FINNISH NATIONAL
AGENCY FOR EDUCATION

Welcome to the webinar: Team Finland Knowledge (TFK) Impact Study Results

Please keep your camera and microphone muted unless you are speaking.

Questions and comments can be posted in the chat or you can ask for the floor by ”raising your hand” or by commenting in the chat.

The Teams interpreter agent is allowed. Third-party bots and AI agents (e.g., Otter.ai, Fireflies.ai, Read.ai) are automatically removed from the meeting.

The presentations will be published after the meeting on our web page.

EDUFI’s Safer Space Principles

- **Discrimination-free zone:** We do not tolerate discrimination or harassment in any form. We value everyone as equal and respect diversity.
- **Right to define and not to define:** Respect everyone's right to define or not define themselves. Don't make assumptions about anyone's qualities.
- **Benevolence:** It's human to make mistakes. You can make mistakes, and by asking, things will be clarified. The assumption is that everyone participates in the discussion in a good-natured manner from their own starting point.
- **Respect:** Everyone has the right to their own opinion and the duty to respect the opinions of others. Discriminatory attitudes are not opinions.
- **Bringing things up:** Bring things up. There are no things that are self-evident. Learn to both give and receive respectful and constructive feedback.
- **Give space:** Give space to others. Make sure that everyone is heard and can participate in the discussion.
- **Taking care of yourself:** Take care of your own well-being in ways that suit you!
- **If you notice discrimination, racism or harassment, intervene in the situation.**

The harassment contact person for this event is Anne Peltonen (anne.peltonen@oph.fi)

Programme

- Presentation of key findings and recommendations from the study "Building trust for sustainable impact: the value of Team Finland Knowledge Higher Education Partnerships in Asia, Latin America and Southern Africa.“
  - Researchers Kati Keski-Mäenpää and Riikka Suhonen
- Commentary input from EDUFI
  - Head of Unit Maija Airas
- Discussion and Q&A



The impact study report is available online

- Impact study report has been published in EDUFI's publication series and can be accessed at:
  - Building trust for sustainable impact: the value of Team Finland Knowledge Higher Education Partnerships in Asia, Latin America and Southern Africa | Finnish National Agency for Education
- News article on the study:
  - The impacts of the Team Finland Knowledge programme exceed its funding | Finnish National Agency for Education



Building trust for sustainable impact

The value of Team Finland Knowledge higher education partnerships in Asia, Latin America and Southern Africa

Impact study of TFK projects funded 2021–2023 commissioned by EDUFI

Kati Keski-Mäenpää & Riikka Suhonen

TFK webinar for presenting results 30.10.2026

What is Team Finland Knowledge?

A national funding instrument managed by EDUFI for cooperation between Finnish higher education institutions and partners in **China, India, Southeast Asia, Southern Africa and Latin America.**

- Finnish HEI coordinates; at least one partner HEI from the target region
- Mobility must be at least 50% of the budget
- Launched 2021

€4.93M

granted in 2021–2023

72

completed projects

27

partner countries

€80k

maximum funding per project

Data and research questions

72

Project final reports and applications

Document analysis of completed projects 2021–2023

40

Survey responses

About half of the projects responded. In addition to coordinators, also some partner HEIs responded

19

Interviews

10 project coordinators from Finnish HEIs and 9 current and former TFK regional experts

Research questions

Results | **Impact** | **Operating model** | **Regional differences** | **Recommendations**

