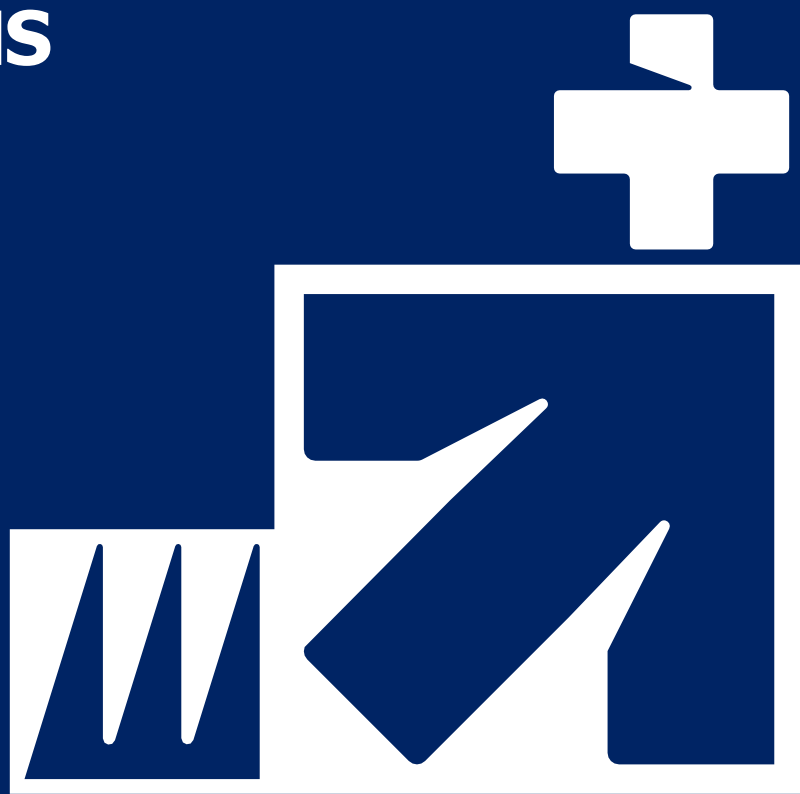


FIRST INTERIM EVALUATION OF BUSINESS FINLAND MISSIONS

**PART 1: SYNTHESIS REPORT OF THE
TWO EVALUATIONS**



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ISBN 1797-7347

ISSN 978-952-457-693-2

BUSINESS FINLAND

We believe in the power of ideas. That's why we fund and help Finnish companies grow quicker and develop their innovations to become global success stories.

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1. Background and context

1.1. The need and rationale of mission policy

Countries have been turning to mission-oriented innovation policies (MOIP) as a new strategy to address complex societal challenges defined by clear goals and a timeframe. By setting clear goals and timeframes, MOIPs align science, technology, and innovation efforts with regulatory policies to drive targeted, collaborative solutions. Missions are typically bold and ambitious, involve a large range of stakeholders across sectors and require significant innovation and coordination. They are also characterised by a long-term vision and transformative ambition. Missions have taken different forms in different arenas.

Business Finland adopted the mission concept in 2021, and in 2022 both the concept and its related practices were further clarified and developed. Business Finland decided to implement mission approach when entering its latest strategy period (2020–2025). With missions, Business Finland aimed to accelerate systemic change and help solve major global challenges, while creating value for society on a broad scale and identifying significant future market opportunities for Finnish companies.

Business Finland's missions are selected from sectors that are experiencing significant global changes so that they can provide significant opportunities for Finnish companies in the markets of future. They combine long-term strategic forecasting with assisting companies here and now. Missions are playing a strong role in Business Finland's programmatic work, as all programmes operate under the umbrella of missions. Thus, programmes have a key role in implementing missions.

