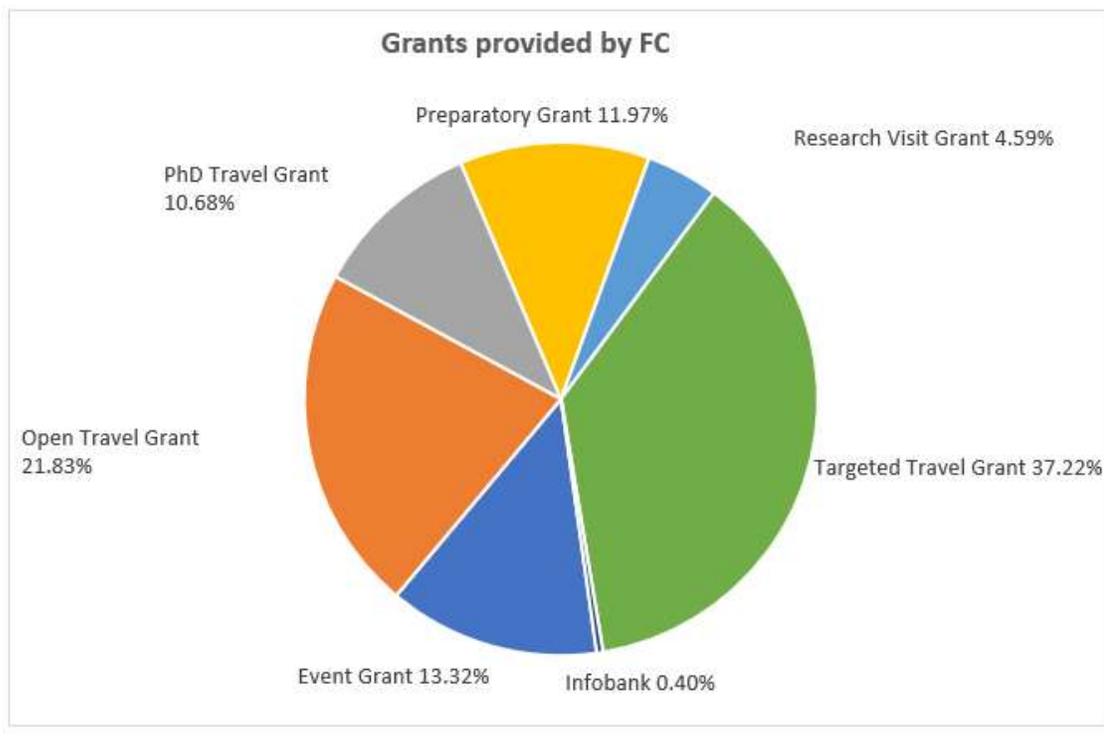


Figure 3. The Grant types provided by the FC

Policy Contact Point

One of the tasks for FC has been to serve as a mediator for providing expert advice on national and EU policies and processes. Many of the stakeholders commented that FC has been a good "in-between" player, acting between the ministries and the academic researchers and HEIs.

" Well where you have the most impact and where you are filling the niche nobody else is, else is wanting to invest on." SC representative

The work has taken various forms, including commenting on or compiling policy documents and policy briefs, organizing and participating in policy-relevant events, disseminating information on policy processes and gathering researchers' input and identifying experts and issuing Targeted Travel Grants for them to attend policy events. As one of the interviewed SC member said:

"I utilise the knowledge of the (FC) Regional Coordinators almost on daily bases. For example, the regional information about research cooperation are at my disposal with a very short notice, know-how and friendliness. I have also been able to communicate the Government priorities to projects in preparation?" SC Member

However, there were also critical voices about the role of FC in this respect. One of the interviewed SC member phrased it the following way:

"I feel somehow that the ministry is sort of outsourcing part of the work that they should be really doing by themselves to FC." Steering Committee representative

The above quotation can be seen justified based on the analysed material. It seems that the Ministry of Education and Culture needed FC since it doesn't have enough personnel resources to take care of the duties delegated to FC. On the other hand, the "in between" - role of FC has also meant that FC has been without a proper home organisation, which would have been able to give a stronger mandate for the FC. This has influenced for example, the reach and visibility of FC within the research community in Finland.

