



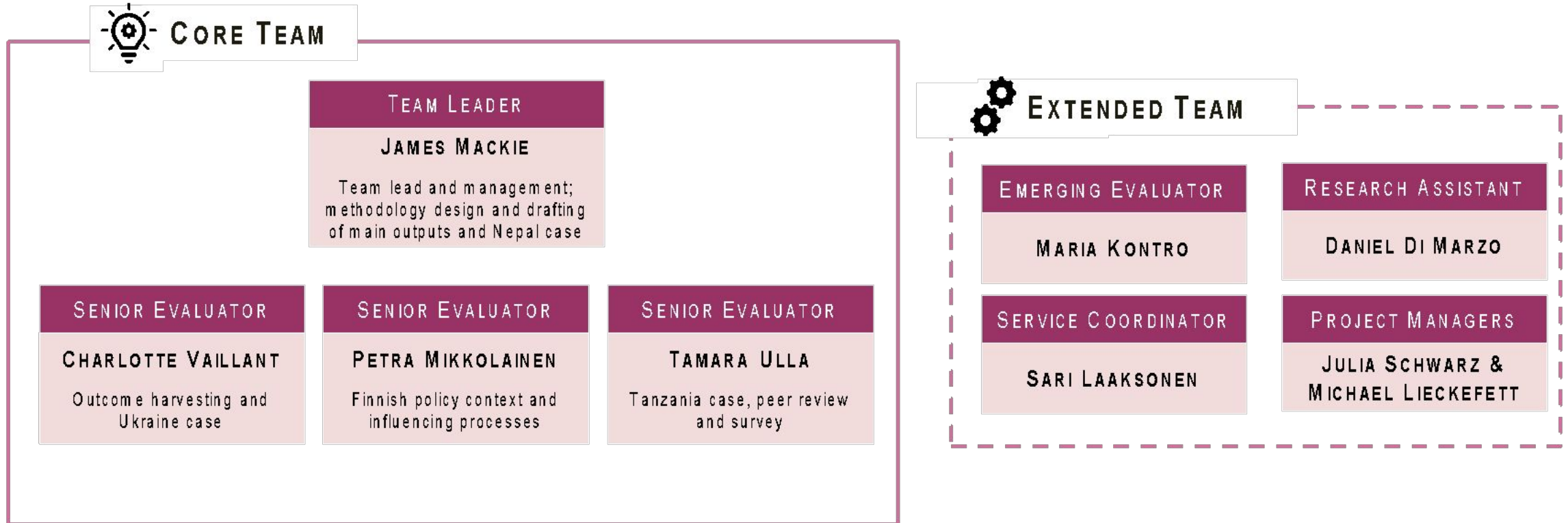
# Evaluation of Finnish Influencing of EU Development Policy

Presentation seminar

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# Evaluation Team



# Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Approach & methodology
3. Findings
4. Conclusions & recommendations

# Why this evaluation?

## Finland's global influence

- Finland is a member state (EU MS) of the EU since 1995
- The EU is a major international donor – COM + EU MS together ~ 50% global ODA
- Through the EU, Finland can influence how this money is spent
- Encourage EU to adopt/follow Finnish development cooperation policy priorities

## Government accountability for Finnish budget

- 20% of Finnish ODA goes through the EU budget (€223 million in 2019)
- Responsibility for how these funds from the Finnish budget are spent
- Accountability to interested stakeholders