Currently, Business Finland has five missions. Decision to start the first two missions that are "Digital Native Finland" (DNF) and "Zero Carbon Future" (ZCF), was made in December 2021. The three latter missions are "Circular Transition for Zero Waste", "Healthcare reimaged", and "Immersive Digital Life" that got their respective decisions at the end of May 2023.

Interim evaluations of the two pilot missions DNF and ZCF were conducted over autumn 2025. These two evaluations were done separately by two different external evaluation teams. The detailed evaluation results of the two first missions are reported separately. This report summarises the synthesis results from the two evaluations. Business Finland's new strategy for 2026–2030 equally builds upon

thematic priorities, but with a different approach, and the role of missions will change. The two pilot missions still offer important lessons for the future implementation of the strategic thematic priorities.

BOX 1: CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF MISSIONS

(Source: Business Finland Thematic Strategy, 6/2022)

1. Global challenge requiring systemic change

- Mission is related to a big societal challenge relevant for Finland, is sustainable at its core, and requires action across society & industries.
- Supporting questions:
 - i. What is the expected positive global societal impact?
 - ii. Why is there a need for action across society (i.e. big corps, SMEs, public sector, academia, civil society, consumers)?
 - iii. What is the relevance for the Finnish society, economic growth and competitiveness?

2. Significant growth opportunities and competitiveness for the Finnish companies

- New market-is created/old one reshaping, change will likely be a cornerstone of the future global economy- The timing is right to aim toward the market and Finland has relevant capabilities to offer.
- Supporting questions:
 - i. What is the long-run market potential regarding the mission?
 - ii. What capabilities (e.g. competences, governance, capacity, and technology) can Finland potentially leverage?
 - iii. Is it the right timing to initiate the mission?

3. Clear value in Business Finland's intervention

- Without Business Finland's intervention, solving the challenge would be slower and Finland's export potential would not be utilised. The challenge is (potentially) relevant for Business Finland's stakeholders, customers & partners.
- Supporting questions:
 - i. What is Business Finland's position and value-add compared to other actors?
 - ii. How is the mission relevant for Business Finland's partners and customers?
 - iii. Would there be a "cost" if Business Finland would not act on the topic?

1.2. Mission related strategy, objectives and expectations

INTRODUCTION OF THE MISSION CONCEPT

In 2020, Business Finland introduced its *Strategy 2025*, which sought to achieve greater societal impact across all its strategic areas. The new strategy also defined a fundamentally new way of working. Based on previous programme evaluations, it was recognised that significant change takes longer than the lifespan of typical Business Finland programmes. Consequently, a longer ten-year time horizon was adopted to enable a deeper and more sustainable transformation.

At the same time, the idea of societal impact emerged as an entirely new “task” for Business Finland — one that had not previously been clearly defined or specified. This development reflected the need to clarify Business Finland’s role in driving systemic change and renewal. The organisation also sought to position itself as a thought leader within its chosen focus areas. Another goal was to make more effective use of Business Finland’s thematic strategy. However, the thematic strategy was not seen as an efficient content guidance mechanism. There were too many programmes, often short in duration, resulting in a fragmented and diffuse overall picture. The programme portfolio was not managed as a coherent strategic entity, and there was little synergy between the programmes. These observations are still considered to be partly valid today.

BUSINESS FINLAND’S MISSION CONCEPT

Organisationally missions are a steering mechanism for Business Finland: They provide strategic direction on how Business Finland can help businesses accelerate systemic change and capture the added value emerging throughout the process, e.g., through new market formation. Goals of missions are set within the framework of Business Finland's strategic goals.

Missions are proactive, collaborative in implementation, and iterative. Missions have been adopted in response to contemporary societal challenges (such as the climate crisis, pandemics, geopolitical crises) which demand systemic change. Advancing this systemic change proactively and collaboratively would position Finnish society and Finnish companies to the forefront of the future global markets (e.g. circular economy, digital economy). Stakeholder collaboration is essential for achieving mission goals, for example through jointly developing agendas, plans and activities with relevant stakeholders.