InfoBank

FinCEAL established a multidisciplinary online database of projects carried out by the Finnish research community focusing on or with partners from Africa or the LAC region. The aim of developing the database was to gather together Finnish institutions projects in and on Africa, Asia and the LAC region. There are 207 projects registered currently. FinCEAL has organised regular campaigns and other activities to increase the visibility of the database and to gather new projects into the database. The FC Project Team is currently planning its development to include info on experts working in and on the regions and thematic areas of FC.

"I believe InfoBank is a useful platform, but in truth I have not used it much myself. I visit it occasionally and quite randomly. A limitation of platforms is that while they create transparency, this access to information does not yet translate into concrete actions. Could InfoBank perhaps be marketed more and join forces with other universities communication channels, to make it more potent as a platform?" Beneficiary

The InfoBank is generally seen as a useful resource, especially for the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Regional Coordinators as well as for the UniPID Project Manager. However, it has been growing very slowly, and the FC coordination Group has also recognised the challenges in attracting more researchers to feed data about their projects into database. It seems that during the first phase more projects were fed into the database than after that. Some of the projects have been going on for a long period of time, which explains the timespan of the InfoBank starting from year 2000. If we look at the newest projects in the database, as an example, the Academy of Finland funded 13 research projects for development research February 2018. All of these projects will work

⁷ Translation from Finnish to English by LP.

in the target regions of FC, but only one has fed in information about the project to FC InfoBank.

"But then for the dissemination information, I think that can be done in, I think it's very important that there are, there is a coordinated effort, that is doing sort of this dissemination that maybe nobody else is doing in such a coordinated way of creating these partnerships and creating possibilities for partnerships. Now whether this is best done through creating an Infobank, I'm not sure, but the coordinated effort is the thing that I appreciate, that there is a person thinking that how do we, if this is the objective that we want to achieve, how do we achieve that in the best and most efficient way." SC representative

The InfoBank has raised mixed feelings also among the FC Project Team. It is seen as good resource, but there is no way the project could increase the input of data from researchers, as long as this is completely voluntary. In terms of the input (especially the time resources) used for developing the InfoBank, it is somewhat questionable whether this has been efficient use of resources, especially since there are only a handful of ongoing projects listed in the database. The idea is excellent, but FC has not had powerful enough mandate to invite or force researchers to provide information to the database. However, this problem is not unique to FC - even all of the three coordinating universities have developed their own separate research databases. Considering that all of these institutions are mainly funded by the state, it certainly looks a waste of resources that this jungle of databases is being developed and maintained without any integration and cooperation.

The following figure 4. shows the number of projects (start date) per year in the InfoBank database since the year 2000.