**This evaluation is therefore to help the MFA judge how it is doing on all these counts**

# EU Decisions on development cooperation

## Key framework documents

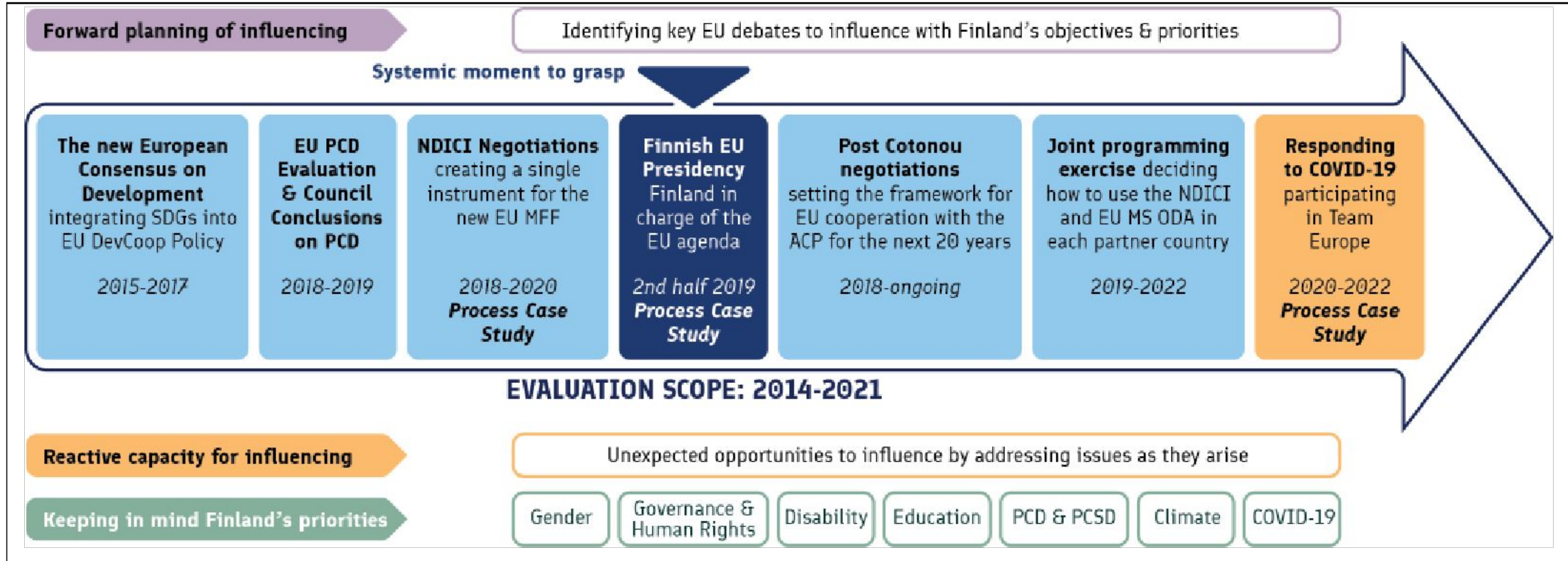
- Since joining the EU Finland has been party to decisions on key EU development cooperation policies:
  - 2005 *European Consensus on Development* – linked to MDGs
  - **2017 *European Consensus on Development*** – linked to SDGs
  - Both approved at highest level by Commission, Council and Parliament
  - These framework policies apply to Commission, *but also to Member States*

## Financing for development – another key part of framework

- EU Multiannual financial framework (**MFF 2021-2027**)
  - Negotiations in period 2019-2020
  - Creation of new *single instrument* for development cooperation: the **NDICI – Global Europe**
  - Approved by **Council** and **Parliament**
  - Sets framework for Commission's development cooperation programme for 7 years

→ *Finland therefore well integrated into EU development policy framework, but it also has an influence over it*

# Opportunities for influencing EU debates



# Approach & methodology



# Finland's EU influencing objectives

## General

- Based on a **hierarchy of policy documents**
- Since 2018, several EU development policy influencing plans with **many objectives**
- But overarching framing: the **2030 Agenda** and **policy coherence** for sustainable development

## Some key recurring priorities:

- Maintain *level of ODA funding* in the EU MFF 2021-2027
- Single instrument approach – the new NDICI-Global Europe instrument
- EU-Africa relations and simplified Post-Cotonou agreement (no EDF)
- EU's global COVID-19 pandemic response
- Gender equality; SRHR; climate change; education; migration; forestry
- Recruitment of Finns in EU institutions

## EU Presidency (2019)

- Overall approach – flexible & consensual, ensure good progress made on key dossiers
- Key priorities – EU-Africa relations and promotion of gender equality.
- NDICI negotiations – focus on EFSD+ and migration
- GAP II process – SRHR language



# Evaluation questions

## **EQ 1 – Internal organisation**

To what extent are the MFA's management approaches, arrangements, processes, and tools efficiently organised to maximise Finland's influence from the point of view of development policy and cooperation?