Strong impact well beyond the size of the funding

87.5%

of partnerships still active after funding

95%

report students' intercultural competence

3 in 4

would apply for TFK funding again

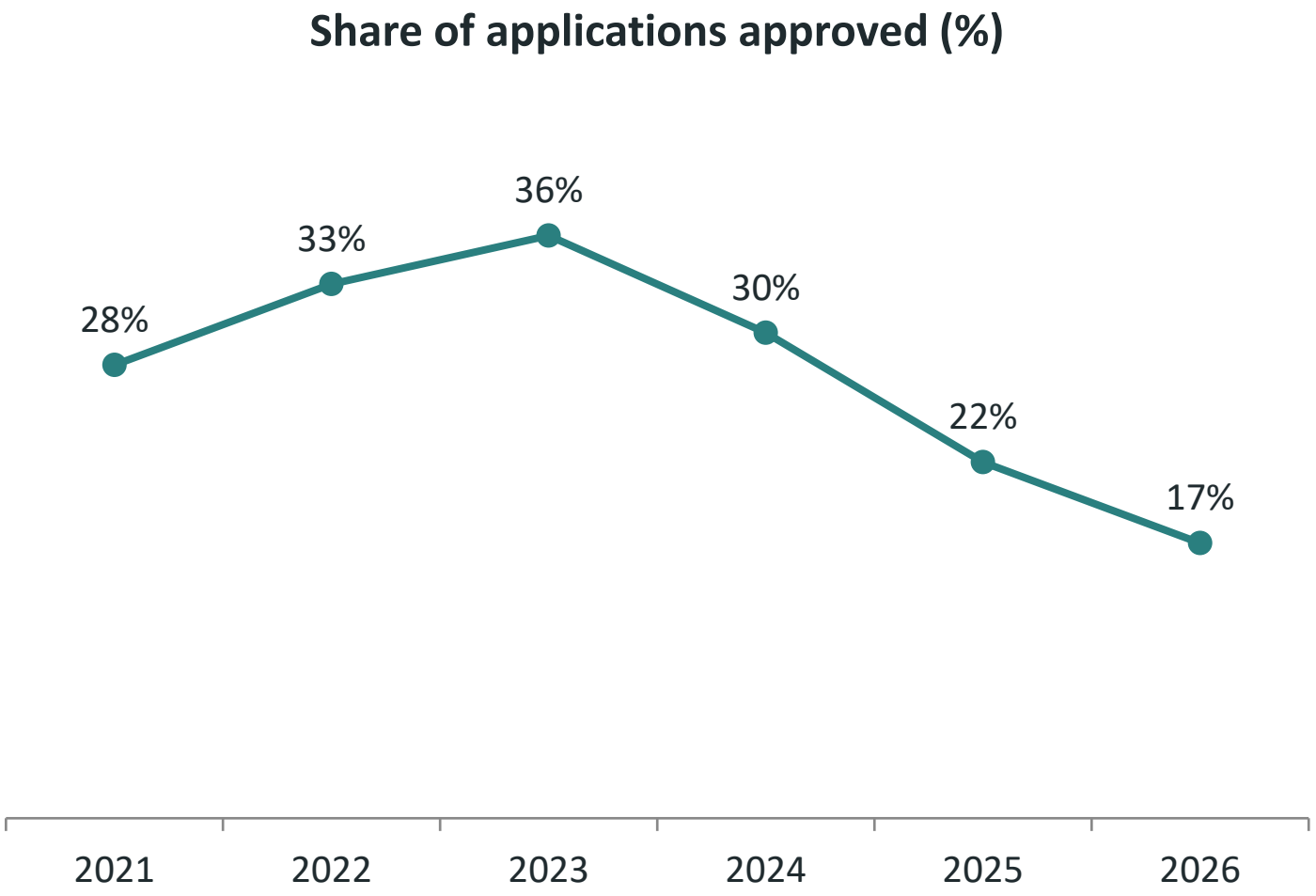
17%

of applications approved in 2026 (36% in 2023)

Core mechanism

Trust built through face-to-face mobility and co-created project activities.

Demand for funding has grown and approval rates fallen



Important niche for funding

Few alternatives exist for funding cooperation between HEIs in Finland and China, India, Southeast Asia, Southern Africa or Latin America

Source: EDUFI

PORTFOLIO

Partner countries, disciplines and levels



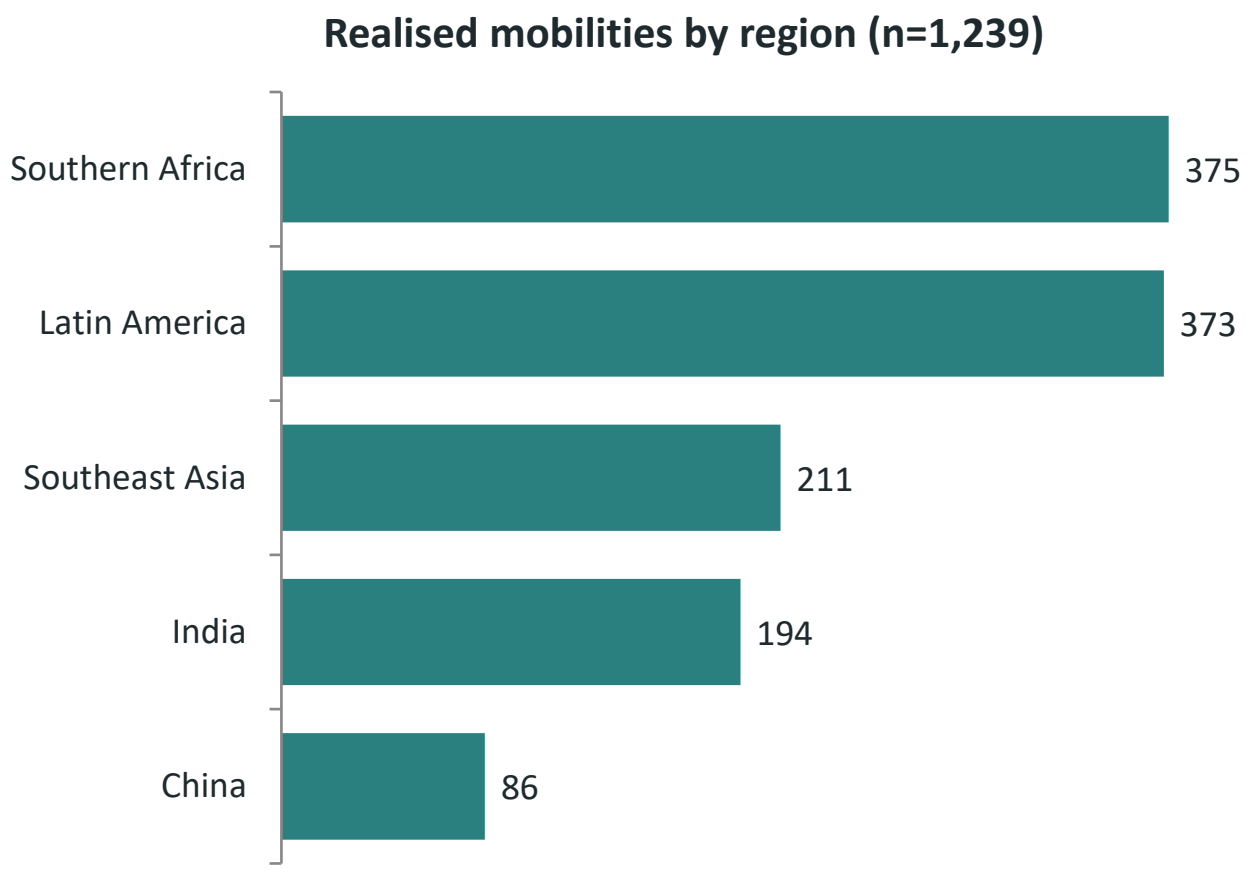
21 Health · **18** Education · **17** Engineering

