UK Science & Innovation Network

UK Science & Innovation Network Country Summary

Finland

1. Science and Innovation Landscape

Finland has consistently ranked high in international comparisons of education, research, technology and innovation. Finland's strengths have largely been based on its high-quality educational system and good integration between industry, research institutes, universities and the public sector. Finland has a highly sophisticated and integrated innovation system and ranks 6th in Global innovation index (UK ranks 4th).

Finland position in Global Innovation Index 2023:

6th

UK position in Global Innovation Index 2023:

4th

Finland is on the path towards an ambitious goal of significantly increasing the investments in research and development and raising the ambition level of R&D activities. A parliamentary commitment to reach a 4% investment level has been agreed and significant concrete measures have been taken in order to meet the target. Finland has adopted laws to increase public funding to R&D and to guarantee tax exemptions related to RDI-investments. Additionally, the new R&D funding law requires the government to prepare a multiannual plan for the use of public R&D funding for the following eight years once every electoral term. In addition to its proposals on funding, the parliamentary R&D working group makes recommendations related to strengthening the management of the RDI system, increasing the availability of R&D skills and labour force, advancing cooperation, making strategic choices at the national level, assessing the effectiveness of R&D funding and developing a favourable operating environment for research and innovation.

At the Ministerial level, the Prime Minister chaired Research and Innovation Council helps set overall direction of the Finnish S&I landscape. Nearly 80% of governmental R&D funding is channelled through two ministries, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. The Ministry of Education and Culture ensures the overall functioning of higher education and science in Finland. The Ministry is responsible for the planning and implementation of higher education and science policy, and it prepares the related statutes, national budget proposals and government decisions. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment is responsible for preparing and implementing Finland's innovation policy. These ministries are the foremost organisations responsible for science and technology policies.

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The Ministry of Education and Culture sponsors the Research Council of Finland, which is the Finnish Funding Agency for Basic Research as well as universities. The Research Council of Finland is an expert organisation in science and research that funds high-quality scientific research and provides expertise in science and science policy and strengthens the position of science and research. The Ministry of Employment and the Economy funds Business Finland, the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation. Business Finland gathers all services related to innovation funding and to the promotion of exports, investments and travel under one roof.

Finland's strengths in Science and Innovation (S&I) are well developed high quality S&I ecosystem, cost effectiveness of S&I operations, strong competence, know-how and expert pool in certain S&I areas and strong and developing start-up culture. Success has been built on generous investment in R&D; investment in enabling infrastructure; well-connected innovation ecosystems, often with a shared sense of vision; talented workforces and tech-savvy populations; and a mission-oriented approach with government accepted as a major player. Finland leads the way in digital technologies and take-up, for example around AI, 5G/6G and quantum technology research, and hosts companies with global reach such as Nokia. Finland hosts the prestigious Millennium Innovation Prize and Europe's leading start-up and technology event, Slush.

Higher Education and Research landscape

The Finnish higher education system consists of 13 universities and 22 universities of applied sciences that operate under the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. 9 of the Finnish universities are featured in the QS World University Ranking 2023. Additionally, 12 public research institutes work under related ministries. VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland (VTT) under the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment is a key cooperation partner for companies, research institutes, higher education institutions and policy makers both nationally and internationally. Other public research institutes are more mission-oriented, with a broad range of research objectives. Their mandate can vary from research (both basic and applied) to additional responsibilities, such as monitoring, data collection and management, certification and inspection.

2. UK-Finland Partnership on Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I)

The UK has a strong Science & Innovation footprint in Finland, fuelled collaboration and researcher mobility. The engagement with Finland on science and innovation is wide-ranging and involves mutual priority areas like clean energy, artificial intelligence, quantum, semiconductors, critical minerals and climate change mitigation. Forums like Arctic Spirit (organised by the Arctic Centre at the University of Lapland), start-up event Slush, World Circular Economy Forum

(initiated by Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra) provide platforms for new and strengthened partnerships between UK and Finnish S&I communities.

Joint Declaration on the Strategic Partnership between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Finland

The Strategic Partnership, signed in May 2024, deepens UK-Finnish cooperation across the bilateral relationship, including foreign policy, security and defence, science and technology, sustainable development, climate and energy, economic cooperation and irregular migration.

Examples of science and innovation (S&I) goals in Strategic Partnership Agreement include

- Cooperate to innovate and commercialise new technology
- Cooperate in education, science, research, innovation and technology and collaborate on research, development and innovation bilaterally and through multilateral mechanisms
- Promote the sustainable, secure and safe design, development, deployment and use of new and emerging technologies. This includes the fields of artificial intelligence (AI), high performance computing, quantum technologies, space, cyber security and defence applications, 6G and future telecoms technologies, engineering biology and the bioeconomy, and semiconductor technologies.
- Tackle shared challenges and accelerating development in key areas of human and planetary health, life sciences, anti-microbial resistance, climate science and the green transition.

3. SIN Finland Contact

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