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HEP PROGRAMME 2024-2026

Synthesis of the HEP annual reporting 2025

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1. THE AIMS OF THE HEP PROGRAMME 2023-2026

The Higher Education Partnership Programme (HEP) supports partnerships between Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs) and HEIs in the global South for collaboration related to **methodological, educational and administrative dimensions of higher education**.

The HEP programme **develops the quality of higher education** through international cooperation and specifically aims to boost graduate **employability, digitalization** and both **social and technological innovations**. Attention is given to promoting equal access to higher education for a diverse group of students. HEP also supports student and staff exchange to pursue mutual learning.

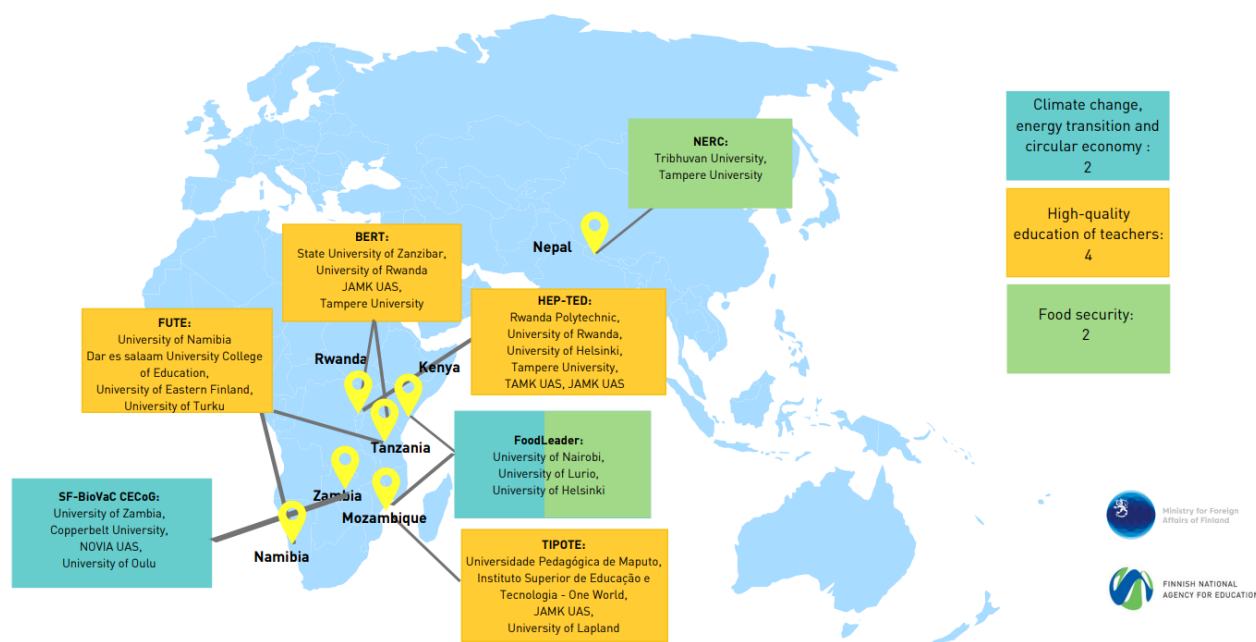
The thematic priorities of the HEP programme are:

- teacher education (primary, secondary, vocational)
- climate change, energy transition and the circular economy, and
- food security

Currently, there are **7 HEP projects**, involving **7 partner countries**: Kenya, Namibia, Nepal, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia. The 7 partnerships involve **totally 20 HEIs**: 9 Finnish and 11 from the partner countries.

Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs provides funding for the programme through its development cooperation funds and the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) manages the programme.

HEP projects 2024-2026 on a map



2. ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

The HEP partnerships have all made good generic progress in the year 2025, with activities mostly proceeding according to workplans. Delays have occurred, mainly due to challenging procurement processes, software incompatibility, extreme weather conditions and partner country staff workloads. Some minor changes to the partnership activities were made based on EDUFI monitoring recommendations, to enhance the project effectiveness and impact.