Internally, missions have been regarded as a means to create holistic solutions and framework for the wide service portfolio of Business Finland, for long-term impact. Missions also have the potential to advance cross-sectoral innovation. Missions direct Business Finland activities and services to mission themes, both directly and through programmes and campaigns.

Value for Business Finland customers is typically seen to arise from creation of new markets, networks, insights and programme and campaign specific activities and services, as well as the development of the operating environment. Missions are fostering cross-sectoral collaboration. They focus on problems and not on sectors, technologies or companies. Thus, mission orientation encourages working interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and between actors.

2. The two pilot missions

2.1. Selection and definition of missions

INITIATION OF PILOT MISSIONS

As was typical, Business Finland's thematic strategy was developed through a separate process and completed two years after the main strategy. The content choices in this thematic strategy were aligned with the overall Strategy 2025. The themes for the two pilot missions had already been selected earlier, as they were considered obvious priorities. The pilot missions, however, were launched before there was a clear understanding of their objectives, the means to achieve them, or the requirements for implementation.

The thematic strategy was completed in June 2022, complementing the main strategy. It identified *ten opportunities for Finland* and defined *three to five thematic priorities* for Business Finland. Within this framework, missions became the organisation's new operational model. They were intended to address global challenges and seize emerging market opportunities. The missions were to be selected from the thematic priorities, and while not every theme necessarily required its own mission, the roadmaps of the pilot missions were aligned with the new strategic framework.

REFINEMENT OF THE MISSION CONCEPT

During the 2023 reform, the management, focus, and objectives of the missions were further refined. Three new missions were introduced, ensuring that each thematic priority area had its own mission. At this point, missions evolved into the core implementation mechanism for the thematic strategy.

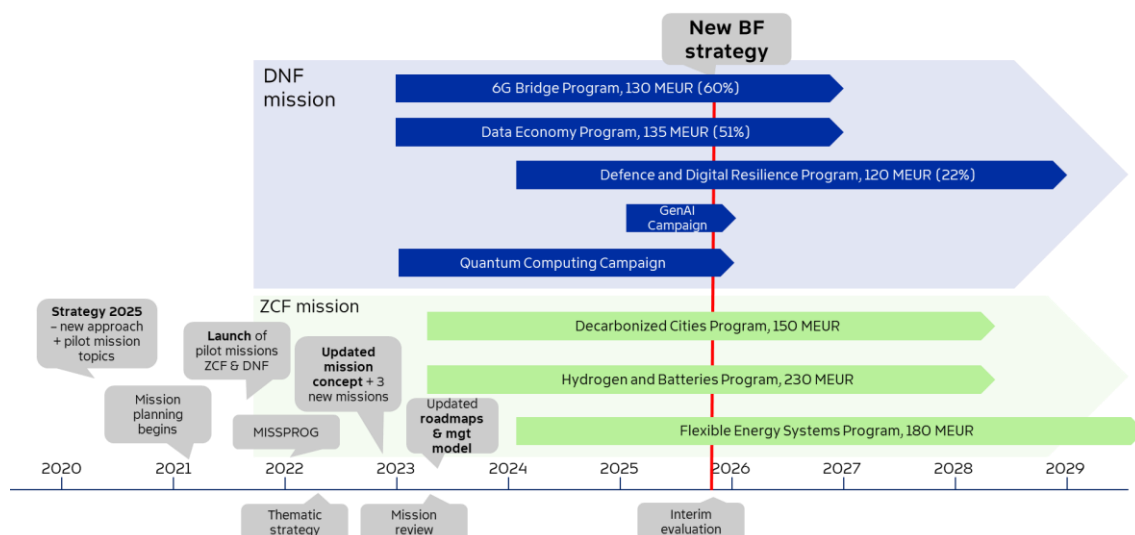


Figure 1. Timeline and evolution of the Business Finland mission concept. Source: Authors.