81%
of projects include Master's level

46%
of projects include PhD level

Source: Project applications, n=72 projects 2021–2023.

1,239 mobilities realised



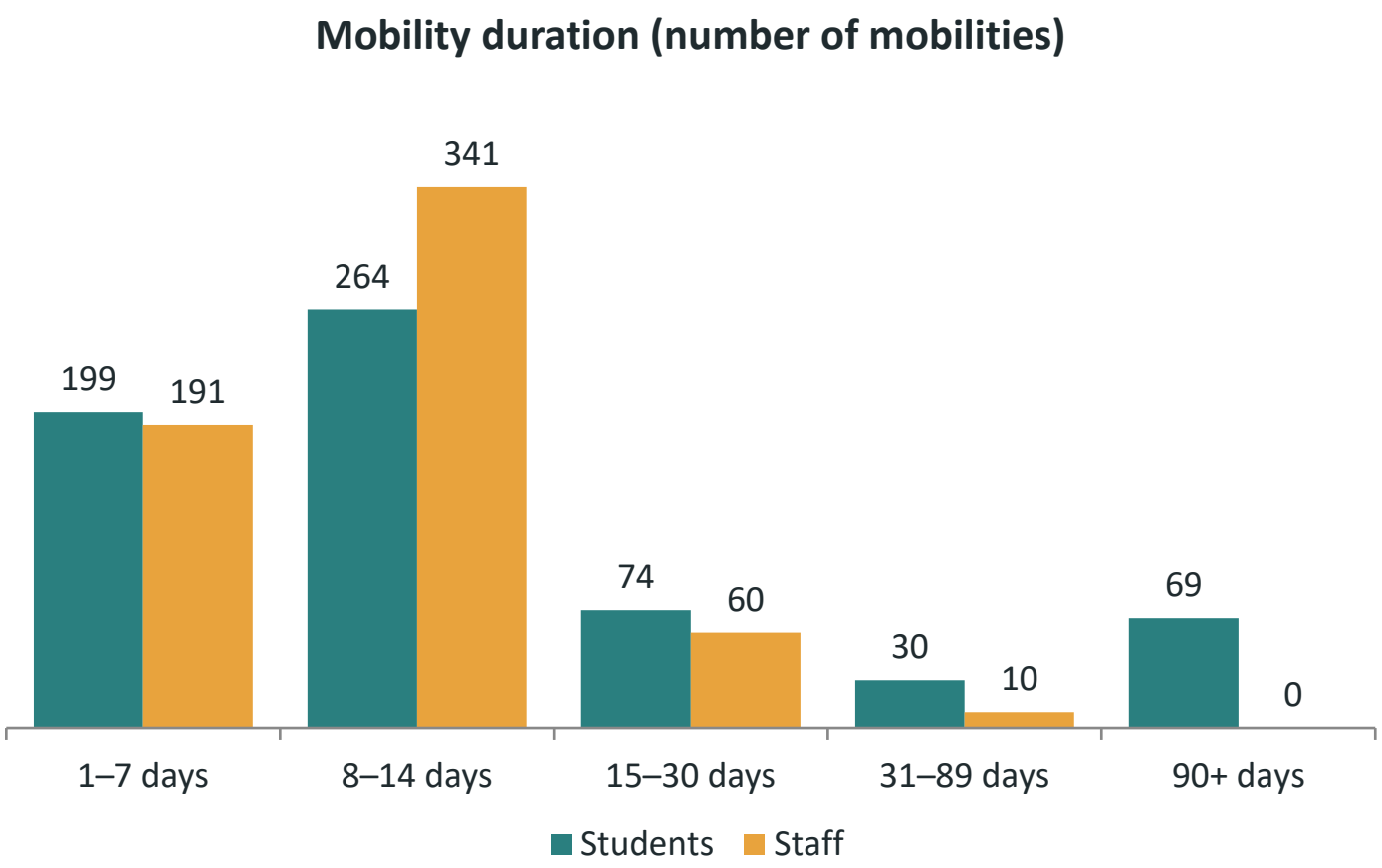
48% Staff **52%** Students

48% Outgoing **52%** Incoming

89–104%
of planned mobilities realised

Source: EDUFI mobility data, projects 2021–2023

Mostly short mobilities



- 80% of mobilities lasted two weeks or less
- Stays over three months students only, mostly incoming
- One-week visits leave little room for visa delays or flight changes

Source: Project final reports, 2021–2023

Mobilities with a broad range of concrete outputs

Joint online and hybrid courses