HEP Programme level Results Framework

The HEP programme long-term objective (IMPACT) is that HEIs contribute to sustainable development through quality, inclusive, working-life relevant higher education. The programme has two expected outcomes. The first focuses on institutional-level development while the second relates to staff capacities.

The OUTCOME-level aims relate to four more specific, short-term objectives:

- Educational offer (new study programmes and courses)
- Professional development (training of admin and academic staff)
- New pedagogical methods, incl. digitalized and blended education
- Access to higher education for students with vulnerable backgrounds

IMPACT

HEIs in the partner countries contribute to sustainable development by providing high-quality, inclusive and working-life relevant higher education.

OUTCOME 1

Strengthened educational and institutional capacities of partner HEIs in providing working-life relevant higher education

Output 1: Strengthened educational capacity, including/in particular renewed degree programmes and individual courses

Output 2: Strengthened capacity of teachers and experts involved in projects in teaching and administration (professional development)

OUTCOME 2

Improved quality of the partner HEIs' education, including digitalized and blended education

Output 3: Improved pedagogical methods and new innovative solutions created for teaching and learning.

Output 4: Improved access to higher education for students with vulnerable backgrounds

Educational offer (study programmes, courses)

During the second year of the HEP programme, several partnerships already finalized or were actively working towards revising or creating new educational offer. Within the FUTE partnership, 41 courses were reviewed at University of Namibia and Dar es Salaam University, to include dimensions of ESD (Education for Sustainable Development), e.g. use of research-based learning materials and student-centered learning. The project has used a much-appreciated mentoring and peer learning approach for the course revision process.

In Zambia, through the SF-BioVac partnership, course revisions have taken place at University of Zambia and the Copperbelt University, in the following fields: Biogas Production & Process Design, Circular Economy and Sustainability & Circular Business Models.

In Mozambique and Kenya, the Foodleader partnership has created digital learning materials and 4 modules, covering diverse topics such as food systems, sustainable development goals, dietary and food sample data collection and analysis, stakeholder mapping and engagement, and actions for change.

The HEP-TED partnership has developed and accredited a **first master-level Postgraduate Programme in Technical Teacher Education** at Rwanda Polytechnic.

At University of Rwanda, a **Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PGCLTHE)** has been revised and is pending internal approval.

At University of Rwanda, a new post-graduate certificate program was developed and awaits HEC accreditation: **Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Leadership and Management (PGCHEM)**.

Professional development

As evidenced by the progress indicator below, 1239 staff has participated in professional development during 2025. Most partnerships have offered these trainings both in physical, hybrid and digital forms. Internet connectivity has proven to be a challenge but was appropriately mitigated through the use of pre-recorded videos and learning materials. Blended learning has also been used in the staff training, where assignments were done as preparations for a specific training course, and also continued afterwards in smaller teams.

Access to higher education for students with vulnerable backgrounds

Several HEP partnerships have made efforts towards more inclusive access to higher education, and support during the studies. In the **BERT project in Rwanda and Tanzania, students with disabilities are directly involved in project activities**, with actions focusing on awareness-raising about student rights, landscape mapping regarding obstacles for students with disabilities, and developing assistive technologies.

Other partnerships have worked on identifying gaps in institutional inclusion policies and strengthening disability-inclusive pedagogies, as well as providing teacher trainees with improved competencies in inclusive education. The project activities have also focused on enhancing gender balance in higher education, e.g through gender-responsive pedagogy, creation of safe spaces, events related to women in STEM.

Progress according to HEP Programme level indicators

Based on data provided in the 2025 annual reports, the programme progress is presented in the table below, based on HEP programme-level indicators.

Overall, students report **clear positive improvements** in both teaching methods and course content, especially through increased use of **digital tools**, **interactive activities**, and **practical, hands-on learning**. Many highlight that teaching has become more **student-centered**, with better access to materials and more consistent use of online platforms. Course content is described as **more updated, relevant, and aligned with industry needs**, though some students note that updates are not yet consistent across all curricula. A recurring theme is the desire for **more practical sessions**, **faster feedback**, and in some cases **more flexible study options** (e.g., evening or online classes). In general, the feedback reflects **strong appreciation for progress**.