Despite these developments, effectively embedding the thematic strategy into Business Finland's operations has always been challenging — a difficulty that persists even under the mission model. A key question remains as to how thematic steering within Business Finland should evolve in the future. Nevertheless, the need for a long-term thematic focus and guidance has not disappeared and shows no sign of doing so. Nor is there any indication that mission-oriented innovation policy is being abandoned or has failed overall; rather, it has proven difficult to implement in practice.

2.1.1. Digital Native Finland (DNF) Mission

At its launch, the DNF Mission had the goal of accelerating digital transformation and creating global competitive advantage for Finnish companies. The mission was seen to increase sustainable customer value and raise the productivity of companies to the next level, by means of increasing digital capabilities. Investing in the connectivity and data economy of the future, together with the development of software expertise, were to provide Finnish export companies with competitive advantage, while also attracting foreign investments.

In May 2023, the mission was further defined as follows:

- Rationale:
 - o Digitalisation is sweeping the world and causing dramatic changes to all sectors. We need to dramatically accelerate digital transformation to survive and take productivity to next level. Digital is also a great enabler in saving our planet and time to act is now.
- Mission Main Goal:
 - o Improved global competitiveness and a well-functioning digital society. We fast-forward digital transformation and build global competitive edge with future connectivity and data economy to maximise sustainable customer value and productivity.
- Focus areas:
 - o 1) Digital transformation;
 - o 2) Future connectivity (5G/6G) & data economy;
 - o 3) Smart, safe and sustainable digital technologies with software, AI, cyber security, quantum and beyond.
- What must change:
 - o Access to high-quality data must be increased while ensuring sensitive data is safeguarded. The education system needs to be redefined to support the upskilling of digital skills. Companies are to be challenged to fully digitalise operations and create new digital business models and co-operation networks. Bar to utilise opportunities arising from EU funding should be lowered, risk taking in investments enabled. Experts worldwide should be scouted to work in Finland, and their societal inclusion supported. We must boldly and proudly present what is coming from Finland, with promised value.

- The defined **subgoals** of the mission included a) Significant improvement of digital competencies in Finland. A digital native mindset achieved, b) Finnish technological leadership and global competitiveness in digitalisation achieved. Global competitive edge built to maximise sustainable customer value and productivity, and c) Roadblocks to digital business & society removed through collaboration globally.