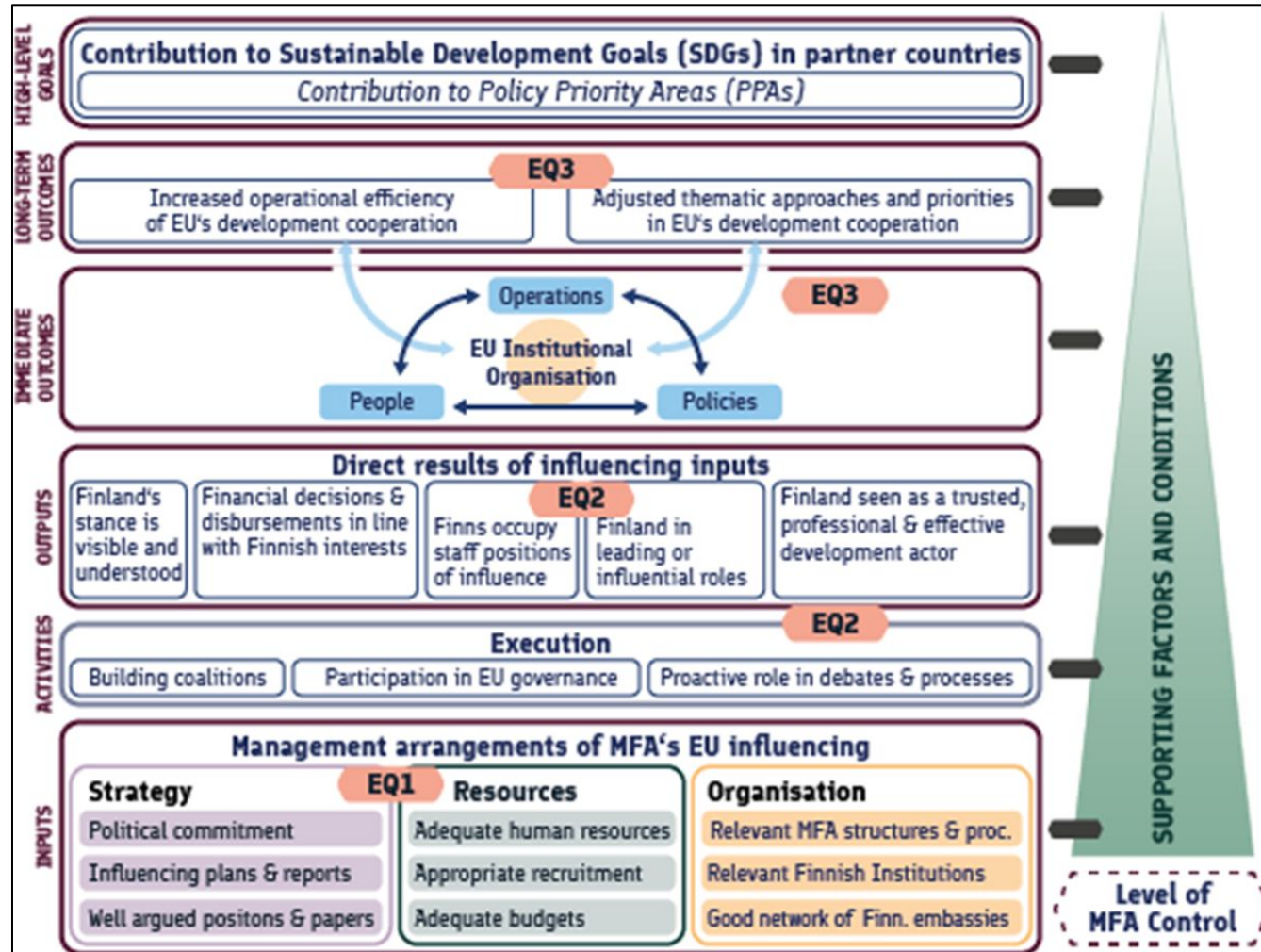
## **EQ 2 – Influencing process in practice**

To what extent has the MFA succeeded in promoting and incorporating its development policy objectives and principles in its engagement and relations with the EU in a relevant, coherent and efficient manner?

## **EQ 3 – Influencing Outcomes**

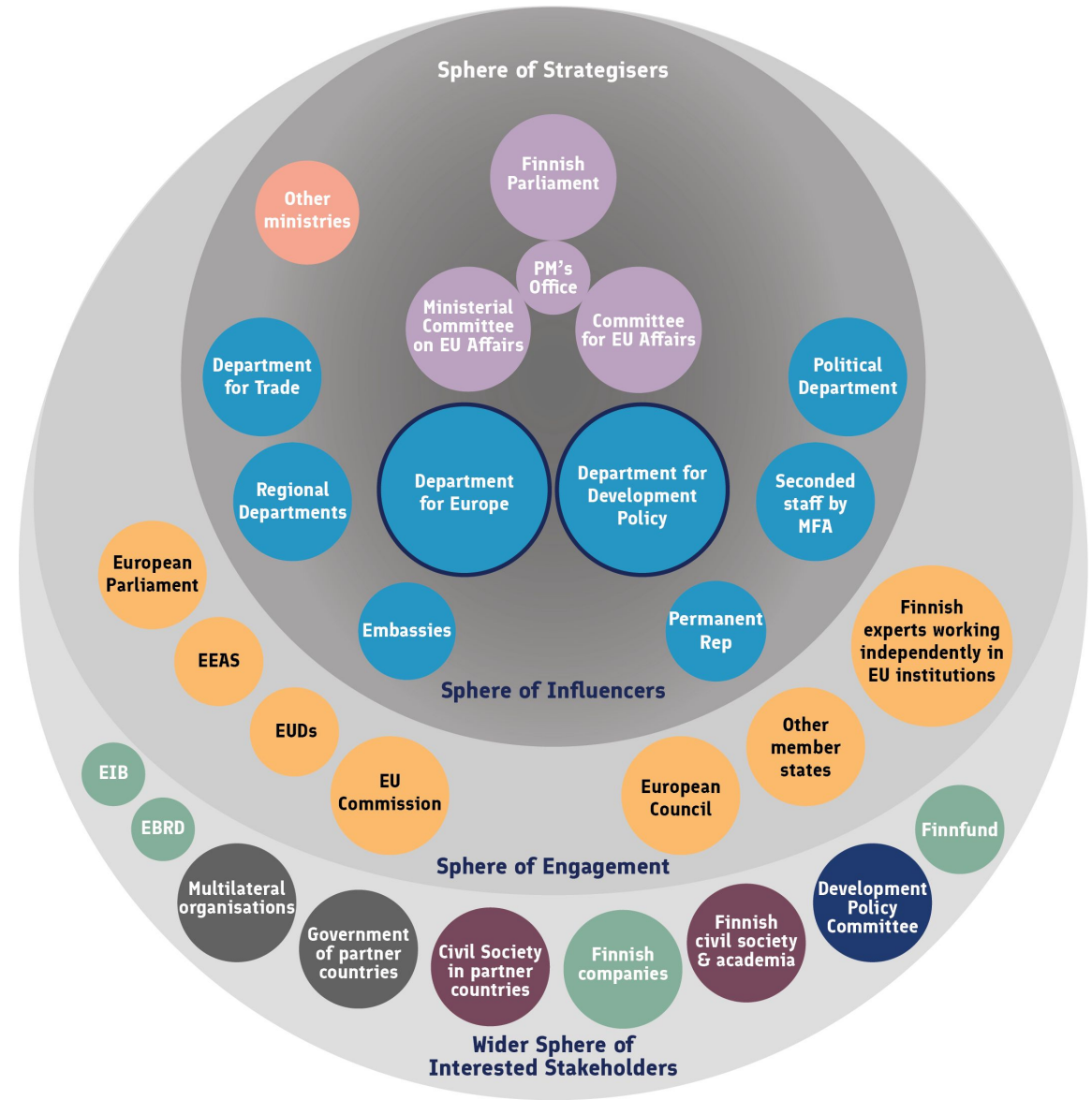
To what extent has the MFA succeeded in attaining influencing objectives/changes in the EU for the advancement of the Finnish and international development agenda and interests?