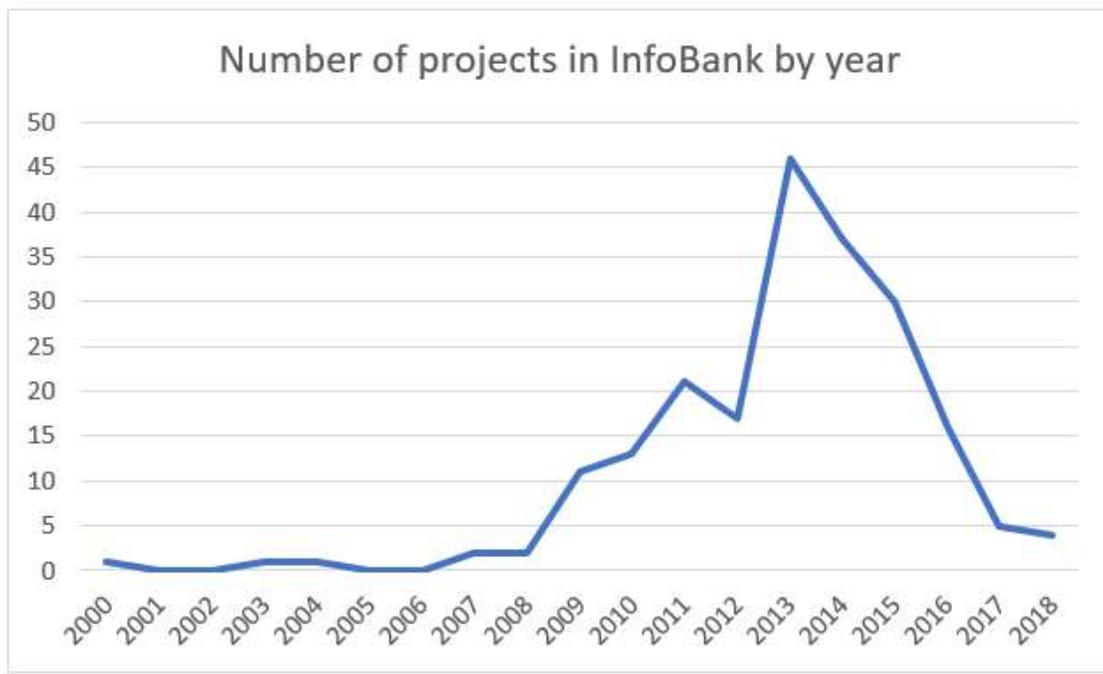


Figure 4. Number of projects (by start date) in the InfoBank database (Total N= 207)

Communication

Communication has been one of the tasks of the FinCEAL in order to facilitate Finnish researcher's partnership forming in the project regions. The Project Team has been developing communication practices continuously and successfully. Nevertheless, communication was one area in which the FC Coordination Group would have wanted to have more support, possibly in form of special communication person for the project or communication support in some other form. The communication could have been, for example, supported by the coordinating universities, which has not been the case.

Communication process received also some criticism from outside the FC Project Team. FinCEAL communication efforts may not have always been coordinated with other organisations promoting similar objectives, for example, internationalisation of Finnish researchers, as one stakeholder pointed out.

"... because maybe there's possibilities for joint communications other than just somebody forwarding on a mailing list also, because when you mentioned X, she has a tendency of just forwarding everything, and then that has a bit of a chaotic effect to it. So when you actually coordinate communications and make it effective and it's, it could have a different kind of impact." Stakeholder

Once again, it feels like the FinCEAL has been the victim of its "in between" -role also in terms of visibility and reach of the communication. If it would have had a stronger mandate and more integrated resources with more visible national level -organisations, it could have also had a better reach.

Costs

The budget of FC has grown for the two later phases if compared to the previous phase, but this is mainly due to adding the new regional component, Asia. Activities of FinCEAL as such, i.e., the grants, events organised etc, have been according the plan, timely and cost-efficient. In some cases, parts of the planned budget lines have been transferred to fund other actions, but these have all been according to the overall objectives.

One observation is that the coordinating universities have been using extremely high models for calculating the overhead from the project budget. In the first two phases the universities used the Full Cost Model which meant that overhead percentages were calculated from the personnel costs. The University of Jyväskylä used an overhead rate of 90%; the University of Helsinki, 128%; and the University of Eastern Finland, 89%. In the current phase University of Jyväskylä is using a 30% overhead percentage from the overall costs, University of Helsinki is using 46,24% overhead percentage and the University of Eastern Finland is still using the Full Cost Model with an overhead rate 81%.

It is clear that when considering the small amount of funding available for the project in total, and the type of initiative where expensive equipment or infrastructure from the universities was neither needed nor provided, these kinds of overhead percentages, i.e., usage of the

Full Cost Model, have meant a huge loss for the researchers both from Finland and from the target regions. It seems that a larger portion of FC funding has been spent on the coordinating universities than on the actual activities of FC. When adding to this the fact that researchers from the three coordinating universities have received 27,25% (€ 206525) of the awarded grants, the unavoidable conclusion is that FinCEAL has been a very profitable project for the three coordinating universities and in some of them, especially for the departments where the Regional Coordinator has been placed. ⁸

This seems to follow the common practice of the Finnish universities and it has been seen problematic by governmental authorities. The National Audit Office of Finland has audited the state funding for universities (VTV 2018) and pointed out problems related to the full cost -model funding with the following notion:

"The starting point with the full cost model is determining all the costs arising from a project. The model includes the risk that research funding is used to fund expenses that the state has already funded by means of core funding." (VTV 2018, 26).