PROGRAMME LEVEL IMPACT AND OUTCOME: INDICATORS			
Level	Indicator	2024	2025
IMPACT HEIs in the partner countries contribute to sustainable development by providing high-quality, inclusive and working-life relevant higher education	Indicator 1 Satisfaction of the leadership of the partner HEIs on the impacts of the projects.	4,7	5,1
OUTCOME 1 Strengthened educational and institutional capacities of partner HEIs in providing working-life relevant higher education (<i>renewed degree programmes and individual courses, professional development</i>)	Indicator 2 Nr of staff engaged in capacity development, including exchange programmes.	1047 (50% female)	1239 (30% female)
	Indicator 3 Nr of educational institutions, incl. higher education, reached through measures aimed to increase their capacity	62	75
OUTCOME 2 Improved quality of the partner HEIs' education, including digitalized and blended education (<i>innovative pedagogical methods, inclusive access to higher education</i>)	Indicator 4 Student satisfaction on new and/or revised courses (scale 1-6)	Not yet available	4,6

Cooperation with non-academic partners and the wider ecosystem

Cooperation with non-academic actors is a **core implementation principle** of many HEP partnerships. The projects are designed around a **human-rights-based and ecosystem approach**, meaning that inclusive higher education is pursued not only within universities, but through **systematic collaboration with government bodies, civil society and the private sector**. These actors contribute expertise, legitimacy, policy alignment, and practical solutions that academic actors alone could not deliver. One example of this is the BERT partnership.

Other HEP partnerships approach non-academic actors as **central to achieving working-life relevance, feasibility, and sustainability** in knowledge development. Projects are designed as a **quadruple-helix partnership** linking higher education with **industry, public authorities, NGOs, and local communities**, moving beyond curriculum reform toward **real-world application and pilot implementation**. One example of this is the SF-BioVac partnership.

Non-academic actors	Role in the partnership	How they cooperate in practice
Governmental and public authorities , like Ministries (Education, Health, Sports), National Council of People with Disabilities (Rwanda), Rwanda Higher Education Council, Tanzania Commission for Universities, Rural Electrification Authority of Zambia (REA), Zambia Public Procurement Agency, Zambia Revenue Authority	Ensure legal compliance, policy alignment, and institutional feasibility Enable sustainability through regulation, recognition, and scale-up Act as a bridge between project innovation and national systems	Policy alignment discussions Curriculum review and accreditation processes Participation in the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Guidance on procurement processes Support with tax exemptions and regulatory approvals Engagement in dissemination events and policy-relevant fora
Civil society, NGOs, associations , like Zanzibar Federation of Disabled People Organizations, National Union of People with Disabilities of Rwanda (NUDOR), Rwanda Association for Women in Science and Engineering	Represent rights holders' lived experience Act as community multipliers for outreach Support awareness-raising and behavioral change Connect technical solutions with social acceptance and community perspectives	Participation in needs analysis and stakeholder mappings Sharing good practices and regional experience Joint workshops Input to curriculum and training content

Private sector actors, like Zambeef Plc (agribusiness and food production) , biogas plant operators and technology providers (Finland and Zambia), waste and energy companies visited during industrial tours in Zambia, suppliers of assistive and digital accessibility technologies, technical vendors involved in learning hubs and equipment procurement	Translate policy goals into practical solutions Anchor the project in working-life relevance Enable digital accessibility and blended learning environments Support institutional capacity to sustain inclusive practices Test theoretical concepts against operational realities Enable applied learning (theses, lab work, pilot design)	Needs assessments Procurement and installation of assistive technology Practical demonstrations during workshops (e.g. simulation) Participation in industrial visits Contribution of real operational data and cases for courses, student assignments, and theses Hosting and informing research Input to pilot plant design feasibility and value-chain thinking
Schools, rectors, teacher associations	Ensure pedagogical relevance and contextual grounding of teacher education Strengthen practicum and school–university collaboration models Support continuous improvement of teacher preparation pathways	Participation in teacher training activities and workshops Provision of feed-back on training offer Input into practicum models and mentoring practices Learning through community-based projects
Regional and international stakeholders (beyond partner universities), like EU Delegations, Finnish embassies, HEIs and NGOs from other countries	Extend project impact beyond partner countries Facilitate regional alignment and peer learning Strengthen sustainability and scalability of results	Participation in regional workshops and online forums Knowledge exchange Visibility, advocacy, and policy dialogue