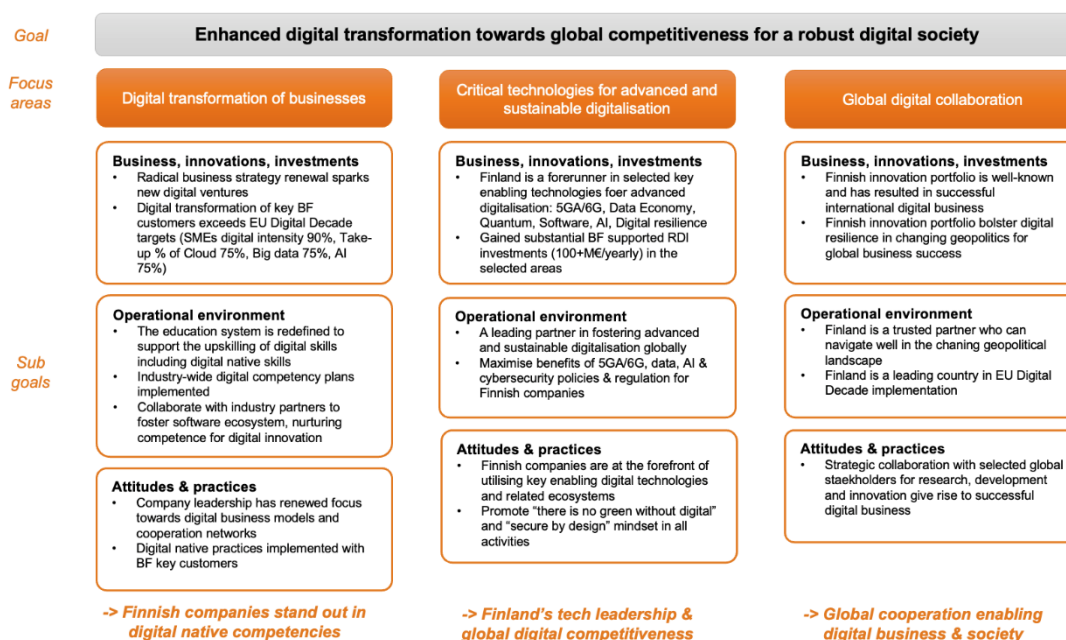


Figure 2. Illustration of the overall goal, focus areas and sub-goals of the Digital Native Finland Mission. Source: Business Finland.

2.1.2. Zero Carbon Future (ZCF) Mission

Throughout the preparation and implementation of the ZCF Mission, the main goal has been to significantly increase Finland's carbon handprint globally. Rationale for the Mission is the urgency to limit the global warming which requires drastic cuts on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Increasing global handprint means that Finnish solutions reducing emissions are used globally, and that Finnish companies also use the best available solutions in Finland. One driver for the Missions is Finland's goal to be carbon neutral by 2035. Through the ZCF Mission, Business Finland also wants to accelerate the international growth of companies and connect Finnish companies to new value chains emerging in the world.

The energy sector is responsible for 75% of global GHG emissions, with energy consumed mainly in industry, built environment, and transportation; this provided the basis for the

Mission's focus on these areas. In all of these, cities play a significant role, which is reflected in the Mission's chosen focus areas.

In May 2023, the ZCF Mission goals and sub-goals were further defined as follows:

Mission Main Goal: Our future wellbeing is made with global carbon handprint. We speed & scale up innovations and create long-term business opportunities globally. We enhance and lead global networks and partnerships. Focus is on energy transition in the industries, transportation & mobility and built environment with maximal utilisation of circularity and digitalisation.

What must change: We must start measuring our impact with global carbon handprint and targets must be set in international platform co-operation. Companies need to be driven by global disruptions and future needs of end-clients/partners. Cross-sectoral approach, digitalisation and circularity should be used to full potential with high involvement of start-ups. Focus must be put on systemic challenges in international markets and born global attitude "From innovation to Green Investment" path.

Subgoals of the Mission:

- Driving Innovations. The developed carbon-handprint innovations boost Finnish competitiveness & business potential and serve as global benchmarks.
- Policy Play. As a wanted partner, Business Finland together with stakeholders, has significantly contributed to low-carbon policy formulation & implementation in Finland, Europe and worldwide.
- Investments. An attractive service path "From Innovation to Green Investment" has been created, by which Finnish innovations scale-up efficiently globally, and significant foreign investments have been attracted to Finland.
- Behavioural Change. Finnish end-users and companies are turned into early adapters that gain a competitive edge through strong linkages with global and Finnish hotspots for agile, mission-based business, bringing together the public sector, private sector, and citizens.
- Cross-cutting enablers. These actions combine the four levers above to create impact by long-term commitment, out-of-the-box thinking, clear target setting and thrive.

ZERO CARBON FUTURE WHAT DO WE AIM FOR?

Our future wellbeing is made with Finland's global carbon handprint



Figure 3. Illustration of the overall goal, focus areas and sub-goals of the Zero Carbon Future Mission. Source: Business Finland.

2.2. Operationalization of the missions

Missions' implementation processes were created and defined in detail in a separate development (MISPROG) project which also renewed the programme concept and processes. The development project was completed in 2022, after the first missions had already been operating a year of operations, which meant that they initially developed some of their own ways of working.