Intensive courses and summer/winter schools

Internships and traineeships

Cooperation with world-of-work incl. companies, NGOs, ministries and museums

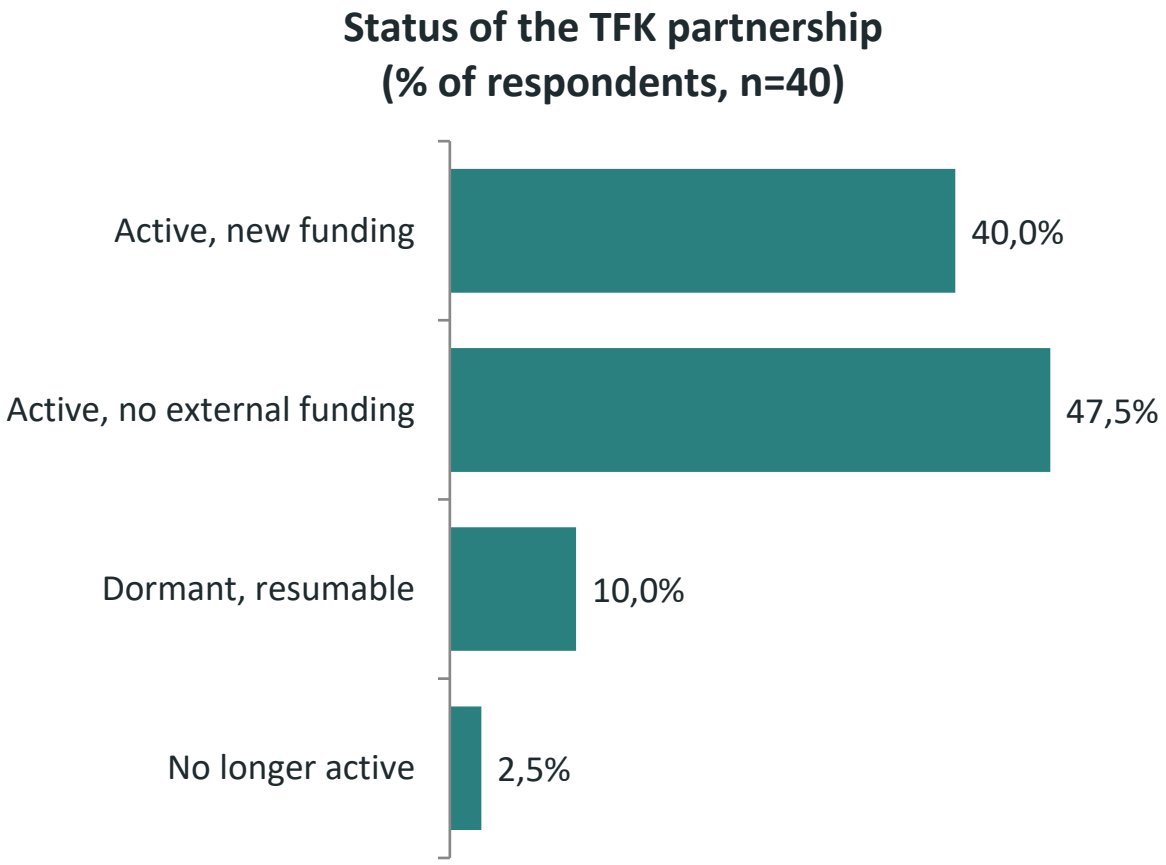
Hardest to achieve during a short project: Joint or double degrees

Trust is built face to face

> *Online meetings alone do not open one's eyes in the same way as actually going on site, getting to know the local education system and culture. [...] The mobility component is unquestionably the most important element of this project.*
>
> — Finnish coordinating HEI, interview

> *Now we feel we can implement almost anything together because the trust is there.*
>
> — Finnish coordinating HEI, interview