Distributing the coordination of FC to three different host universities has been both problematic and beneficial. It seems that the FC Coordination Group has had to face several issues concerning the infrastructure of the daily management of the project. Different universities have their own IT -infrastructure, own financial management structures etc. The physical distances between the three coordinating universities have created a challenge which has demanded an extra effort from the coordinators to overcome. This has evidently caused loss of resources both in terms of time and finances. On the other hand, distributing the coordination to three different universities has meant that the outreach and networking with the scientific community has been better than if all the activities had been concentrated in one university.

The distribution of grants has some issues when examined more closely. Table 1. Shows that 25,66% of the grants have been given to researchers who have received multiple grants. Still, more interesting fact is that this 25% has received 45,39% of the total funding awarded. The biggest sum received by one researcher is €23308.86, which consists of 11 separate grants. This raises questions about the possible exclusive nature of the funding mechanism. Those who have received funding have been re-applying and have been funded more and more. In terms of sustainable network building or research project preparation this have been an excellent opportunity for these few active researchers. On the other hand, if we consider the objective of internationalisation of Finnish scientific community, the spread may not have been as wide as it could have been.

⁸ It should be clarified, however, that coordinators and PI's have not participated in the evaluation of applications coming from their home department, because of the conflict of interest. All such applications have been sent to be evaluated by another regional component to ensure a fair treatment to all.

Total number of grants	427
Total number of grant receivers	304
Number of single grant receivers	226
Number of multiple grant receivers	78
Percentage of multiple grant receivers	25.66
Number of grants for multiple receivers	201
Percentage of grants for multiple receivers	47.07
Percentage of funding for multiple receivers	45.39

Table 1. Distribution of grant and funding

One topic to be discussed is the relatively large number of distinguished professors among the grant receivers. This is partly explained by the fact that FC has organised side events in the target regions, and senior academics have been needed as speakers in these events. It is true that sometimes the presence of senior academics is needed to foster the cooperation, as one of the interviewed beneficiary stated:

"Yeah for me like a senior professor it means that in some occasions I need to be there to convince some of the collaborators, some of the stakeholders of the consortium to hop in, in a way." Beneficiary

Event, Preparatory and Research Visit grants are typically not used by an individual, but instead they are given to a team, which is led by professor. Nevertheless, these distinguished professors should be able to get funding from their own institutions if they and/or their home institution decides that their presence is needed for promoting their home institutions research and funding proposals. During the project there have also been differences with regions on the amount of senior academics receiving funding.

All of the above observations are based on budgetary reporting which has also been delivered to the Ministry of Education and Culture. There is nothing in the data suggesting that any of the above-mentioned cost related issues would have raised any concern within the MEC.

3.2 How has the project contributed to the internationalization process of the Finnish scientific community?

There are number of different aspects where FC has succeeded in contributing to the internationalisation of Finnish academia. The first aim of the FC was to strengthen Finnish participation in and understanding of the EU science, technology, and innovation (STI) policy dialogues with the target regions. The tireless efforts and expertise of the FC Coordination Group have visibly been very effective in finding out about the possible events for policy dialogues and attracting Finnish experts participating to these events with the help of the targeted travel grants. The promotion of expert participation to policy dialogue by a short-term project is, to say the least, short-sighted in terms of sustainable development of Finnish participation in international policy dialogues. Influencing to global or EU-wide policy

discussions takes time and would require continuity both in terms of funding and stable, recognisable organisational structures.

The policy dialogue participation by researchers -objective has a fundamental unsolved challenge: What is the incentive for an individual researcher to participate to policy dialogue when the result indicators for the universities do not recognise this type of activity at all? The same ministry (MEC), which expects academic to participate to policy dialogue, measures only the number of academic degrees, scientific publications, and the speed and effectiveness by which the university students acquire credit points and degrees as indicators for success when deciding about the funding for the universities⁹. At a more general level a question which should be discussed is whether inviting individual, often randomly selected, academics to EU -level policy dialogue makes sense? The beneficiary feedback indicates that it is difficult to connect the high-level policy dialogue (abroad) with the everyday work of an academic. It is not only in EU or global context where this is seen difficult, but also domestically. There seems to be very little connection between academics and Finnish decision makers, as one of the interviewed ministry representatives says when asked about connections with scientific community:

