



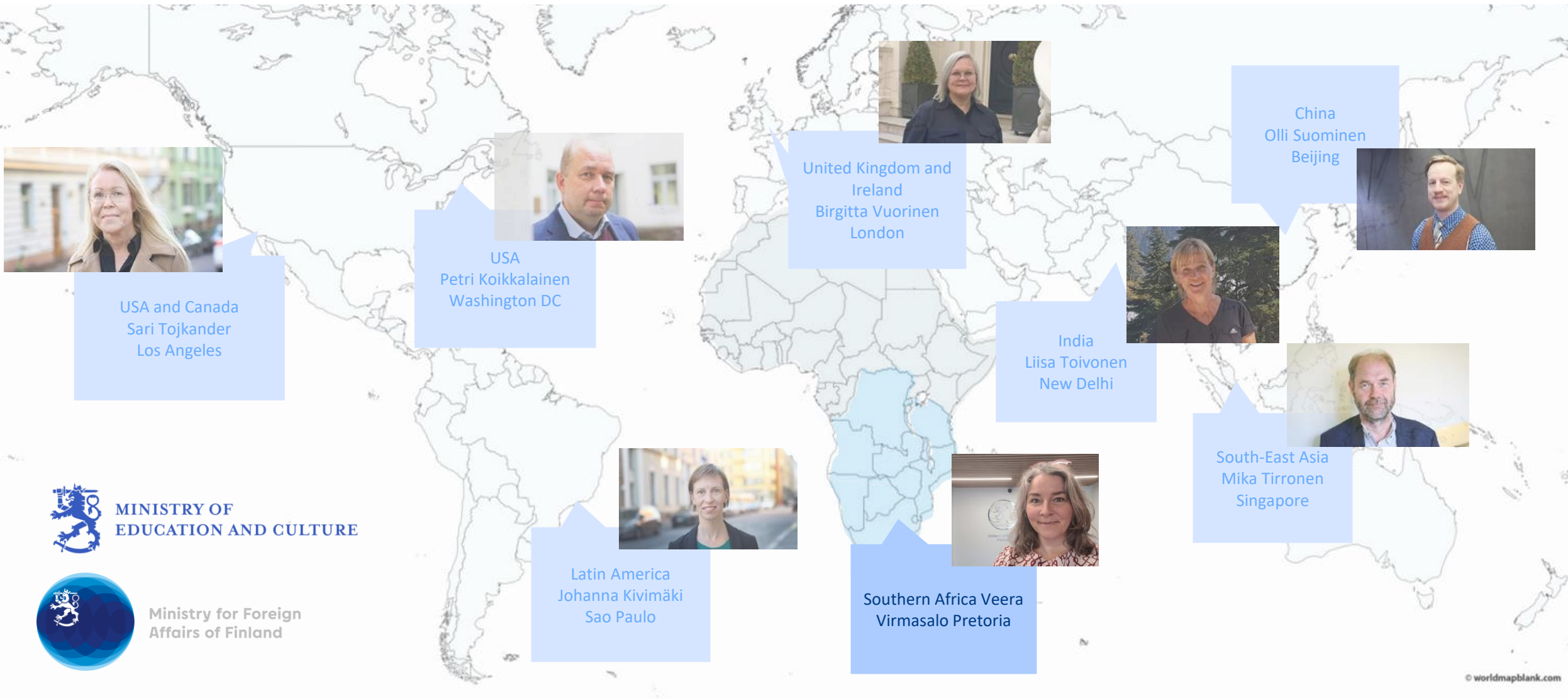
Team Finland Regional Perspective to HEI ICI & HEP Evaluation report

Veera Virmasalo
Higher Education and Science Counsellor
Embassy of Pretoria (South Africa)

3.10.2025

Team Finland Knowledge Network

8 higher education and science counsellors stationed at Finnish embassies around the world



What strengths and challenges do you see/agree with?



STRENGTHS

- Past collabs > Relationships between colleagues
- Moving from “development” mindset to mutual interest as academics and HE administrators?
- Strong “selling points”, incl. worklife relevancy
- New types of funding opportunities

CHALLENGES

- Guarding and making use of the **core duties of higher education institutions** (research, teaching, societal engagement ... academic freedom) **in the context of new types of funding**
- Scarce funding for collaborations is a clear challenge for **education & science diplomacy**

Which measures could be taken to improve the situation?



- Identify and explore **new funding opportunities**, mindful of HEI core duties. Share experiences with others. **Nurture existing connections.**
- Drive to **understand other stakeholders** in multi-stakeholder initiatives
- Keep on **communicating the HEI perspective**
 - Core duties
 - Academic freedom
 - Interests – what is possible and meaningful for HEIs and what not?
 - HEI strengths (“package” existing partnerships to demonstrate quality and scale)
 - Concretise, concretise, concretise

Not quite "New type of funding" but...

TF brings together all Finland's public internationalisation services.

Presence on the continent through Finnish embassies, who have identified certain key thematic areas.

Explore if alignment with **Team Finland key areas** is a possibility (> networks, "real-world" applications, some embassy working time, publicity)

Team
FINLAND

Namibia (Angola) :
Responsible mining, renewable energy and cleantech, circular economy.