Risks encountered during implementation

The 2025 reports highlight a range of operational, strategic, and contextual risks that have influenced project implementation. Many of the identified risks relate to procurement processes, mobility arrangements, and administrative procedures, which have continued to affect timelines and require additional coordination. In several cases, delays in procurement, complex national regulations, and challenges in international payments have required active involvement of institutional leadership and flexible adjustments to plans.

Operational risks have also included limitations in digital infrastructure, staff workload, and participation in joint activities. Connectivity issues, uneven access to digital tools, and competing responsibilities have occasionally affected communication and coordination. These challenges have been addressed through proactive planning, redistribution of tasks, and strengthened internal communication practices.

Strategic and contextual risks—such as political developments, institutional changes, and external disruptions—have remained relevant. Changes in government structures, elections, health-related crises, and security incidents have influenced the timing and organisation of activities. In addition, environmental factors such as extreme weather conditions have created new risks for mobility and local implementation. While these risks are largely outside project control, they have been managed through continuous monitoring, contingency planning, and flexible implementation approaches.

Economic risks have included fluctuations in costs, delays in funding processes, and pressures on institutional resources. In some cases, budget adjustments and the use of contingency funds have been necessary to respond to changing circumstances. At the same time, strengthened financial monitoring and clear guidelines have helped reduce risks related to budget management and use of funds.

Overall, several projects have reported stable or reduced risk levels due to improved coordination, regular review of risk matrices, and proactive mitigation measures. The findings indicate an increased capacity to anticipate and manage risks, with projects adapting effectively to changing conditions while maintaining progress toward their objectives. Continued systematic risk assessment and flexibility will remain important as implementation advances.

3. CONSISTENCY WITH THE FINNISH DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The Human rights based approach, gender equality and non-discrimination

Human Rights

The HEP projects continued to apply a strong human rights–based approach in 2025, embedding the principles of participation, inclusion, non-discrimination, accountability, and transparency across all activities. Projects systematically identified right holders, duty bearers, and responsible actors, ensuring that stakeholders—including students, academic staff, and institutional leaders—were actively engaged in planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. Particular emphasis was placed on strengthening institutional capacities to deliver inclusive, high-quality education and to address structural barriers related to access, participation, and equity.

Several projects further reinforced evidence-based approaches to human rights by conducting surveys and assessments on inclusion, equality, and participation. These tools enabled projects to monitor perceptions of discrimination, accessibility, and safety, while also informing the development of more inclusive policies and practices. Digital platforms and collaborative learning environments were used to widen participation and ensure access to information.

Gender equality

Gender equality remained a cross-cutting priority across all projects, with increasing attention to both participation and structural change. Projects actively monitored gender balance through disaggregated data and aimed to ensure equal opportunities in recruitment, training, and mobility. In many cases, women represented a majority of participants, particularly in fields such as education and nutrition, while efforts were also made to encourage more balanced representation in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as engineering and STEM.

Beyond participation, several projects advanced gender equality through targeted actions. These included the promotion of gender-responsive pedagogy, the development of training initiatives supporting women in STEM, and the creation of safe and inclusive spaces for dialogue on gender-related challenges.

Overall, women increasingly took on leadership, facilitation, and expert roles in project activities, contributing to more inclusive and representative collaboration. At the same time, projects recognized ongoing challenges in achieving balanced participation in certain contexts and committed to continued monitoring and improvement.

Non-discrimination and disability inclusion

Non-discrimination and inclusion—particularly regarding persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups—remained central to all projects. A broad understanding of inclusion was adopted, addressing not only disability but also social, cultural, institutional, and economic barriers to participation.

Projects applied both systemic and targeted approaches to inclusion. Institutional capacity building focused on strengthening inclusive pedagogy, curriculum development, and policy frameworks, while targeted measures addressed specific accessibility needs, such as assistive technologies, accessible learning materials, and adapted teaching methods. Students with disabilities and other underrepresented groups were increasingly recognized as active participants and contributors, rather than passive beneficiaries.