"Well, it depends very much. We don't actually have that much of straight connections. 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 organising some kind of...the themes of some disciplines have these regular meetings with some of...well in some disciplines, but not even in all."
Ministry representative

The grants provided by the FinCEAL have been in key position to promote the internationalization process of the Finnish scientific community. All grantees seem to be very satisfied with the opportunities that the funding has provided. Many reported that they had made good contacts, new networks and were preparing future co-operation with partners from the target regions. Grantees reported also that they have continued co-operation with their partners from the target regions in various ways. It is also possible, that the reach of the project support may have been somewhat random, based partly on information obtained by word-of-mouth from one academic to another.

To highlight one grant form specifically, the individual travel grants for researchers in their early academic career, where funding possibilities are scarce and highly competed, have obviously had a great effect. This support for young researchers or researchers at an early stage of their academic career (PhD -students and post-doc students) can be seen as much more influential in the internationalisation process of Finnish field of science than that of funding experienced professor or their equivalents, who would get funding from other sources anyway.

⁹ State budget for universities 2018
<http://budjetti.vm.fi/indox/sisalto.jsp?year=2018&lang=fi&maindoc=/2018/aky/aky.xml&opennode=0:1:11:259:687:741:755:>

Developing the Partnership Support Instrument into a Rolling Call for applying grants in 2017 has enhanced the effectiveness of FC in supporting the participation possibilities of Finnish scientific community. The grantees have commended FC for simple, easy and effective grant application and award process.

Participation for preparation of joint international proposals for funding for research projects or joint events has been the second objective for FinCEAL. Preparing funding proposals is both costly and time-consuming. It is clear that without the support from FC many joint proposals would not have happened at all. This is particularly the case when the researchers preparing joint proposals are not yet senior academics with an established position and funding possibilities.

Promoting awareness of Finnish expertise and know-how in the target regions has been the third overall objective for FinCEAL. In this the FC Project Team has achieved remarkable results considering the small staff resources of FC. The side events organised by FC have been very positive experiences, and that could be a model which should be continued in the future. In some cases, the side events organised by FC have opened up huge opportunities.

"But decided to go for it and join in and that was a really really good decision because the entire side event in the way it was planned gave so much publicity to our work and I ended up getting a lot of publicity through that. Um which has really um propelled a lot of the activities that I'm doing in X [country] right now." Beneficiary

For researchers this has also created opportunities and not only in the target regions but also in Finland, as the following excerpt demonstrates.

" So, in terms of getting visibility for what is actually required for example when you want to do collaboration with X [country] or Y [country] FinCEAL has facilitated that by enabling me to go to an event which addresses both issues. But also in some of the FinCEAL events that have been organized here. It has been a forum where you might get some presentations but also some discussions but that allow you to sort of have better visibility on what are the key needs and research questions." Beneficiary

Gathering and disseminating information on already existing Finnish cooperation and on new cooperation possibilities with the target regions was the fourth overall objective. The FC Project Team has organised numerous events for information sharing, provided a lot of information on their website and created and maintained the InfoBank, a project database. These have successful and reached a relatively large number of audiences. The newsletter¹⁰ has over 600 subscribers and it has been published 43 times at the time of the assessment. FC has a LinkedIn group with almost 200 members and it utilises UniPID Facebook page which has more than 1100 followers.

FinCEAL has achieved amazing results especially if we keep in mind that the project has had first only two and later three fulltime coordinators. The number of grants provided, the

¹⁰ http://www.unipid.fi/en/page/233/finceal_plus_newsletters/

number events organised, the amount of information and policy briefs shared etc, have been very impressive. Interviewed stakeholders have recognised that FC has made Finnish research community visible in the target regions and have been able to effectively organise side-events where researcher and other participants have been able to meet.

FinCEAL has clearly contributed to the internationalisation process of Finnish scientific community. At this stage it is difficult to say what has been the overall impact of FC in the internationalisation process due to complex and diverse nature of international co-operation in academic research community. However, FC seems to have found a role where there is a gap in certain parts of the processes of international co-operation.

