



OPETUS- JA KULTTUURIMINISTERIÖ

Team Finland Knowledge (TFK)

PRETORIA (SOUTHERN AFRICA)

Veera Virmasalo 28.3.2025

Team Finland Knowledge

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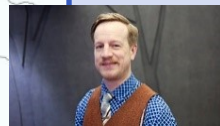
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Contracts until:

2026 UK, USA/WAS

2027 USA/LA, LaM, India,
South Africa

2028 China, Singapore

Objectives of Team Finland Knowledge network

1. Promote understanding of changes in higher education, research and innovation policy in the host country/region
2. Promote cooperation and partnerships
3. Make Finland more attractive to international talent



❖ 17 countries

❖ Combined
population ca.
400 million

❖ 67–46% of the
population is
under 25 y.o.
(Cf. Finland
27%, EU
29,5%)

TFK Pretoria – geographic and thematic focus

”Southern Africa” (Southern African Development Community SADC +Rwanda)

- **Geographic focus** on South Africa + countries where Finnish HEIs have partnerships / interests.
- **Thematic focus** from STI policies (regional, national, Finland, EU), and Finnish HEI interests. For example, in South Africa:
 - Engaging Finnish and SA HEIs in “**Team Finland**”
themes: Critical raw materials and mining, digital transformation (esp. AI), water security and water in circular economy
 - **Other key themes from embassy work**: Higher education development; history and peace building – with innovation and inclusivity as crosscutting themes
 - **AND YOUR THEMES** 😊



❖ 70 publicly funded HEIs, numerous private institutions.

❖ High inequalities (between people, between HEIs)

Current issues in higher education

In the broad "Southern Africa" area covered by TFK

- **Access.** Ca. 4–6% of population with bachelor's degree, 1% with master's. Large youth cohorts > digital "solutions" and remote platforms needed
- **Quality.** Societal impact, worklife relevance (of HE degrees & of HE in lifelong learning in other sectors), decolonization
- **Funding.** Inadequacy of domestic government funding (max. 0,6% of GNP), dependency on foreign funding problematic, pressure *and interest by HEIs* for increased private sector funding.
- **Networks.** Great interest in collaboration with other African countries, South-South collaboration.



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Strengths in higher education

In the broad "Southern Africa" area covered by TFK

- **Large youth cohorts.** 67–46% of the population is under 25 y.o. (compare with Finland 27%, EU 29,5%)
- **Diversity.** Languages, contexts, views, actors
- **Number of strong research universities** (esp. in SA – but please engage also with formerly disadvantaged HEIs)
- **Panafrikanism and decolonial thinking.**
- **Strategic location for research.** (Biodiversity, mineral wealth, social transformation processes, resource-scarce environments with potential for unexpected innovations)
- **Internationalisation (incl. diasporas)**



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When developing partnerships

Some ideas

- [UniPid ethical guidelines for responsible academic partnerships with the Global South](#)
- In identifying partners, consider:
 - Mutual interest
 - Time and resource constraints on both sides
 - Inequalities (formerly disadvantaged HEIs)
- In planning,
 - Responsiveness and active listening (do not assume – ask and have a dialogue until there is a mutual understanding)
 - Who gets to move?



Recent expressions of interest to collaborate

South Africa

- [Technological Higher Education Network South Africa THENSA](#) (greetings to JAMK and TAMK!)
- University of Johannesburg / [Qatar-South Africa Centre for Peace and Intercultural Understanding](#)
- [Tshwane University of Technology](#) AI hub (greetings to Haaga-Helia and Aalto!)
- [University of Venda](#) International Office (greetings to HAMK!)

Other countries in the region

- [National University of Lesotho, Faculty of Education](#)
- Botswana High Commission Education Attaché on vocational teacher training, higher education mobility ([Botswana HEIs](#))



PLEASE DO STAY IN TOUCH!

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