Partnerships continue after the funding ends

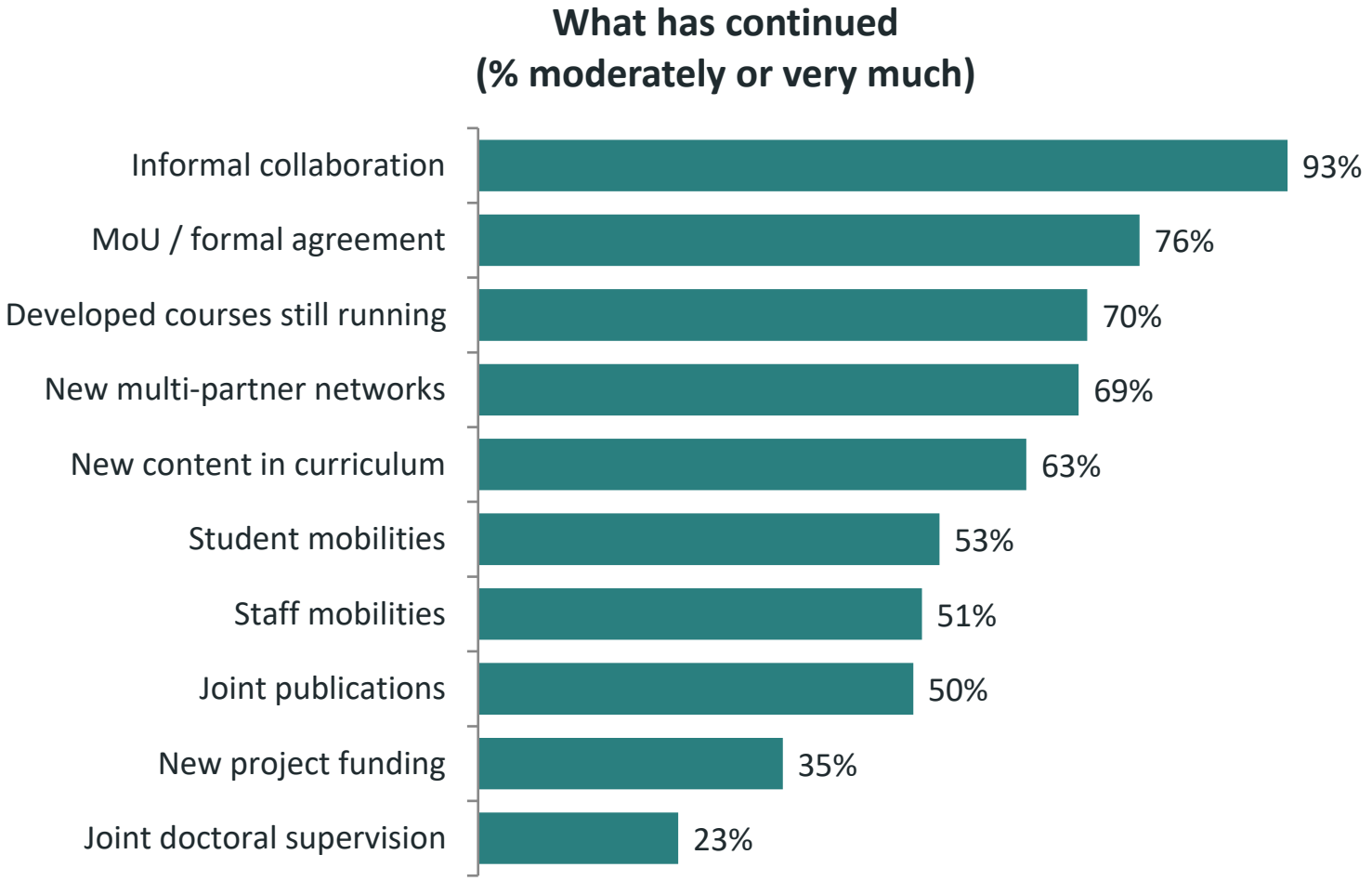


Supportive elements

- Trust and shared motivation
- Backing from department or faculty
- Responsibility shared by several people
- Links to embassies, ministries, companies, NGOs
- New courses integrated with core teaching
- A continuation plan from the start

Source: TFK impact survey (n=40)