3.3 How has the process evolved and what has been learnt?

The objectives of FinCEAL have been somewhat refined during the three phases of the project. The first phase of FC included a revision of original objectives and then further on, FC Plus and FC Plus Continuation phases have seen consolidation and refinement of the overall objectives. New funding modalities have been added along the way and application and feedback processes have also been developed continuously. The visibility of FinCEAL has also increased over time and it has been recognised as an important international player by many stakeholders. Flexibility and readiness to develop the project has been a key element of FC over the years.

As one of the coordinators phrased:

"...based on lessons learnt from the different project phases and deeper understanding of how to strengthen the cooperation with the regions, we introduced new funding modalities and evaluation processes. We also intensified our international presence by organizing more events and building networks in comparison to the 1st phase where we concentrated on making the initiative known locally." FC Coordinator

The first phase of FC included a lot of development work done by the regional coordinators and the UniPID Project Manager. During the first two phases the UniPID Project Manager was involved in the evaluation process of grant applications, alongside the regional coordinators and their respective PI's. Due to increase in numbers of applications and workload connected to that when the Asia component was added, the regional coordinators have taken care of the grant processes with their respective PIs. This has evidently cleared the division of labour between the regional coordinators and the UniPID Project Manager, which may have been slightly overlapping and sometimes unclear during the first phase of FC.

It is clear from the data available that FC activities have been based on the objectives of the overall initiative. They have also been consistent throughout the three phases, though evolving on the way based on the experiences from previous phase.

During the first FC phase the regional coordinators established Regional Advisory Groups (RAG). However, the RAGs were mostly used in the first phase and later they developed into networks of experts which the regional coordinators have been using according to their

needs. The network of experts -model is obviously the most useful way of benefiting from the existing expertise in Finland.

The role of the Steering Committee has also been discussed in many of the interviews. The Steering Committee has apparently not steered or guided the FC Coordination Team, but instead the meetings have been more about the FC informing the SC of projects advancement and result. This information sharing is naturally important, but maybe it should have been mutual and not only from the FC to SC. It seems that the role of the SC has not been very clear, as one of the interviewees reveals when asked about the SC:

"I see them like a bit of a political stamp. ...'You need a queen so that you can say to have a monarchy' -kind of thing."

It is evident, that the kind of work FinCEAL has been doing, should not be project -based. Instead, it should have a clear institutional status, which would ensure continuity and build-up of knowledge base. It would also give more weight to the efforts of the expert team in relation to other funding agencies, HEIs and governmental organisations. To mention just a few characteristics of the FinCEAL Project Team, the beneficiaries have applauded them for innovation, expertise, flexibility and friendliness. The team has build a unique knowledge base and know-how, and it would a be great loss for Finland if this collective expertise would be lost. As one of the SC members phrased it:

"I hope that this fabulous group of experts finds new tasks in the next phase of FinCEAL, tasks which could pave way for the next level of open, international and globally responsible Finland." Ministry representative

3.4 Are the results sustainable?

There are different aspects of sustainability which have to be considered when thinking of the whole project period. Personal and institutional networks and other international academic connections made with the support of FC will sustain variably. Many of the networks created have already developed so much that they can continue to collaborate with some other funding. This depends a lot on the readiness of the individual academics and their success in obtaining funding from various sources. Many interviews indicate that sustainable networks have been created with the support of FC. With these networks, external funding is no the only requirement for sustainability, but it certainly plays a big role. Most likely a big part of academic cooperation created with the support from FC will continue and sustain through personal networks of researchers. Organising joint events, offering travel or research visit support is already more of a challenge and there is a strong feeling that the kind of support FC has provided does not exist elsewhere.

A lot depends on the strategic decisions taken and funding provided by the HEIs and other organisations which have been represented in the SC and their willingness to invest personnel and financial resources for the kind of activities FC has been supporting. At the moment it seems that these organisations have no inclination to contribute to the

continuation of FC in its current form since it is not in the core of their strategic goals and/or in one of the areas where they are focusing their research resources.

