



Evaluating Research Ecosystem Using SCOPE

Can SCOPE-framework be used in evaluating
multidisciplinary research ecosystems?

PhD Mari Riipinen, Development manager
Customer Success and RDI partnerships, CSC



Outline

- About the presenter
- INVEST a Research Flagship in Finland
 - Characteristics from assessment point of view
- Assignment of the assessment group
 - Data, meetings and interviews
- Assessing INVEST Flagship with SCOPE
- Key results of the assessment and recommendations
- Conclusions: Can research ecosystem be evaluated using SCOPE framework

Who am I

- PhD in Human Geography

- *Scaling social capital. Local and global perspectives on land use in Nellim, Finland*

- 8 years of experience in research funding

- National funders, EU funding, USA funding + renewal of pre award services (service design and organization)

- 7 years of experience in leading research development/ research preconditions unit

- Open science, research ethics, coordination and support for multidisciplinary research ecosystems, CRIS system, project management system, university level funding, research infrastructures, data support services

- 2 years of experience on national support for digitalization of research

- Strategic collaboration, RDI partnerships, customer success development

Networks and collaborating with people have driven my professional career.



Finnish Flagship Programme

Aim of the Finnish Flagships is to challenge and innovate the scientific system.

- An instrument that supports high-quality research and increases the economic and societal impact emerging from the research
- The Flagships create future knowledge and sustainable solutions to societal challenges and promote economic growth by, for example, developing new business opportunities
- By providing substantial long-term funding, the programme accelerates active collaboration between different actors and facilitates the development and expansion and systematic operations

Lippulaivaohjelma 5, haku suunnitellaan avattavaksi keväällä 2026



FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME

The northern fleet of excellent science, successful collaboration and solutions for tomorrow
The Finnish Flagship Programme provides a long-term RDI in Finland. The programme offers long-term funding for large research Flagships, each operating in a specific field. The programme promotes active collaboration between research, business and society. This supports future knowledge and know-how, and helps create solutions to societal challenges, develop business opportunities and contribute to sustainable growth.

THE FINNISH FLAGSHIPS

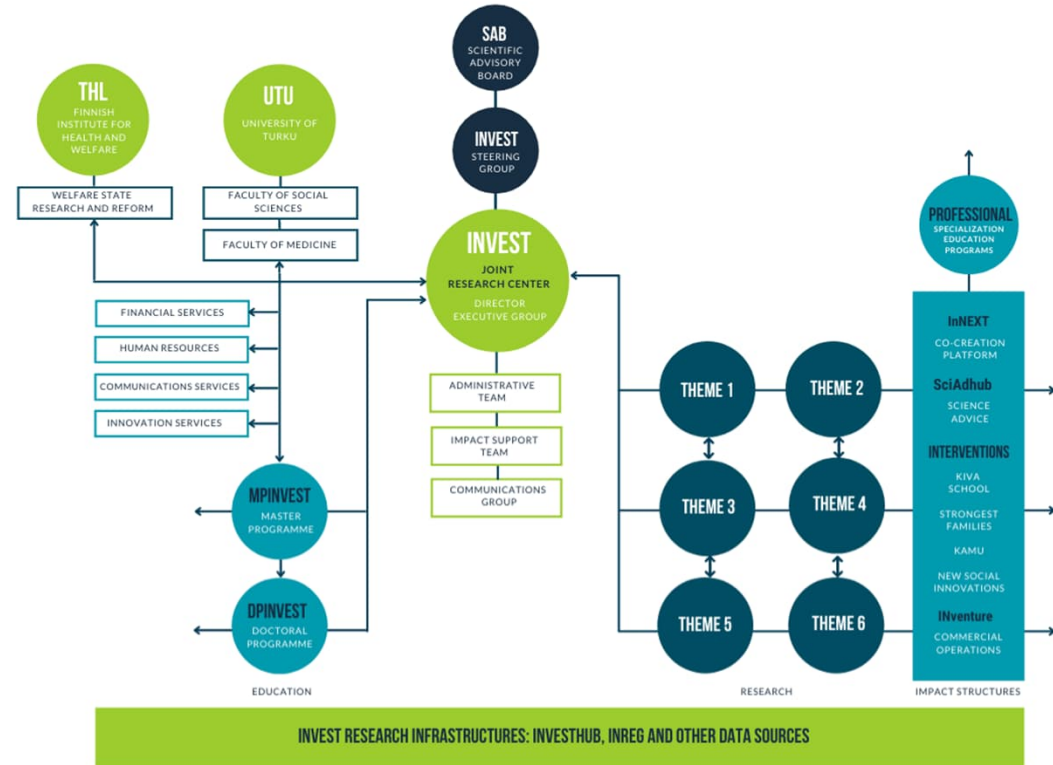
- effective mix of cutting-edge research
- long-term plan for eight years
- versatile societal impact
- close collaboration with business, industry and society
- high ambition level
- excellent facilities, infrastructures and
- strong commitment from host organisations
- selected by the Research Council of Finland