Courses, curricula and collaboration after the project



70%

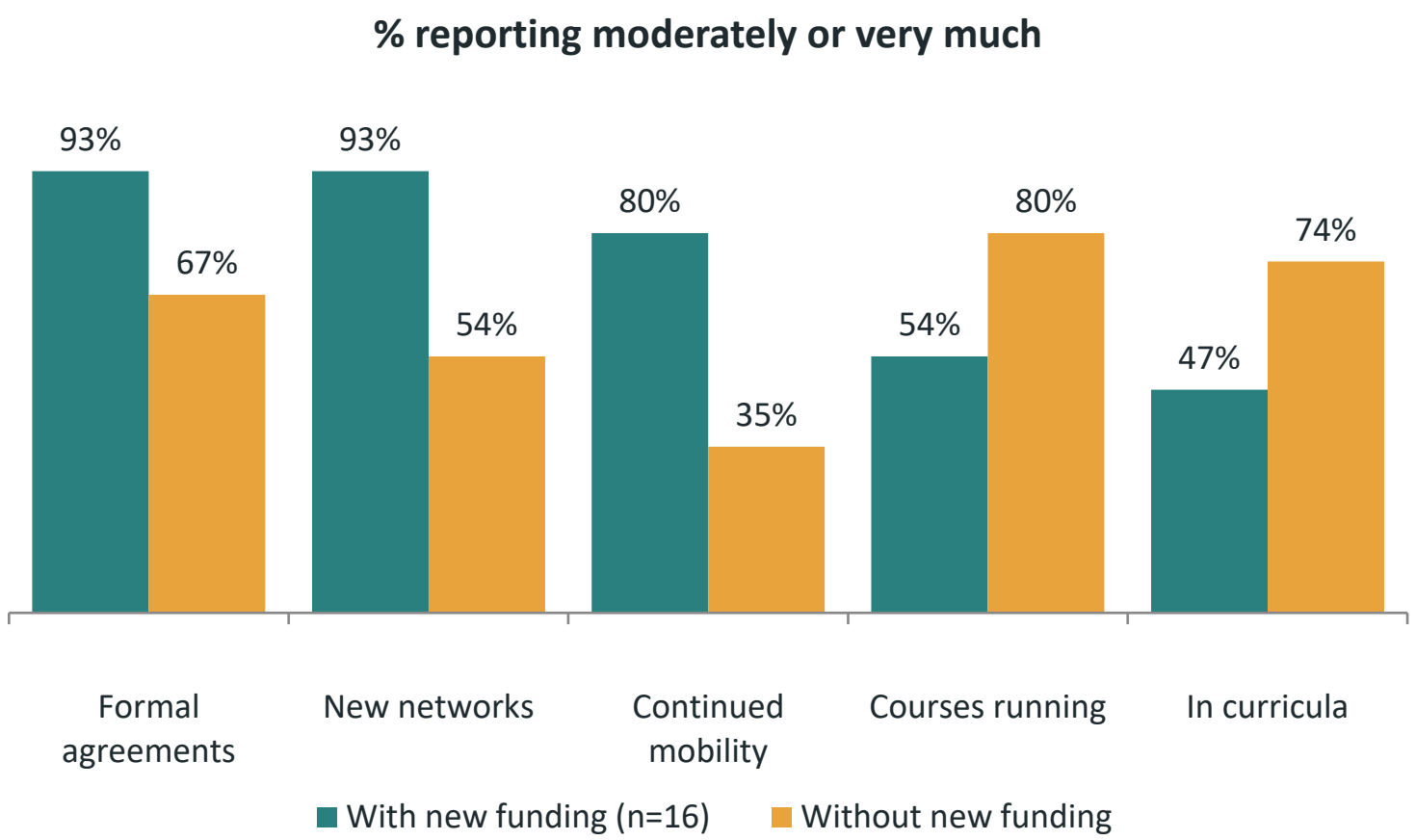
developed courses still running

63%

new content integrated into curricula

Source: TFK impact survey (n=40)