# Theory of change and data collection



- **Theory of Change** approach
- **Outcome harvesting**
- **110 Interviews** – most in Helsinki, Brussels, ...
- **2 Country case studies:** Nepal, Tanzania + Ukraine – ‘mini-case’
- **1 Peer Review** – 6 other EU MS: BE, DK, IRL, POL, PORT, SE
- **Survey to Embassies & EUDs** – 14 countries / 30 respondents
- **Literature review**

# Findings



- EU Institutions & Partners
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs
- Multistakeholder entity
- Investment Partners
- Other ministries
- Civil Society Organisations
- Other governmental institutions
- Political entities in Finland's EU coordination

# Overall answers to the Evaluation questions

## EQ 1 – Internal organisation

- EU influencing strategies are **coherent with its development policy** & generally well understood
- But they are **complex, not always well focused and prioritised**, nor always farsighted enough.

## EQ 2 – Influencing process in practice

- Finland's process for influencing the EU on development cooperation is **relevant, coherent, reasonably efficient and runs smoothly**.

## EQ 3 – Influencing Outcomes

- 18 Outcomes harvested and systematically analysed in terms of significance.
  - 25% of them **involved policy shifts endorsed by the three key EU institutions** and are therefore of major significance.
  - The rest are of more limited significance and often of a **more operational character** or policy shifts at a regional or country level.

# Selected specific findings per EQ

## EQ 1 – Internal organisation

- Some lack of clarity and guidance to staff on **prioritisation** of EU influencing in different areas (F1.1)
- Apparent lack of institutional **evidence-based** forward thinking and visioning based (F1.5.2)
- No systematic approach to **monitoring and learning** on EU influencing (F1.5.1)
- MFA **staffing is tight**, as a result opportunities for influencing are missed (F1.2.1)
- **External coordination and consultation** on influencing not as strong as could be (F1.4.2)

## EQ 2 – Influencing process in practice

- Finland has a well-recognised **leading and influential role** particularly in some areas (e.g. on gender equality, HRBA, sustainable use of natural resources, education) (F2.5)
- Finland widely seen a **trusted, highly professional and effective** actor on dev. coop. (F2.7.1)
- **Coalition building** and working with like-minded states widely and effectively used (F2.1.1)
- There are Finns in various positions in EU institutions but **not enough** (F2.2.2)

