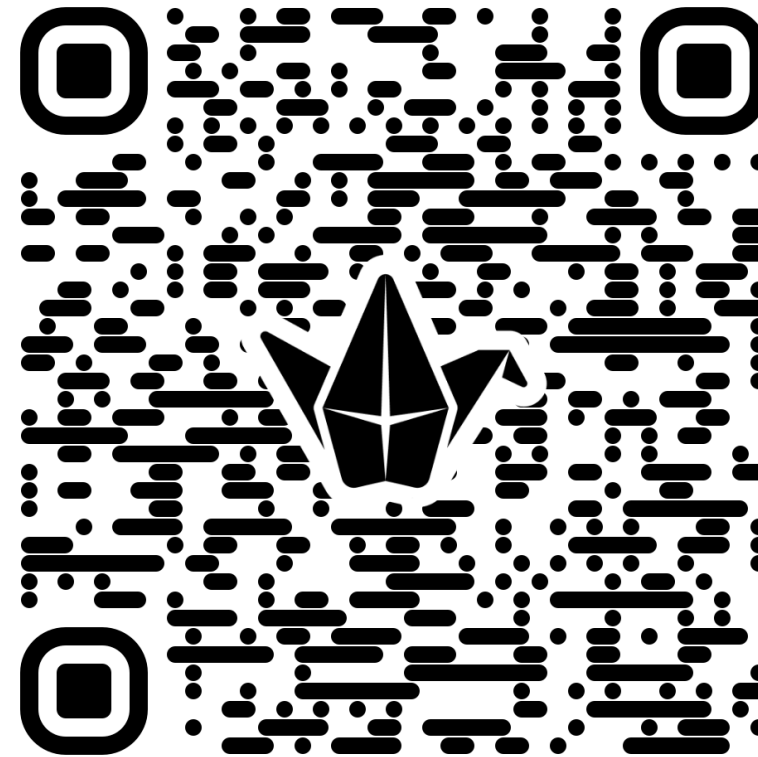


Role of higher education in multi-stakeholder partnerships and VET development in Africa

Join the sessions Padlet!

- Answer the questions
- Comment on the session discussion and presentations
- Comment on your fellow participants comments
- Or share relevant projects to the topic



Role of higher education in multi-stakeholder partnerships and VET development in Africa

Session structure

14.15-14.25 Welcome and introduction of panelists

14.25-14.35 Presentation of EDUFI survey results:

Higher education as catalyst for innovative, multi-stakeholder partnerships for skills development and employability in Africa

14.35 – 15.00 Panel discussion

- Dr Sylvie Mucyo, Vice-Chancellor, Rwanda Polytechnic
- Merja Paloniemi, Project Development Manager, Educational Consortium OSAO
- Cynthia Söderbacka, Team Leader, Novia University of Applied Sciences



Sylvie Mucyo, PhD

Currently serving as Vice-Chancellor of Rwanda Polytechnic, the largest public polytechnic in Rwanda with a diverse academic programme offered across its 8 colleges.

An environmental scientist by training, she specialized in waste management and bioenergy development

With more than 10 years in academic leadership and administration, she is passionate about transformative education that leads to societal impact.

Higher Education Pedagogies for Teacher Education (HEP-TED) 2024-2026

Teacher education, higher education pedagogy, higher education management, 1.1.2024-31.8.2026

Partners: Rwanda Polytechnic & University of Rwanda (**Rwanda**), University of Helsinki, JAMK University of Applied Sciences, Tampere University of Applied Sciences, Tampere University (**Finland**)

Total budget: €1,2 MIL

Objectives:

- Enhancing institutional management capacities for teacher education
- Improving the quality of teacher education through co-creation and pedagogical renewal
- Strengthening cross-institutional collaboration



Merja Paloniemi
Project Development Manager,
Educational Consortium
OSAO

Leads international VET
projects enhancing
vocational education and
work-based learning.

Merja.paloniemi@osao.fi



DevVET Project, Developing Working Life Collaboration in Vocational Education – Strengthening work-based learning and teacher competencies in Kenya

15.8.2024–14.3.2026

Financier: Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs through
the Youth Employment and Vocational Training
funding program. Coordinated by GIZ

Kilimanjaro VET Project – Empowering vocational teachers and students in Tanzania's Kilimanjaro region

31.1.2023–31.12.2025

Financier: Erasmus+ Capacity Building



More info!