Evidence-based inclusion work was strengthened through surveys and research activities, which highlighted both progress and remaining challenges. While many respondents reported low levels of discrimination and high levels of perceived equality, accessibility—particularly for persons with disabilities—remains an area requiring further development. Structural barriers, such as inaccessible infrastructure or limited availability of specialized support, were identified in several contexts.

Projects also expanded their understanding of non-discrimination to include diverse perspectives, such as socio-economic background, cultural identity, and sexual orientation.

Climate resilience and environmental sustainability

Projects adopted more sustainable operational practices through digital and blended learning, reduced travel, resource efficiency, and environmentally conscious choices. Some projects addressed sustainability

directly through themes such as climate education or renewable energy, while others contributed indirectly by raising awareness and integrating sustainability perspectives into teaching.

Overall, the reports indicate a growing and more systematic consideration of environmental responsibility across the HEP programme.

4. PARTNERSHIPS AND COOPERATION

Cooperation across partner institutions has remained strong and constructive, supported by shared goals, mutual respect, and a commitment to advancing project objectives. Many partnerships have continued to deepen over time, while new forms of collaboration have emerged through joint activities, peer learning, and problem-solving in response to practical challenges. In several cases, collaboration has expanded beyond the core consortium to include external experts, stakeholders, and other HEP projects, enriching the exchange of knowledge and strengthening the relevance of activities.

Regular, open and structured communication has been a key enabler of effective cooperation. Projects have relied on a combination of formal meetings—such as monthly coordination and board meetings—and more informal, rapid communication channels. Clear documentation practices and shared digital platforms have supported transparency and continuity, particularly in complex, multi-partner settings. At the same time, challenges related to differing workloads, time constraints, and occasional connectivity issues have affected participation and required flexibility in scheduling and follow-up.

Differences in institutional contexts—including administrative procedures, procurement systems, academic calendars, and language—have continued to shape cooperation. These differences have sometimes led to delays or required additional coordination efforts. Projects have addressed these challenges through early planning, continuous dialogue, use of flexible approaches, and, where needed, involvement of institutional leadership or external support.

Trust has been central to maintaining effective partnerships. Transparent discussion of challenges, proactive problem-solving, and willingness to adapt have helped partners navigate uncertainties and sustain collaboration. Inclusive practices—such as engaging a broad range of staff, students, and stakeholders—have strengthened commitment and contributed to more sustainable outcomes.

Good practices in implementation:

- Regular, multi-level communication combining formal meetings and flexible channels
- Clear documentation, shared platforms, and transparent decision-making processes
- Joint planning and co-creation through mixed teams, mentoring, and shared responsibilities
- Use of in-person interactions and mobility to strengthen trust and collaboration
- Flexibility in addressing contextual differences (e.g. administrative systems, schedules, language)
- Proactive problem-solving and open handling of challenges and disagreements
- Early engagement of stakeholders and expansion of networks beyond the core partnership
- Anticipation and active management of delays related to procurement, reporting, and participation

5. PROJECT VISIBILITY

During 2025, HEP projects actively disseminated their activities, results, and outcomes to a wide range of audiences using both digital and in-person channels. Communication was guided by structured dissemination plans and implemented collaboratively across partners, supporting shared ownership.

Digital communication remained central. Project websites, blogs, newsletters, and social media platforms such as LinkedIn, YouTube, and messaging applications were widely used to share updates, publish results, and engage stakeholders. Several projects produced regular content, including blog series, bulletins, podcasts, and instructional videos, which supported continuous communication and broader accessibility. Internal communication within institutions also contributed to awareness and engagement.

Stakeholder engagement continued to play a key role in visibility. Projects presented their work to ministries, local authorities, embassies, professional networks, and international organisations. Collaboration with new partners and networks further expanded outreach. In several cases, projects engaged directly with schools, students, and community actors, increasing local relevance and impact. The involvement of students and beneficiaries, including persons with disabilities, also strengthened dissemination and advocacy efforts.