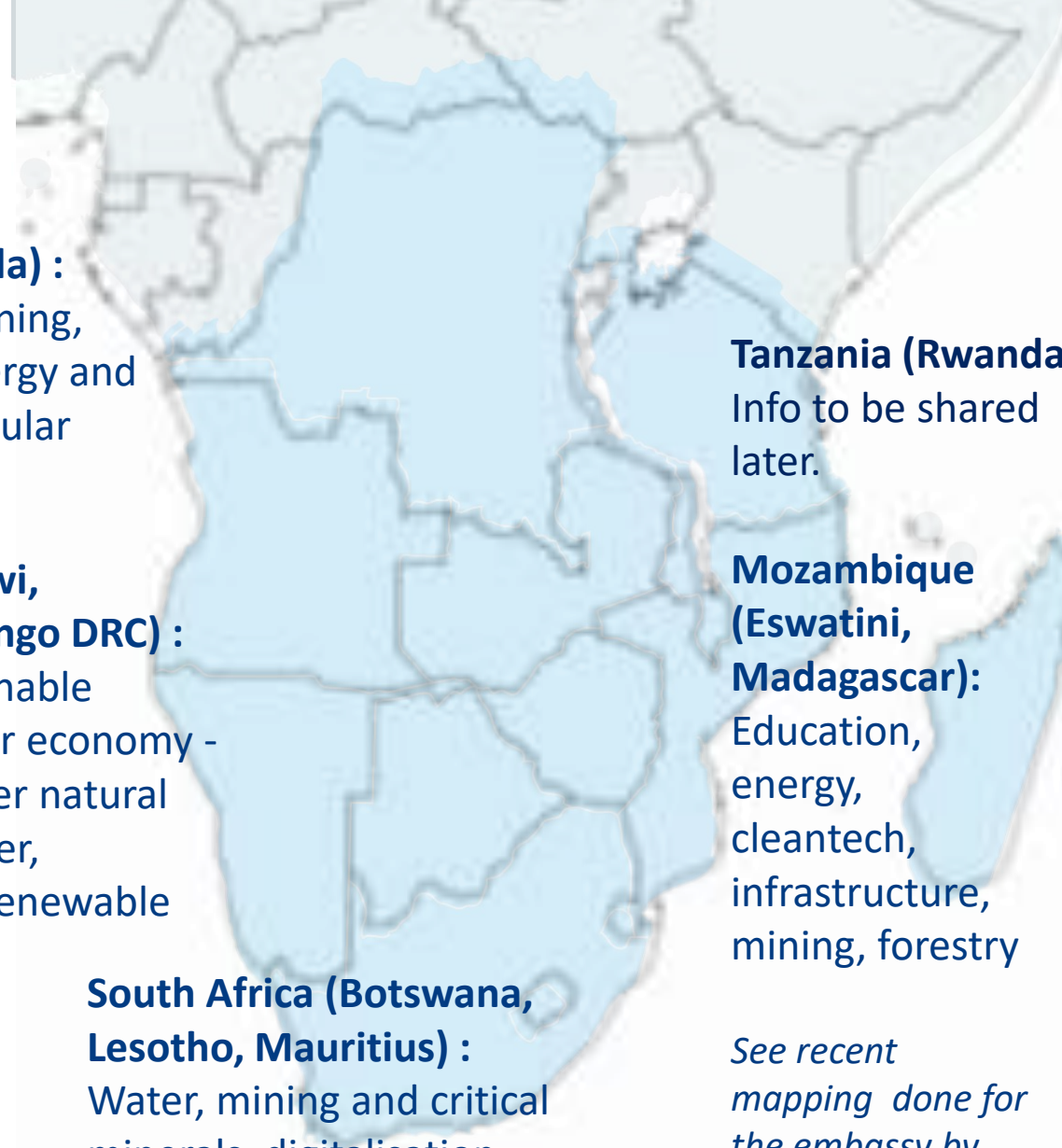
Zambia (Malawi, Zimbabwe, Congo DRC) :
Smart & sustainable mining- Circular economy - Forestry & other natural resources (water, meteorology, renewable energy)

South Africa (Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius) :
Water, mining and critical minerals, digitalisation. Crosscutting: green solutions and innovation.

Tanzania (Rwanda)
Info to be shared later.

Mozambique (Eswatini, Madagascar):
Education, energy, cleantech, infrastructure, mining, forestry

See recent mapping done for the embassy by Raisa Venäläinen & Co.





“New types of funding” current examples

- [Rise to Challenge](#) by Business Finland. DL 31. October. A total of EUR 30 million for 5-10 projects. Finnish focus but could entail international collaborations.
- [Finnish Digital and Green Transformation \(FDGT\)](#) project secondments through HAUS. Secondment of digitalization experts from Finland to public sector organisations on the African continent. Max. 6 months. Should link to potential future business collaboration.
- [Joint Innovation Facility \(JIF\)](#). EU funding, implemented by GIZ and Finnish HAUS. Amendable for private sector – HEI collaboration. Especially female-led companies? Call opens early 2026.
- [Global Gateway Africa](#) – embassies have their ears out for HEI opportunities (let me know if anything specific...)



Please let me know

- What kind of support do you need?
- Who would like to be involved in conceptualising a proposal for “South Africa – Finland dialogue”
- Veera.virmasalo@gov.fi



Thank you & please keep in touch!

Veera.virmasalo@gov.fi