Finland's strengths

- High-level education and research system
- State-of-the-art research environments and infrastructures
- Strong collaboration and innovation culture
- Continuous investments in R&D
- Gender equality

INVEST – Inequalities, Interventions and a New Welfare State

- Aims at providing a new model for the welfare states that is more equal, better targeted to problem groups, more anticipatory as well as economically and socially sustainable.
- Based on cutting-edge research on the conditions and mechanisms involved at different periods of development, INVEST will evaluate and develop various universal and targeted interventions to improve the efficiency of the current welfare state institutions at critical points of the early life course.



Assignment of the assessment group

Give information and recommendations on:

What kind of entity or organizational unit INVEST Flagship should and could be by 2026 in terms of content (research, education and impact) and structure (organization)?

- what are the strengths of INVEST flagship and what kind of actions were needed to improve the strengths and aims of INVEST.
- what were the challenges of INVEST and what actions were needed to overcome the challenges.



Professor Juho Saari, Tampere University
Chair of the assessment group



Professor Tina Malti, University of Toronto and Leipzig University



Professor Stefan Svalfors, Institute for Futures Studies in Stockholm and Swedish Research Council



PhD Mari Riipinen, CSC and University of Turku
Management of the assessment group

Assessing a Research Flagship with SCOPE model



PRINCIPLES:

Evaluate
only when
necessary

Evaluate
with
evaluated

Draw on
evaluation
expertise

- START with what you value
 - Clearly articulate what YOU value about the entity being evaluated
- CONTEXT considerations
 - WHAT are you evaluating
 - WHY are you evaluating
- OPTIONS for evaluating
 - Qualitative and quantitative options
- PROBE
 - Unintended consequences?
 - Cost-benefit of the evaluation
- EVALUATE your evaluation
 - Did the evaluation achieve its aims

SCOPE: Why are we assessing



PURPOSE	OPTIONS CONSIDERATIONS
ANALYSIS Evaluating to understand “Science of Science” activities that study pattern and trends for the sole purpose of understanding them better	Will likely require some form of qualitative data analysis. May learn from published studies in a similar area
ADVOCACY Evaluating to “show off” . Evaluating activities that seek to highlight and entity of strengths for cases such as promotional materials or grant applications	Often need only to highlight the entity’s strengths rather than present a holistic analysis of their performance
ACCOUNTABILITY Evaluating to monitor . Plotting progress against an objective whether internally or externally set	Requires reliable data that will be available over a period of time for trend analysis
ACCLAIM Evaluating to compare . Assessment that seeks to compare and benchmark one entity with another. University rankings are an example of this	Requires reliable sector-wide data or intelligence. Such evaluations are used to identify strengths in an entity and to learn from their best practices
ADAPTATION Evaluate to incentivize . The use of assessment to incentivize certain behaviors. Funder assessment of engagement with open access in one example.	Evaluative incentives might include prizes (e.g. research culture awards) required thresholds (e.g. funder open access policies), or audits and to must be appropriate to their importance of the incentivized behavior
ALLOCATION Evaluating to reward . Any activity that results in some form of reward for entities being evaluated be this a job promotion, grant, prize or award of any description	Selecting candidates for jobs, prizes or grant income usually require thresholds (who makes the shortlist) and ranking (who gets the prize)