## EQ 3 – Outcomes

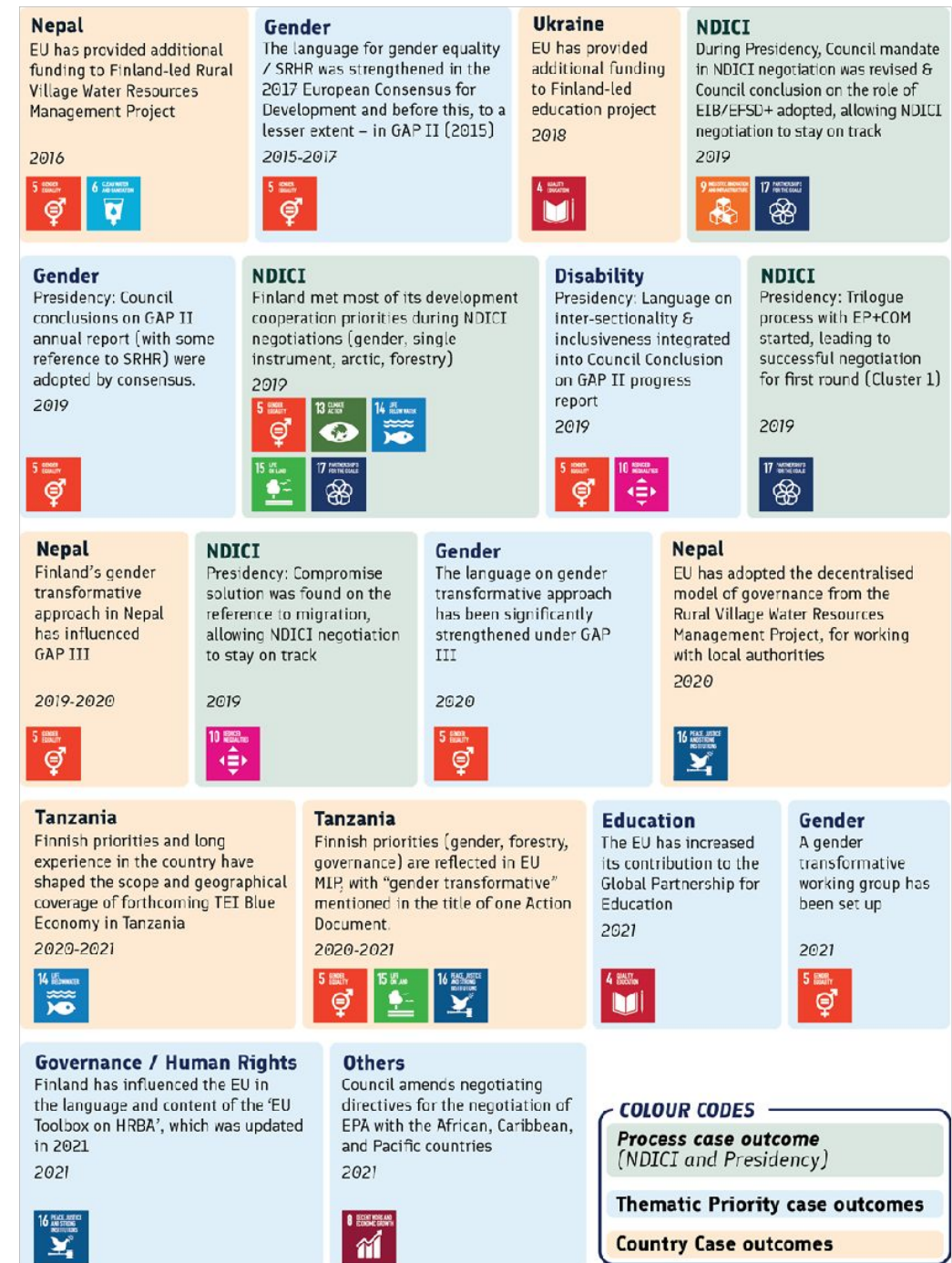
- Finland's EU **Presidency was a success**, though no specific outcome on Africa (F3.4+2.3)
- Achievement of **NDICI single instrument** (F3.5) and maintenance of **level of ODA** important in new EU MFF (F2.6.1) – both outcomes Finland pushed for
- **Lack of clarity on internal coordination** on EU's TE Initiatives and Global Gateway (F.4.1)



# Outcome harvesting

**18 Outcomes identified** (both in Brussels and partner countries):

- Verified and triangulated
- Checked against stated objectives
- Rated according to:
  1. Significance of outcome (result)
  2. Significance of influencing effort
- Some objectives not met
- At least one case of a ‘missed opportunity’
- They emerge from the **Process** cases, **Thematic** priority cases and from **Country** cases
- They also link well to a variety of SDGs and the 2030 Agenda



# Peer Review – 6 other EU member states

**Six MS covered:** Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Poland, Portugal & Sweden

**Study based on:** interviews with PermRep staff + literature, notably EBA study on like-minded MS for Sweden

## Comparisons

- 4 countries very similar policies & priorities – BE, DK, IRL & SE – clearly all ‘like-minded’
- 2 – Portugal & Poland – rather different: much lower ODA, yet Portugal has similar policy and geographic priorities to Finland, while for Poland they are rather different

## Lessons

- Working with varying coalitions of like-minded states – standard practice for all
- Confirms validity of approaches identified by Small State Theory
- Finland stands out as only one with written influencing plans
- Leveraging experience gained in the field gaining traction
- Other MS note a trend of *‘influencing moving to the field’*
- Sweden strong on placing secondments with expertise in the EU institutions

# Survey of Embassies and EUDs

**Survey of 14 countries:** invitations sent to Embassies and EU Delegation staff

**Response:** 50% response rate: 5 MFA & 10 EUD staff → *EUD views most robust*

## Findings:

- MFA & EUD: Positive assessment of effectiveness of Finnish influencing strategy
- EUD: In policy terms Finland seen as particularly strong on gender equality, use of natural resources and education
- EUD: Despite Finland's size, it's influence and presence is felt
- EUD: Finland achieved this through using a range of formal and informal channels including taking roles in joint management and through coalition building
- EUD: Saw attitude and experience of Finnish official as two greatest strengths contributing to successful influencing



# EU influencing is different in partner countries

- **Partner country context** different for influencing than HQ/Brussels
  - Number of EU players (EUD & MS embassies) generally smaller
  - Personal connections between HoMs, HoCs and sector specialists stronger, more direct and more frequent
  - Daily concerns more operational and political vis à vis partner government
- So influencing works more directly and more regularly, often quite intense debates
- Of course within framework provided by HQs – so more limited/targeted in scope
- At same time in-country debates can feed back to HQ – useful evidence for policy making
- **Vital part of influencing:** Indeed in-country influencing probably becoming more important
  - Some argue *'influencing is moving to the field'* (Peer Review para 12.4)
  - Advent of TE Initiatives and their in-country emphasis contributing to this
- **Need to consider implications** for resourcing embassies to tackle this effectively