More info!





Cynthia Söderbacka

SF-BioVac Project Coordinator

Team Leader: Sustainable Energy Technology, Process Engineering | Project Manager

Novia UAS: Faculty for Technology & Seafaring-RDI

Project Name: Sustainable Futures: Biogas Value Chain for Circular Economy Competence Growth in Zambia (SF-BioVac)

Theme: Climate Change , Circular Economy & Energy Transition

Period: 1.1.2024-31.8.2026

Partners Novia University of Applied Sciences & University of Oulu (**Finland**), Copperbelt University & University of Zambia (**Zambia**), Rural Electrification Authority, Zambia (REA) as industrial partner

Total Budget: € 1,09 MIL

Financier: Ministry for Foreign Affairs-HEP

Objective: Capacity building in Zambia's HEIs through practical & theoretical training in Circular Economy in the Waste-2-Energy sector with focus on the biogas value chain –using PBL approach



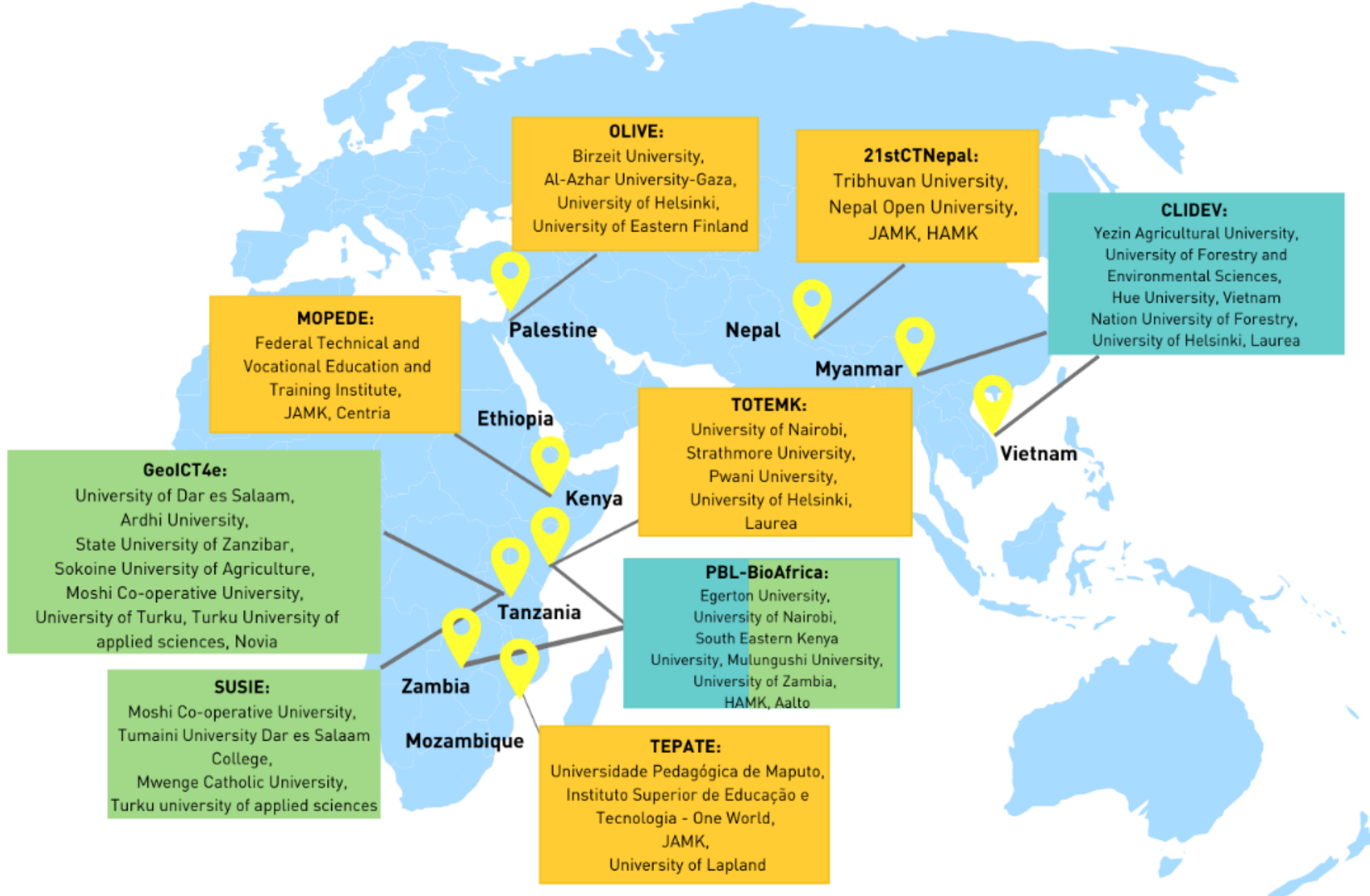
FINNISH NATIONAL
AGENCY FOR EDUCATION

*Higher education as catalyst for
innovative, multi-stakeholder
partnerships for skills development and
employability in Africa*

HEI ICI programme 2020-2024
HEP programme 2024-2026



HEI ICI projects on a map



Climate change:
2

Learning crises:
5

Innovations:
3



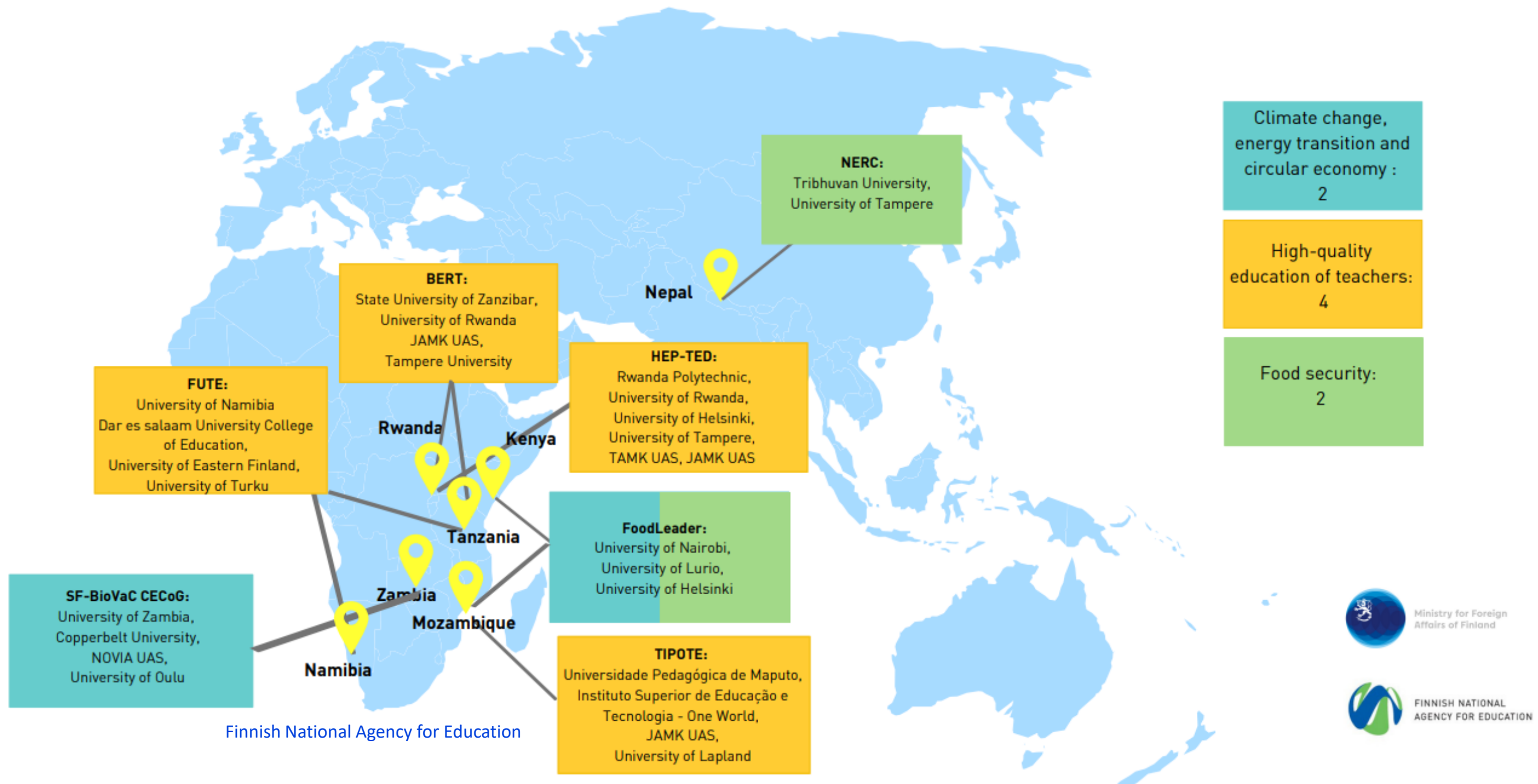
Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland



OPETUSHALLITUS
UTBILDNINGSSYRELSSEN

Finnish National Agency for Education

HEP projects 2024-2026 on a map



Main questions

Evaluation of HEI ICI and HEP programmes

Minna Mayer, Kristiina Lähde & Heidi Uitto

- Impact and effects
- Multi-stakeholder collaboration
- Follow-up funding

The evaluation was based on two surveys (N=49, N=41), 12 expert interviews, project materials, and four case studies

Builds on the HEI ICI Synthesis Report: [Results of HEI ICI projects 2020-2024 | Finnish National Agency for Education](#)

Impact on higher education

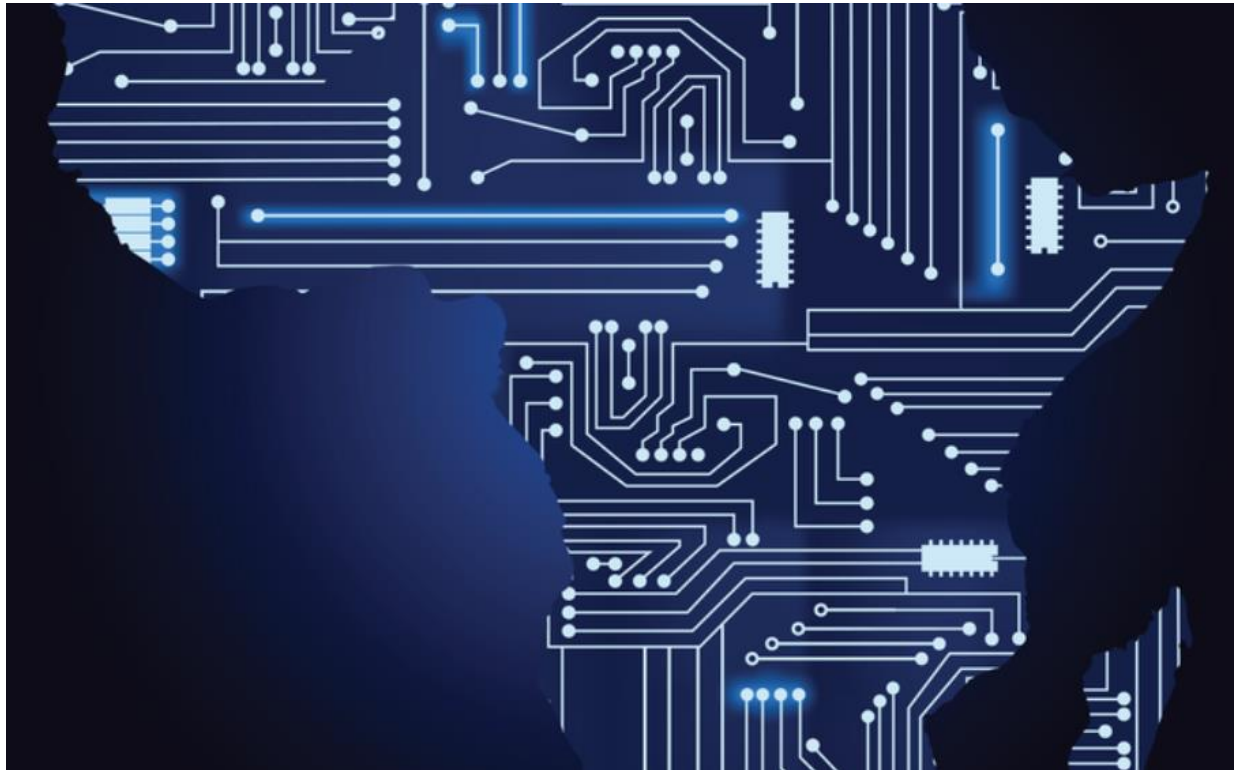
Strengthening the quality of higher education