MEC has been funding FinCEAL from the Veikkaus lottery surplus for the advancement of science -funding source. The use of this funding was recently evaluated, and the report was published in 2018. The evaluated period included also the funding decision for FinCEAL+. The report concentrates mainly on beneficiary organisations which are established organisations and receive several types of funding. This leaves out FinCEAL project as such, but the report also discusses the principles and processes of funding provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture. One conclusion from the report seems to fit also FinCEAL funding:

"From the beneficiaries' point of view, the funding does not serve as an incentive or guidance instrument, because the results of the funded activities are not directly linked to the level or continuity of funding." (OKM 2018, 14)

This may also reflect a challenge connected to FC. The coordinating universities, or even the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (ARENE) and Universities Finland (UNIFI), could possibly invest more to the sustainability of FC if they would see more permanent structures and support existing for FC than the current two-year project cycle.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has said that they cannot continue to fund FinCEAL from the same funding source anymore. At the same time, they have also indicated that they would like to see a continuation to FC in some form or another, so the future of funding remains unclear at the time of writing of this assessment. MEC has set priorities for internationalisation:

"The first one is the enhancement of higher education and research collaboration. And this is the networks, this is the mobility issues, these are the research projects, participating in H2020. All these issues. Then the second one is actually talent attraction. We are now in the situation where we must, we have to see that where we can find the people who are willing to come to Finland, work here, even for some time. And then get the connections and then linking. And the third one is the education export." Ministry representative

It is difficult to avoid a conclusion that out of these three priorities education export is becoming more and more important¹¹. Education export as such has very little to do with the priorities of FC, and this may be one reason why the Ministry is not willing to continue funding FC. Ministry has also established the Team Finland Knowledge Network to boost education export. This reflects a paradigm change in Finnish educational thinking, where

¹¹ https://kauppapolitiikka.fi/markkinat/kiri-kiri-koulutusvienti/?utm_source=Kauppapolitiikka&utm_campaign=e3645073d7-Kauppapolitiikka_2018_03_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a19b51e52e-e3645073d7-297009829

exports could be replacing cooperation and higher goals like the Sustainable Development Goals¹² or global responsibility.

There is a strong feeling among the interviewees that the FC Coordination Group has gathered a unique construction of knowledge and expertise related to the target areas of FC. It would be a great loss if this expertise would disperse and disappear without continuation.

3.5 How could things be done better in the future?

Although it is yet unclear what will be the future for FC, this chapter tries to point out some issues which should be considered for the future.

One of the characteristics of FC has been the world-wide focus of the project. This has been both beneficial and challenging. With a relatively small funding and very small number of staff, the project has covered huge geographical regions with a very diverse scientific communities. Wide geographical coverage and large thematical scientific areas have enabled researchers from very different institutions and from very different scientific interests to receive support. On the other hand, this may also have spread the efforts of the FC Coordination Group somewhat too widely. The overall objectives set for the project could be considered for future and the decisions about whether to focus more precisely to certain thematic areas or certain smaller geographical regions, or broaden the scope and focus of the project, should be done. This should be considered in the future and maybe the stakeholders represented in the Steering Committee could discuss this within their respective organisations. It could be beneficial to include the academic community, funding agencies, ministries and political decision making -level into this discussion.

Another issue which could be considered further in the future is the wide array of activities FC has supported. It seems that the project team has been extremely efficient, productive and a lot of the success of the project is due to their commitment and energy. However, reorganising some of the functions and support schemes could be helpful in the future. It could be helpful if communication and information sharing would have dedicated resources both in terms of funding and personnel in a project with this large geographical and topical coverage. The database should be linked automatically to the university research databases. This should probably be a part of a larger change where research databases would be linked through open surfaces so that an individual researcher would only need to feed in information about research project once.