Participation in conferences, seminars, and public events further enhanced visibility at national and international levels. Projects contributed to academic and policy discussions through presentations, panel discussions, and workshops. High-level events and forums provided opportunities to showcase results, strengthen partnerships, and position projects within broader development agendas.

Innovative communication approaches were also evident. The use of podcasts, digital studios, webinars, and blended dissemination formats enabled projects to reach new audiences and adapt to different contexts. At the same time, traditional methods such as printed materials and on-site events remained important, particularly in local settings.

Overall, project visibility in 2025 was characterized by multi-channel communication, active stakeholder engagement, and increasing use of diverse and accessible dissemination methods. These efforts have strengthened the reach, relevance, and impact of the projects, while supporting sustainability and future collaboration.

Project	Publications and Articles
BERT	Landscape Analysis on disability inclusion in East African HEIs Forthcoming: Global Mapping Desk Review on best practices in inclusive learning
Foodleader	No publications from the second year of the project implementation
FUTE	lipinge et al. (2024): Future teacher education for sustainable development (conference paper at EduCon, Namibia, Sept 2024) lipinge, S. M., Anyolo, E. O., Naukushu, S. T., Ndakalako, H., and Amakali, L. (In Press). <i>Fostering Education for Sustainable Development for Resilient Economic Transformation: A Project Perspective</i> . In Resilient Systems for Sustainable Economic Transformation.

HEP-TED	Burns, E., Lehto, S., Mporananayo, N., & Mukingambeho, D. (2026). Building pedagogical learning organisations in Rwanda: An application of Senge’s framework. Digital Champions Developing Digital Pedagogy in Rwandan Higher Education Jamk University of Applied Sciences The Power of Collaboration in Digital Pedagogy and AI – Experiences from Rwanda TAMK International Tampere Universities Nordic Forum in Rwanda: Prospects for Cooperation Amid International Uncertainty TAMK International Tampere Universities Four Reasons to Respect Students TAMK International Tampere Universities Advancing Digital Pedagogy: A Collaborative Construction of a Digital Pedagogy Training in Rwanda Higher Education Pedagogies for Teacher Education University of Helsinki Four Reasons to Respect Students Higher Education Pedagogies for Teacher Education University of Helsinki Nordic Forum in Rwanda Showcases the Power of Long-Term Collaboration Higher Education Pedagogies for Teacher Education University of Helsinki Building Trust Through Dialogue: Professional Development Discussions in Rwandan Higher Education Higher Education Pedagogies for Teacher Education University of Helsinki HEP-TED Enters Its Final Phase: Deepening Collaboration and Showcasing Impact Across Finland and Rwanda Higher Education Pedagogies for Teacher Education University of Helsinki Digital Champions Developing Digital Pedagogy in Rwandan Higher Education Higher Education Pedagogies for Teacher Education University of Helsinki Strengthening Industrial Engagement and Advancing Women in STEM: Lessons from the HEP-TED Workshop in Finland Higher Education Pedagogies for Teacher Education University of Helsinki Reflecting Forward: Insights from the HEP-TED Self-Evaluation Workshop Higher Education Pedagogies for Teacher Education University of Helsinki Empowering educators through applied methods of digital champions - College of Education UR and RP commit to advancing digital pedagogy - College of Education Digital champions share experiences in transforming teaching practices - College of Education
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	UR-CE Hosts Quality Assurance Workshop to Boost Teacher Education under (...) - College of Education Empowering Teachers as Central Agents of Quality Assurance in Education : A (...) - College of Education
NERC	The project is working on a manuscript about the food composition database work with the project researchers/officers and aim to submit it by the end of March 2026. Together with teachers involved in the project, the project has also started drafting another manuscript about curriculum development at the partner departments.
SF-BioVac	Forthcoming: A manuscript on integrating sustainability and circular economy into higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa has been drafted for publication in the International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education Sustainable Cassava-based Ethanol Production-Integrating biogas production 2025 (Student's report yet to be published) – To be published on the European Project Semester website Master's thesis UNZA- Assessing The Sustainability Performance Of The Circular Economy Through The Biogas Value Chain: A Case- Study Of Zambeef Farm. Unlocking Zambia's Biogas Potential: Insights from the SF-BioVac Project results to be published by the Engineering Institute of Zambia (EIZ) & presented at the EIZ Symposium 2026.
TIPOTE	Irmeli Maunonen-Eskelinen: Living Lab approach to inclusive pedagogy (Arena, in Finnish) Pigga Keskitalo: Professorin työpäivä (KIDE Journal, 2/2024, in Finnish) Jari Järvinen: Podcasteja portugaliksi tekoälyn avustamana. Jamk Arena Pro. https://arena.jamk.fi/fi/arena-pro/podcasteja-portugaliksi-tekoalyn-avustamana/