- HEI ICI: 40 degree programmes, over 300 courses, and 40 digital courses
- 86% adopted new pedagogical methods
- 83% confirmed that changes had been piloted or implemented outside of the projects
- 85% emphasized the integration of sustainability and social responsibility into teaching



Pedagogical reform and digitalization

- Over 70% of respondents reported **improvements in curricula and teaching methods**
- 65% adopted **problem-based learning**
- Over 70% reported the adoption of **hybrid teaching** and scalable models
- 80% reported strengthened **capacity for digital learning**
- 77% stated that access to online resources improved through the partnerships



Skills development

- 91% of participants improved their **communication and teamwork skills**
- 84% strengthened their **critical thinking**
- 83% developed their **digital skills**
- 75% improved their **technical and professional skills**
- **Entrepreneurial skills** were strengthened by 53% of participants.



Higher education in a skills ecosystem

The role of higher education as catalyst for learning ecosystems.

- **35%** of the partnerships collaborated with the private sector, even though this is not a requirement in the funding programmes
- **44%** collaborated with public authorities and **29%** with civil society
- **Focus on the labour market relevance of skills**
 - the private sector was involved in the development and quality monitoring of educational programmes,
 - for example: skills needs analyses, internships, or problem-based learning where student groups solve challenges from the private sector.





HEI ICI projects: innovation, skills for employability

[PBL-BioAfrica – HAMK](#). Wide networks with NGOs and companies created a **collaborative training ecosystem** in Kenya and Zambia. Real world problems solved in international student teams, coached by teachers, co-creation and innovation with the labour market. Students created products and startups for agro-entrepreneurship, climate-smart agriculture.

[Multi-Competence Learning \(MCL\) - GeoICT4e](#).

Multidisciplinary teams tackle real-life challenges provided by external partners. Industry reps, experts, coaching. Regional socio-ecological challenges, e.g. forestry/optimal timber harvesting, eco-tourism, climate adaptation, land-ownership.



-  Environmental awareness
-  Geospatial tech familiarity
-  Spatiotemporal problem solving
-  Business knowledge and innovativeness

Added value of Finnish partnerships

Key strengths:

- Pedagogical expertise: student-centred teaching, inclusive models, digital
- Co-creation: locally applicable solutions through mentoring and peer learning, local ownership
- Value-driven approach: equality, openness and transparency, non-hierarchical structures, long-term commitment

Science and education diplomacy:

- Academic cooperation builds trust in an increasingly polarized global operating environment
- Supports the SDGs and fair internationalization

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Finnish development and trade policy

Key benefits of higher education partnerships:

- Finland's priority areas: education, gender equality, and climate/green transition
- Soft power/diplomacy: Finland seen as a visible and credible actor
- Visibility of Finnish education and technological expertise in Africa
- Expansion of cooperation: successful examples of combining education and trade
- New Team Finland strategy 2025–2027 points to the importance of increased international higher education cooperation

Main take-aways

Finnish-African higher education partnerships are characterized by

- A value-driven, respectful and collaborative approach
- Reforms in pedagogy, digital learning, management and labor market cooperation.
- Skills development to improve graduate employability.
- Institutionalized innovations, co-created with local actors and supported by leadership.
- Multi-stakeholder approaches (ministries, civil society, private sector)
- Strong contribution to Finland's development & trade goals



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Thank you!

Press release and link to review:

[Higher education cooperation in Africa strengthens Finland's position in the current geopolitical situation | Finnish National Agency for Education](#)

https://www.linkedin.com/company/edufi-highered/@EDUFI_HigherEd



**What potential do you see in cooperation
between
higher education and vocational education?**

**How can this cooperation
enhance
skills development for employability?**

What is the role of private sector engagement in HE and VET collaboration?