# Key elements for successful in-country influencing

## What lessons to be learnt on successful recipe?

- Expertise and solid professional image (F2.5, 2.7.1, 2.7.2, Survey Q13, Fig.12)
- Staff resources to do both operational & influencing work (F1.2.1, 4.6),
- Positive, constructive attitude (Survey Q13, Fig.12)
- Capacity & approval to handle EU funds: delegated cooperation (F1.2.2, 2.6.2)
- Clarity on in-country EU influencing aims and agreement in Embassy + with HQ (F1.1, 1.3, 4.6)
- Willingness to compromise and adjust Finnish priorities for complementarity with EU group (Survey Q10)
- Proactive engagement with EU group in country & coalition building – includes willingness to take on governance tasks for effective collaboration (F2.1.1+2, 2.2.1, Survey Q10, Q14)
- Staying well-informed and networked (Survey Q10)
- Good relationship with partner country government and actors a key asset (Nepal 2.3, Tanz. 2.3, 2.7)

# Nepal – Some key findings

Crit.	Topic	Finding
1.2	Resources	Staffing levels adequate. <i>'Finnish staffing is limited in quantity but good in quality'</i> . However, limited staff has also meant <b>missed opportunities</b>
1.4	Joint work	Embassy works closely with EUD and MS in Nepal. But <b>different (MFA/EUD) processes for project preparation imposes limits</b>
1.5	Learning	Some good learning practices in Embassy but <b>not very systematic</b> . Finland not in <b>European Practitioners Network</b> so misses out on learning there
2.1	Coalitions	Embassy worked closely with EUD and other EU actors. Small group but <b>Finland one of most present and influential</b>
2.2	Relevance	Embassy has participated in EU joint planning and programming. <b>Now getting involved in TE Initiatives</b>
3.2	EU policy	RVWRMP example of Finnish <b>influence on EU to use decentralised governance model</b>
3.3	EU operations	Finland encouraged EU to work at district level and <b>fund local authorities</b>
3.5	EU themes	Finland pushed for water and disability to be included in <b>new GRAPE TEI</b>