Process: data, meetings and interviews



Background data

Content of the material	qualitative/ quantitative	Description
INVEST collaborations	qualitative	Description, including names and numbers and of the nature of the collaborations with different types of stakeholders. (pdf)
INVEST data to assessment group	qualitative quantitative	Analysis on the publications, degree programmes, personnel structure, data infrastructure, interaction and communication. (PowerPoint)
INVEST economic evaluation material	qualitative quantitative	Analysis and raw data (tables) on the personnel and finances of INVEST. (PowerPoint)
INVEST mission statement	qualitative	Mission statement (PowerPoint)
INVEST self-assessment	qualitative	Self-assessment analysis on INVEST flagship's purpose, personnel, finances, collaborations, research, education, impact activities and on the future of the flagship. (pdf, 30 pages)
INVEST citation analysis	qualitative quantitative	Description of selected citation indicators regarding INVEST publications. (word)
INVEST success stories	qualitative	Narratives on selected success stories (including impact) within INVEST. (pdf)

Timetable: meetings and interviews

date and time	topic	on site / online
January 25 th , 2024	Decisions on the ways of working, on assessment questions, the background info and timetable	on-line
March 8 th , 2024	Public kickoff event with invited speakers from the assessment group, UTU, THL and Research Council of Finland	hybrid
April 25 th , 2024	Notions on the background data and preparing for the site visit	on-line
May 15 th , 2024	Participating in the INVEST SAB meeting	on-line
June 10 th - 11 th 2024	Site-visit and drafting the evaluation report	on-site
June 13 th , 2024	Meeting with THL directorate	on-line
September 2 nd , 2024	Finalizing the evaluation report	on-line
October 21 st , 2024	Presenting the evaluation results	hybrid

Key observations

- INVEST has created *something exceptional* that has not happened before within social and health sciences in Finland.
- A center with *academic freedom, start-up mentality and bottom-up structure*
- To lead a research flagship, it requires *flexibility, creativity and willingness to give new generations' opportunities* to find their own path.
- The center is highly depended on external funding and has an *unclear position*
- *INVEST identity* can be described to be filled with enthusiasm and international exchanges.
- *The existing (6) research themes* lack cohesion and clarity, resulting in fragmented efforts to push the research agenda
- It might be better to continue using *mainly quantitative methods* and not broaden too much the methodological framework to maintain a focused and high-level methodological profile.

Recommendations to INVEST

1. Develop a Stronger Core Mission	The main purpose and substantial core of INVEST need to be clarified and a more unified focus needs to be identified, at the same time as the positive aspects of a bottom-up approach are maintained.
2. Expand Multidisciplinary Collaboration	Foster stronger ties with health economics and political science departments to broaden the research scope and impact together with the input from the THL.
3. Enhance Leadership and Governance	Develop a robust leadership framework that balances academic freedom with strategic oversight, ensuring sustained growth and innovation.
4. Secure Financing	The center needs a funding share that is systematic, longstanding and predictable. This basic funding would also secure a sustainable ability to host externally funded projects.

Recommendations to host organizations

1. INVEST research ecosystem should be turned into an Independent Unit at the same organizational level as the faculties at the University of Turku.	<p>The Child Psychiatry unit (Faculty of Medicine) has a long history and is strong and independent.</p> <p>INVEST researchers should have a double affiliation to the independent unit and to the faculty of their discipline.</p> <p>An agreement regarding the academic degrees (Master and PhD) and teaching commitments should be made with the faculties in question.</p> <p>INVEST independent unit needs basic funding that could be allocated based on their performance</p> <p>The INVEST administration team should be at the independent unit and lead by an administrative manager.</p>
2. Collaboration agreement between THL and University of Turku	Framework agreement that states the overall cooperation between two organizations and special agreements regarding INVEST collaboration (data, researcher exchange, PhD training, visiting professorships etc.)
3. Leadership	Decisions on leadership and management positions should be made following the decision-making procedures at the University of Turku
4. Flagships at UTU	A coordination forum is needed to set the rules for this kind of big initiatives.
5. Future national finances	UTU and THL leadership should address the Research Council of Finland to make them aware that some level of smoothing funding is needed.

Outcomes after the assessment

- Strategic collaboration contract between UTU and THL was signed
- New ERC grants were received
- Substantial national research infrastructure status and funding
- Four new professors were appointed
- INVEST becomes as a permanent department at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Turku



Johanna Kaakinen Appointed Professor

24.1.2025

Marjo Kaarinen, the Rector of the University of Turku, has appointed Johanna Kaakinen as a Professor of Psychology.