Two pathways to sustained impact: funded vs. embedded

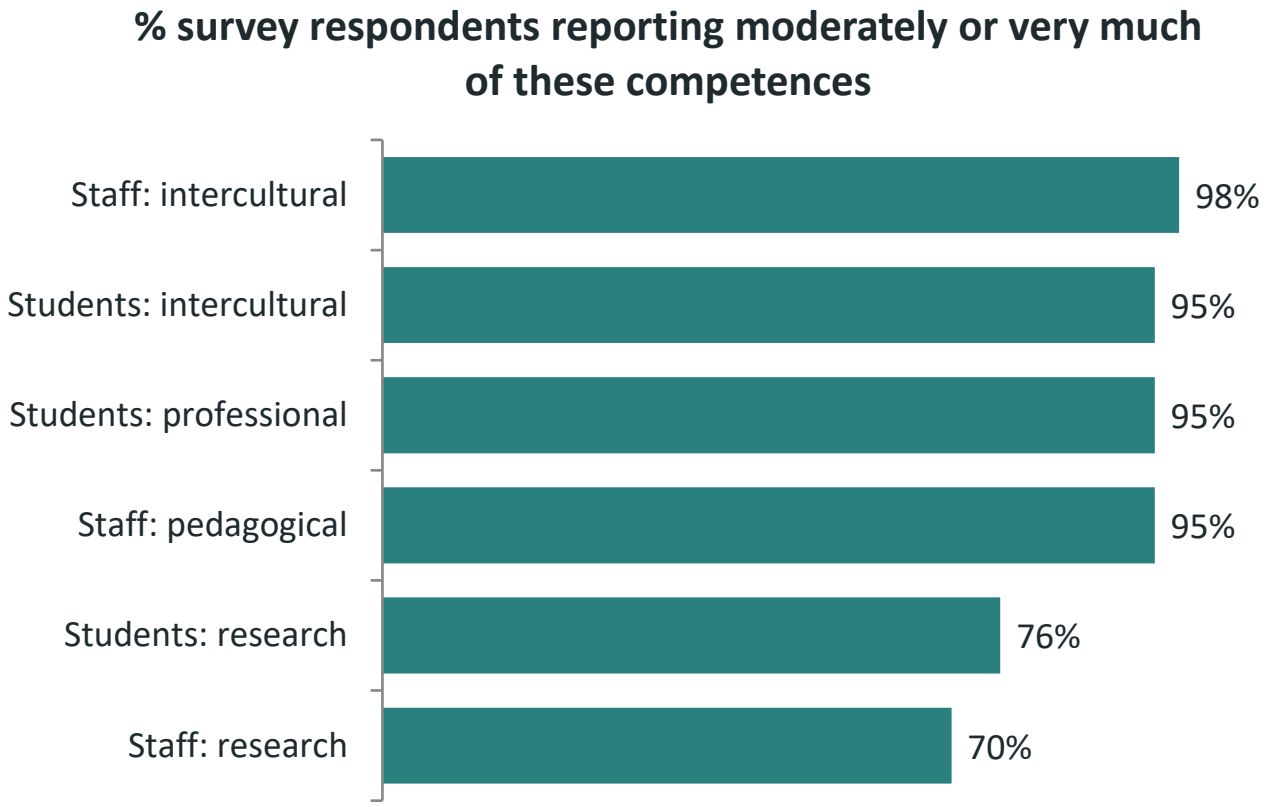


Funded path: new projects, agreements, networks and continued mobility

Embedded path: results integrated into regular teaching and curricula

Source: TFK impact survey (n=40); small subgroups, indicative only

Intercultural, professional and pedagogical competence



Limitation: responses come from coordinators and partners, not from participants themselves.

> *A person who participated in the project as a Master's student is now doing a doctoral dissertation on the same topic.*
>
> — Finnish coordinating HEI, interview

Source: TFK impact survey (n=40)

Institutional and societal benefits

94%
stronger partnerships (Finnish HEIs)

79%
new partnerships (Finnish HEIs)

92%
long-term partnerships (all)

>90%
more interest in region (Finnish HEIs)

Embassies as the most frequently mentioned external collaborator

- Co-hosts for events
- Visa problem-solvers
- Door-openers to ministries

"…Finland's national brand and science diplomatic identity here is really very dependent on those TFK projects in an increasing manner." TFK expert, interview