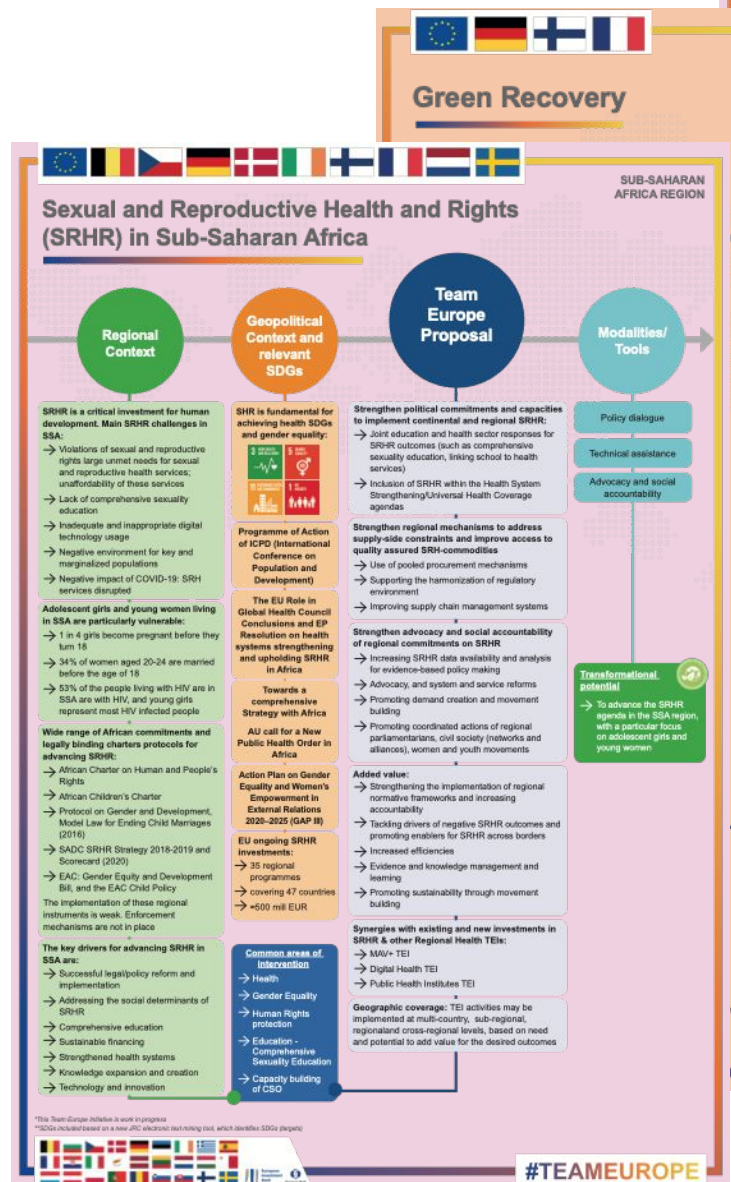
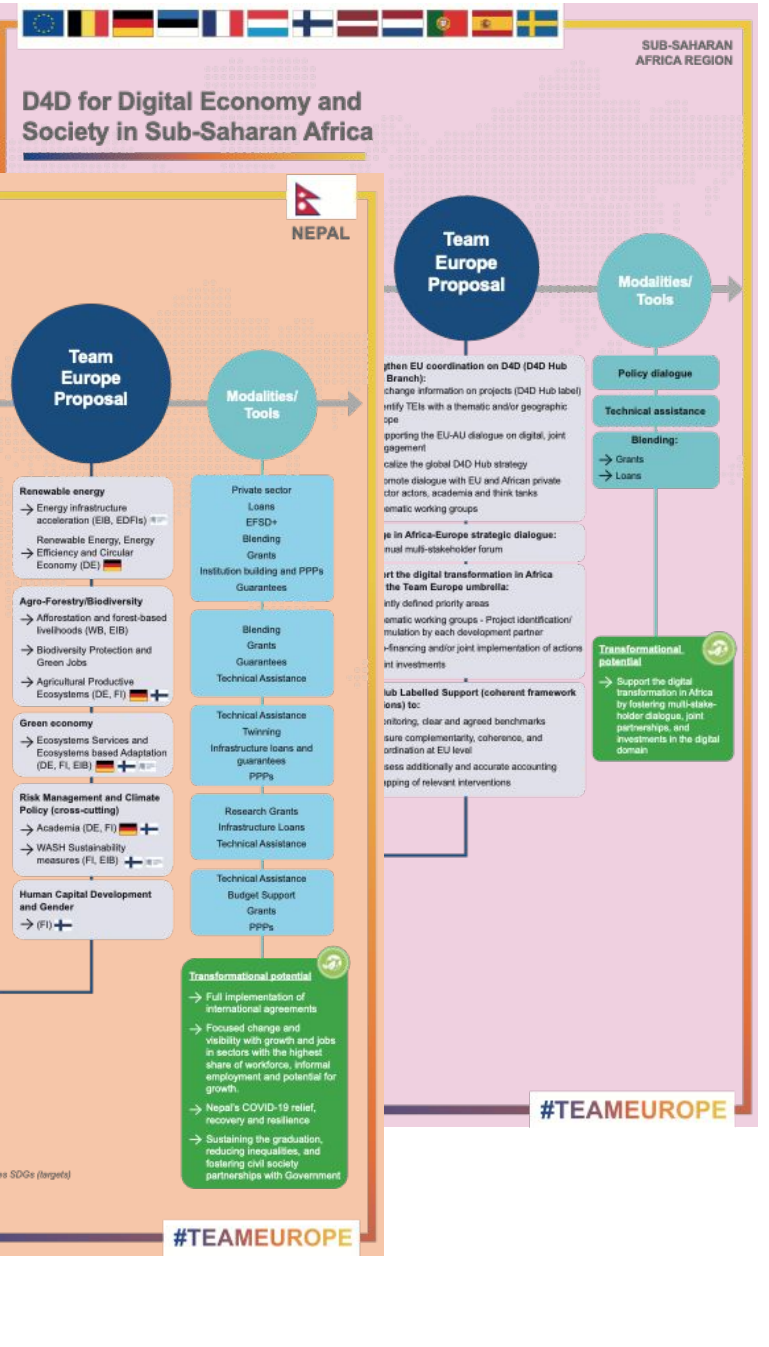
# Tanzania – Some key findings

Crit.	Topic	Finding
1.2	Resources	Staffing OK but tight: <b>can cause difficulties for influencing work.</b> Seek to tackle with flexibility and adaptability.
1.3	Roles	Roles for influencing clear and work well. Not aware of MFA guidance on influencing, but <b>staff experienced – sustainability?</b>
1.4	Joint work	Good joint work with MFA. <b>Lack of Finnish institutions (other than MFA) approved for EU delegated cooperation a limitation.</b>
1.5	Learning	Have participated in learning events, but <b>learning not systematic</b> rather incidental
2.1	Coalitions	Active coordination with 13 MS. <b>Finland among most active.</b> Relations with GoT not easy in recent years but MS <i>'act as one family'</i> .
2.5	Influence	<b>EU group recognises Finnish leadership particularly on gender equality and forestry agenda</b>

# Ukraine – Some key findings

Crit.	Topic	Finding
1.1	Approach	Finnish and EU's development policy in line with each other: facilitated collaboration
1.2	Resources	Limited staffing was a constraint – Staff posted in Kyiv and Brussels key to achieving progress on education project, to make the connections and share information
1.5	Learning	Information flows remain an issue – <i>'sometimes information does not reach the capitals'</i>
2.5	Influence	Finnish expertise in education vital
2.5	Influence	Long-standing partnership with Ukrainian Ministry of Education also vital
2.6	EU finance	On-going pillar assessment of Finnish National Education Agency should enable use of EU funds through delegated cooperation