Elina Kilpi-Jakonen Appointed Professor

16.1.2025

Marjo Kaarinen, the Rector of the University of Turku, has appointed Elina Kilpi-Jakonen as a Professor of Sociology.



Kirsi Peltonen Appointed Professor

31.1.2025

Marjo Kaarinen, the Rector of the University of Turku, has appointed Kirsi Peltonen as a Professor of Psychology, in particular experimental research in social and behavioural



Mirkka Danielsbacka Appointed Professor

30.4.2025

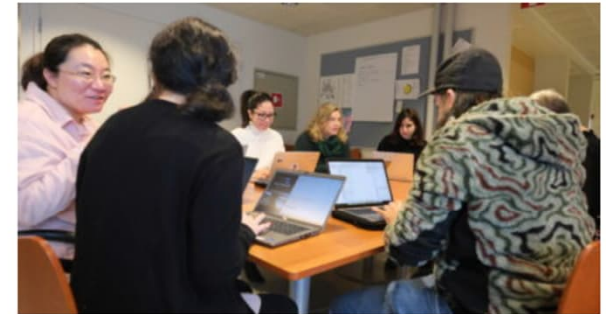
Marjo Kaarinen, the Rector of the University of Turku, has appointed Mirkka Danielsbacka as a Professor of Sociology, starting from 1 May 2025.



FIRE Receives Research Infrastructure Funding to Restore Finland's Leadership in Register-Based Research

4.12.2024

The Finnish Infrastructure for Register-Based Research (FIRE), coordinated by the INVEST Research Flagship Centre, received the national infrastructure roadmap status. According to Professor Jani Erola, who leads the FIRE project, the funding enables the creation of a world-class infrastructure for register-based data research.



11.4.2025

INVEST will continue as permanent University department after flagship funding period

INVEST Research Flagship Centre will continue as a permanent department in the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of...

Can research ecosystem be evaluated using SCOPE?

START with what you VALUE	✓	Clearly articulate what YOU value about the entity being evaluated → self assessment
CONTEXT considerations	✓	WHAT are you evaluating → INVEST entity WHY are you evaluating → Continuation plan
OPTIONS for evaluating	✓	Qualitative and quantitative options → outcomes of research and education, impact stories, finances, personnel and narrative self evaluation
PROBE deeply	? ✓	Unintended consequences? → were biases considered enough Cost-benefit of the evaluation → moderate costs, collected material used for many purposes
EVALUATE your evaluation	✓ ?	Did the evaluation achieve its aims → Decisions were made based on the evaluation → We did not evaluate our work



Conclusions and acknowledgements

- The assessment group believes that the INVEST continues renewing the existing research systems by doing expectational things
- We want to thank
 - University of Turku, especially to the president Jukka Kola and president Marjo Kaartinen
 - THL especially director general Mika Salminen
 - INVEST steering group
 - INVEST Scientific Advisory Board
 - INVEST flagship – director Jani Erola and all of researchers and administration



External assessment report suggests the creation of a stable and sustainable structure for the INVEST Research Flagship Centre

25.10.2024

INVEST (“Inequalities, Interventions and the New Welfare State”) Research Flagship Centre must have a new organisational structure in place by spring 2026, the external assessment report suggests. As INVEST has grown into an ecosystem of around 250 people, it needs a more stable and sustainable organisational structure and a secure share of basic funding. At the same time, INVEST should develop a stronger core mission to reflect the much-expanded scope of research. “The INVEST is too big to fall in terms of staff, research output, and, arguably, the prestige, some creative solutions are certainly needed to solidify this success and avoid unfortunate pitfalls”, evaluators say.



PhD Mari Riipinen,
kehityspäällikkö

Strategic collaboration and
partnerships

CSC - IT Center for Science Ltd
Keilaranta 14, P.O.Box 405, FI-02101
Espoo, FINLAND

mari.riipinen@csc.fi

+358 40 5779273

CSC - For Brilliant Minds | www.csc.fi



facebook.com/CSCfi



twitter.com/CSCfi



linkedin.com/company/csc---it-center-for-science



github.com/CSCfi