6. QUALITY ASSURANCE

Compared to the previous reporting period, the structure of quality assurance remains largely consistent across projects: regular meetings, use of timesheets, reporting and feed-back practices, and stakeholder engagement continue to form the backbone of monitoring. However, gradual developments can be observed.

Internal quality assurance

While regular coordination and monitoring practices were already well established in 2024, in 2025 there is clearer evidence of more structured and reflective approaches. In particular, self-evaluation workshops and internal reflection sessions have become more common and systematic across projects. These are not only used for reporting progress but also for identifying concrete areas for improvement (e.g. communication, time management, and coordination between work packages).

In addition, several projects have strengthened the link between monitoring tools and project management, for example by more actively using risk management frameworks (such as traffic light systems) and mid-term financial reporting. There is also a clearer effort to align activities with the results framework and indicators, rather than only tracking implementation.

External quality assurance

Externally, the role of structured feedback collection has increased. While feedback surveys were already used in 2024, in 2025 they are more consistently applied (including pre- and post-activity surveys) and their results are more clearly fed back into project planning and adjustments.

Project boards and advisory mechanisms remain central, but there is some indication of more active use of these bodies for strategic guidance, not only for formal oversight. In addition, external monitoring (e.g. EDUFI visits) appears to be more explicitly integrated into project learning processes.

The main shift is towards a more systematic, reflective, and learning-oriented approach to quality assurance. Projects are increasingly using existing mechanisms not only for compliance and reporting, but also for continuous improvement and adaptation.

7. MOBILITY SCHEME

During 2025 the HEP- projects implemented structured mobility schemes to enhance learning, knowledge exchange, and professional development. Mobility activities included staff and student exchanges, internships, and short-term visits, and were carefully planned to align project objectives and institutional regulations. Selection processes were generally merit-based, incorporating motivation letters, relevant academic or professional experience, and in some cases positive discrimination measures to encourage diversity and inclusion.

Practical arrangements were coordinated jointly by sending and hosting institutions, covering travel, accommodation, visas, vaccinations, insurance, and local transport. Safety, cultural orientation, and clear guidelines for participation were emphasized for all mobility participants. Credit transfer for student mobility was managed according to institutional and project rules, with some projects awarding ECTS for completed mobility activities while others treated mobility as part of research or project work contributing to the degree.

Digital preparation and blended mobility approaches were widely adopted, combining remote collaboration, preparatory activities, and in-person engagement. Participants attended courses, workshops, research and professional meetings, and cultural exchange activities. In addition, mobilities were used to strengthen networks across institutions, build competencies in project themes, and disseminate project results to wider audiences.

Overall, in 2025 there were **6 student outbound mobilities** and **3 student inbound mobilities to Finland**, involving students from BERT and FUTE projects. For staff/teachers, **4 outbound mobilities** were reported, while **19 staff/teacher inbound mobilities to Finland** took place across HEP-TED, FoodLeader, FUTE, and NERC projects.

8. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The total budget for the HEP projects for 2024–2026 is approximately 6.9 million euros. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs covers 90 % of this amount, while the remaining 10 % is self-financed.

The overall budget utilization of the projects was 56% as of 31 December 2025. Budget utilization rates varied across projects, ranging from 39% to 70% (see the table below).

The second table presents the distribution of payments by southern partner countries. Rwanda, Mozambique, and Tanzania each host two projects.

Use of the total project budget (%) by 2025