# Conclusions & recommendations





Conclusions – successes & challenges	Recommendations – how to improve?
<p><i>C1: Efforts to influence EU have yielded worthwhile results. A range of significant outcomes have been achieved.</i></p>	
<p><i>C2: Finland has succeeded to promote its own development policy priorities in the EU context though not all of them to the same extent.</i></p>	<p>R1: <b>Build on areas of success</b> (e.g. gender equality) to strengthen areas with less impact. (e.g. climate action)</p>
<p><i>C3: Good start on using EU funds, but foundations for more use of delegated cooperation seem weak.</i></p>	<p>R2: Expand the strategic use of <b>delegated cooperation</b> for EU funding.</p>
<p><i>C4: Successful use of various channels for influencing. Good use made of coalitions with like-minded states in many though not all areas. On the other hand, weak presence of Finnish nationals in the EU institutions is a handicap for influencing.</i></p>	<p>R3: Extend use of <b>coalition-building</b> with like-minded states.</p> <p>R4: Expand the <b>presence of Finnish nationals</b> in the EU institutions.</p>
<p><i>C5: Staff understanding of EU influencing priorities varies. Not all find it easy to prioritise both among them and between them and other duties.</i></p>	<p>R5: Strengthen <b>day to day support to staff</b> on EU influencing and prioritisation choices.</p> <p>R6: Improve clarity on prioritisation of EU influencing in <b>partner-country</b> settings</p>

## Conclusions – successes & challenges

*C6: Good use of opportunities in regular EU processes (e.g. 2019 EU Presidency). But some weaknesses on prioritisation and forward planning for future.*

*C7: Internal organisation important factor in success. But there is also scope for improvements and a case for strengthening leadership in places.*

*C8: KM processes for influencing rather informal: limited systematisation and poor links to forward planning.*

*C9: MFA staffing constraints limit EU influencing resulting in missed opportunities: a risk going forward.*

*C10: Where internal coordination not that strong creates risks for new and potentially far-reaching opportunities (e.g. the TEIs and Global Gateway).*

*C11: External coordination and consultation on EU influencing limited, which undermines potential external support for influencing in EU.*

## Recommendations – how to improve?

R7: Develop more **forward looking influencing strategies** based on up-coming EU opportunities

R8: Use the **changeover** of the European Commission in 2024 as an opportunity for influencing.

R9: Review staff roles and responsibilities regularly and **strengthen leadership** on EU influencing.

R10: **Improve monitoring of and learning** from the EU influencing work.

R11: Take a more **strategic approach to staffing issues** to ensure adequate skilled capacity not least with more staff who are familiar with the way the EU works.

R12: Review **coordination for Finnish involvement in Team Europe** and EU Global Gateways strategy.

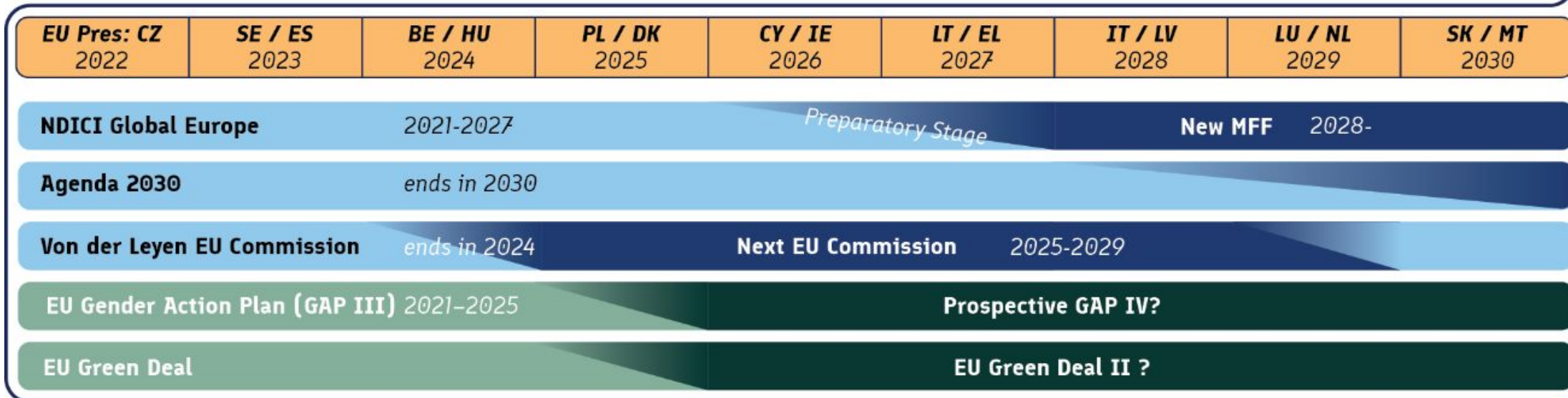
R13: **Expand outreach** on influencing plans to Finnish stakeholders.



# Some significant influencing moments in the future

Many EU policy processes run in regular cycles:

- Use these to plan ahead when influencing will be useful
- Can also identify opportunities when 'like-minded' states will have the EU Presidency
- Crucial to be well informed to stay ahead of the game





Thank you for  
your attention