The role of the Steering Committee and the role of the coordinating universities are issues that should be discussed in the future. The Steering Committee could take more active role and become a forum where participating organisations not only hear about what the project has achieved, but where they themselves actively share and discuss about possibilities to enhance the common, shared objectives and find ways for more cooperation in these efforts. The organisations represented in the SC could also make sure that the role of FC

¹² <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

is clearly visible and recognised in their own respective organisations, including funding mechanisms, communication strategies, databases, information events etc. Since FC has been providing support in situations where other funding has not existed, it would seem natural that SC member organisations would like to map out the niche of FC funding and link it more visibly to their other funding schemes. One possibility could also be that the Team Finland Knowledge Network efforts and FC efforts could be more interlinked and coordinated in the future. All of these actions could possibly help FC to get a stronger mandate for its tasks.

Based on the assessment it seems that the coordinating universities have not fully adopted and utilised the FC Coordination Group and the network of FC. The host institutions should actively take ownership of the work and integrate the objectives into their own strategies and decision-making processes. At the same time, all HEIs have an international office or similar organisation promoting internationalisation of their own institution and academics. Efforts should be made to include FC to the internationalisation strategies and actions of all HEIs. Currently there seem to be big differences between universities in relation to promoting possibilities offered by FC. Depending on the future solutions for FC funding, one possibility would be that HEIs would recognise the needs of FC and link the needed funding to their own respective funding mechanisms, utilising the network and expertise that FC could provide.

A discussion about possible changes in some of the tasks of the possible future initiative should be considered. For example, several of the interviewed persons feel that especially the policy dialogue is an activity area which should be the responsibility of the relevant ministries, not a project funded initiative.

"I mean it can be delegated to them, it can mean OKM or someone else can say that ok you go and represent Finland and you, you know, you have the mandate to do this and that, but at the end of the day it is the ministries that have that role. But that's also a problematic situation if we outsource that to a project, even though you've done a really good job, you know, it's not sustainable in the long term. And I mean probably there then the ministries would need to become more active themselves in their international engagement." SC representative

This is another area where the expertise of current FC and the expertise established within the Team Finland Knowledge Network could create synergies. Team Finland Knowledge Network experts will work at the Finnish Embassies and will create their own networks in their respective regions. However, they may lack the connections and networks to academia, which FC has created and is constantly updating. Business Finland and FC efforts could also be more coordinated, since at least at times there have been some challenges, as one of the coordinators points out:

"This is also why on occasion it has been challenging for FC to ensure the best possible synergy between different institutions for certain activities, including events. FC hasn't been considered as a "Team Finland player" and it has often been difficult to get timely information about activities that could have been relevant for FC to participate or contribute in." Regional Coordinator

The most crucial issue for future would be to form a long-term strategy for reaching the overall objective of the current FC. Sustainability is not built by two-year projects and the short time-span of funding cycles only challenges the use of personnel resources, when a considerable time of the project staff is spent on reporting the previous work or planning the next funding application. Another issue to be solved in the future is the funding for the UniPID Project Manager, which has been based on extremely short contracts by the University of Jyväskylä. The UniPID support is obviously important for FC also in the future, although FC is not limited to support only UniPID member institutions.

Considering all this, the FinCEAL Initiative has been a success story in terms of providing support for internationalising researchers in Finland and in providing strategic support for maintaining and enhancing the cooperation between research and science policy communities in Finland, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

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Annexes:

ToR of the Evaluation

List of documentation used

- FinCEAL, FinCEAL Plus and FinCEAL Plus Continuation funding applications and funding decisions
- FinCEAL, FinCEAL Plus and FinCEAL Plus Continuation Interim and Final reports and Impact Booklets
- Feedback from the grantees gathered by FC
- Steering Committee interviews conducted by the UniPID Project Manager and UniPID Office
- Beneficiary interviews conducted by the UniPID Project Manager and UniPID Office
- FinCEAL web pages

Interviews conducted by Leo Pekkala

Kajsa Ekroos, Coordinator (FinCEAL LAC)

Eva Kagiri, Coordinator (FinCEAL Africa)

Jarkko Mutanen, Coordinator (FinCEAL Asia)

Melissa Plath, Project Manager, UniPID

Timo Tokola, Professor, University of Eastern Finland

Pekka Virtanen, Science Advisor, University of Jyväskylä

Tiina Vihma-Purovaara, Senior Ministerial Adviser, Ministry of Education and Culture

Ten beneficiaries contacted for interviews, only one responded and will not be identified here for the sake of anonymity.