The model works well at application and guidance

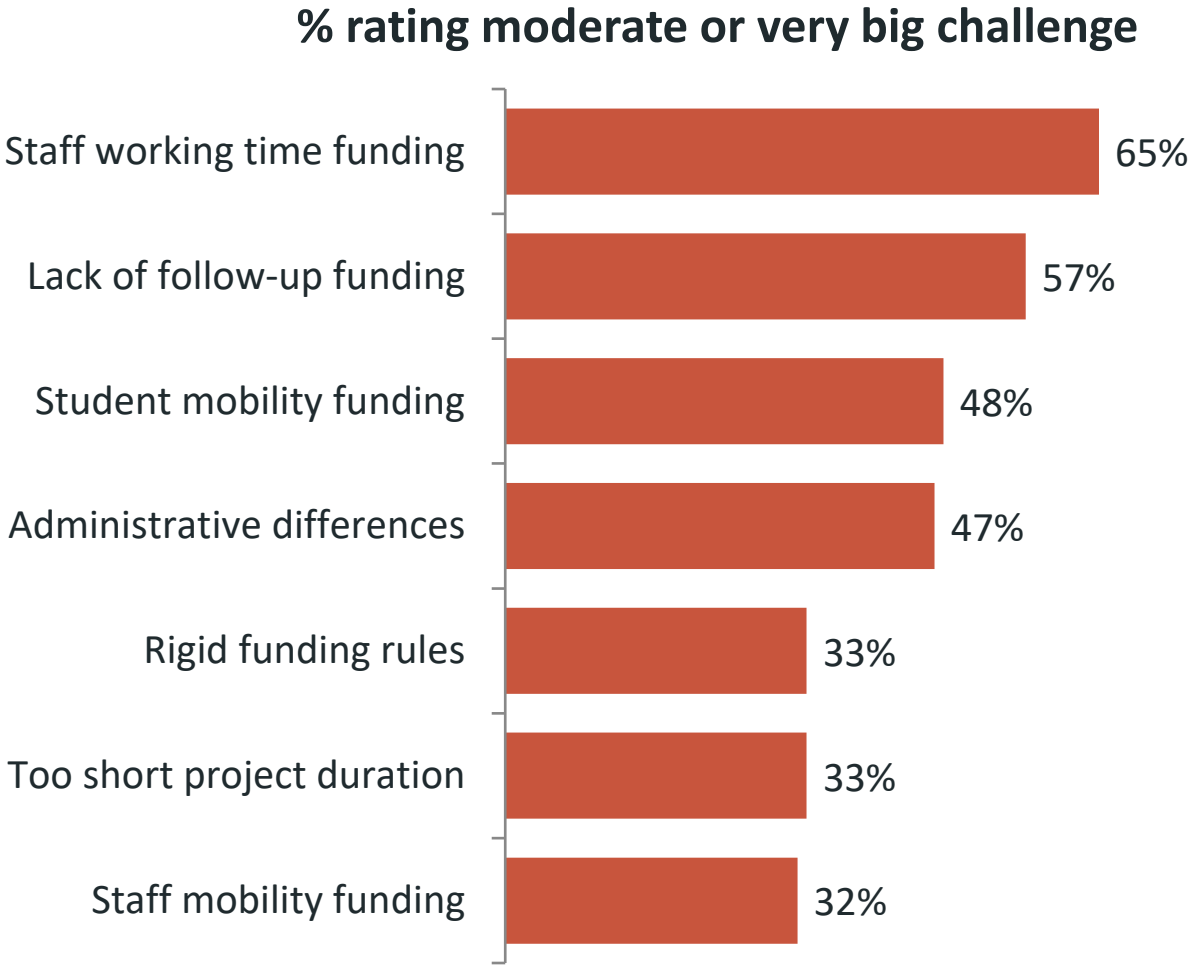


> *I have found working with the TFK team very friendly and helpful and the replies to any questions are quick.*
>
> — Final report

Source: TFK impact survey (n=40)

OPERATING MODEL – CHALLENGES

Key barriers: staff time, follow-up and student grants



Source: TFK impact survey (n=40)

> *It took more time to lead the project than what there was money for. I did it on my own time!*
>
> — Finnish coordinating HEI, survey

> *Students can only realistically participate if they have personal financial support from relatively well-off families.*
>
> — Finnish coordinating HEI, survey

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

Cooperation looks different in each region

Southern Africa

- Capacity building; practical fields such as nursing and teacher education
- Risk of unequal participation
- Visa and cost barriers hit students hardest

Latin America

- Social equity, decolonisation, Indigenous rights
- “No development aid vibe”: projects stand on academic merit
- Language is the main barrier

Asia

- Science, engineering and technology
- China: research security and dual-use risks
- India and Southeast Asia: diversification built on trust

Balanced approach for responsible internationalisation

Risk and security

Dual-use technology, export controls, data governance, research security, reputational risk, sanctions.

+

Equity and power

Reciprocity, shared voice and ownership of knowledge, partners as knowledge producers, equal access to mobility for all students.

> *More voice to the Global South [is needed]. Partnership is not telling how it should be done but asking: how can you do this?*
>
> — TFK expert, interview

THEORY OF CHANGE

Team Finland Knowledge Theory of Change

Inputs

Seed funding up to €80k

EDUFI guidance

HEI partnerships

Regional experts

Institutional co-financing

Activities

Staff and student mobility

Virtual teaching

Joint courses

Engagement with companies, NGOs, ministries

Outputs

Courses and modules

Mobilities completed

MoUs and networks

Publications

Outcomes

Updated curricula

Continued formal and informal collaboration

Wider networks

Follow-up funding

Impact

Durable partnerships

Global visibility

More equitable cooperation

Intercultural/global competence

Core mechanism: trust built through face-to-face mobility and co-created activities

Assumptions: pre-existing ties, shared responsibility, institutional commitment, reachable follow-up funding or curriculum integration, staff time resourced, mobility affordable for all, equity actively managed, motivation of Finnish students to choose Global South destinations, political conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Nine recommendations for EDUFI

1. Maintain TFK as low-threshold seed funding
2. Bridge funding for follow-up support
3. More flexible mobility grants
4. Longer, blended mobility
5. Lighter administration
6. Widen participation
7. Balanced responsible internationalisation
8. Fund more staff working time
9. Follow-up impact survey

RECOMMENDATIONS

Six recommendations for universities and partners

10 Share responsibility and secure faculty support

11 Address equity and power questions

12 Budget realistically for working time, translations etc

13 Contact embassies and TFK experts early

14 Monitor mobility results

15 Plan for continuation and curriculum integration

CONCLUSION

A small instrument with disproportionate effects

1. **Impact outsizes funding**
   Trust, competence and partnerships that last beyond the project.

2. **Seed funding needs a bridge**
   Follow-up funding, fair mobility grants and proportionate administration.

3. **Balanced responsibility**
   Manage risk and security together with equity and reciprocity.

> *At the very least, TFK funding needs to exist.*
>
> — Finnish coordinating HEI, interview

Thank you!
Time for questions and discussion

Commentary input

Maija Airas
Head of Unit, EDUFI

Discussion and Q&A

You can write your questions in the chat or raise your hand

FINNISH NATIONAL
AGENCY FOR EDUCATION

Thank you for participating!

Materials from today's webinar will be published at the event web site.

More information about the TFK programme:

- https://www.oph.fi/en/programmes/tfk-programme
- TFK-programme@oph.fi