The Business Finland missions are organised around a dedicated Mission Lead who is responsible for steering strategic direction and ensuring coherence across programmes and activities. A key part of this role is to actively "market" the mission both within Business Finland and externally, by building visibility, securing commitment and articulating the mission's value to different stakeholder groups. The Mission Lead also has a key role in initiating new programmes under the mission, participating in programme steering groups to ensure alignment with mission objectives, and convening regular meetings with programme managers to coordinate implementation and monitor progress. The mission does not have

its own dedicated budget or funding authority; instead, it relies on existing programme resources and organisational structures to advance its goals.

The mission is further supported by an Advisory Board composed of representatives from companies, research organisations and other key stakeholders. This group advises the Mission Lead on the development of activities, provides insight on emerging needs and opportunities, and helps ensure that mission priorities remain relevant to key beneficiaries and stakeholders.

2.2.1. Mission roadmaps

Key tools for mission management are the mission roadmaps. These roadmaps provide the strategic backbone for the direction and practical implementation of the missions. The roadmaps translate mission's long-term ambition into a sequenced pathway of milestones, annual priorities and concrete actions.

Each year, Business Finland prepares mission-level updates and action plans that align with the roadmap's trajectory. Progress is monitored through a set of KPIs that track both programme-level performance and system-level outcomes, including visibility, investment volumes and impacts on digital transformation across Finnish companies. For example, in 2025, the key actions emphasise continuity in core programme delivery while expanding targeted interventions in emerging technology areas. Priorities include advancing ongoing programmes, preparing new activations, strengthening the domestic ecosystems and supporting customer adaptation regulatory changes etc. Missions also place emphasis on deepening international R&D collaboration and directing efforts towards priority countries that align with Finland's strategic technology focus.

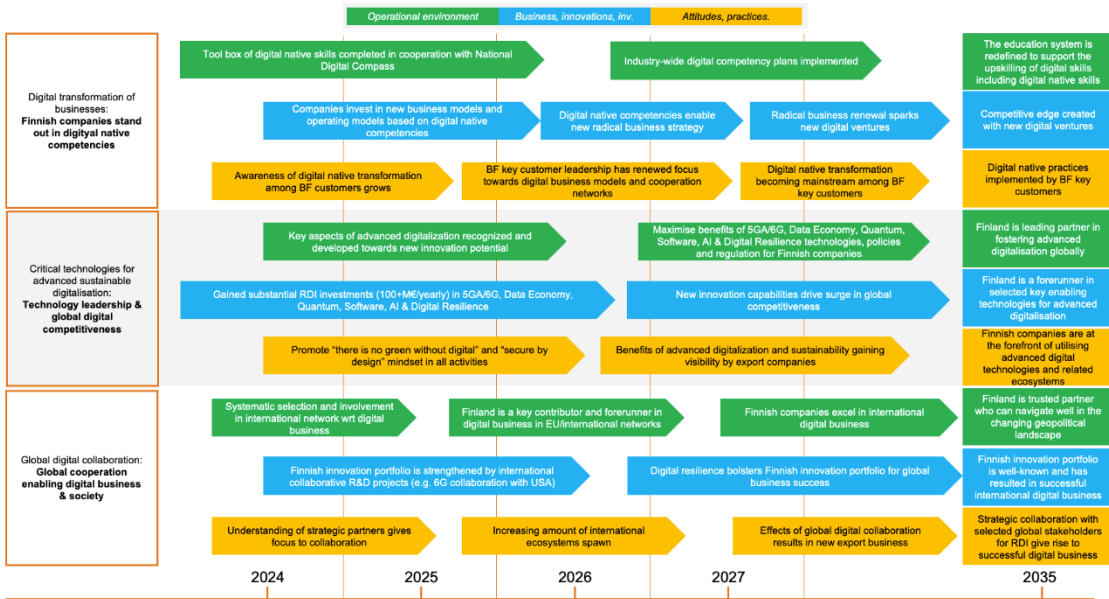


Figure 4. Illustration of the Digital Native Finland Mission roadmap and its milestones (example). Source: Business Finland.

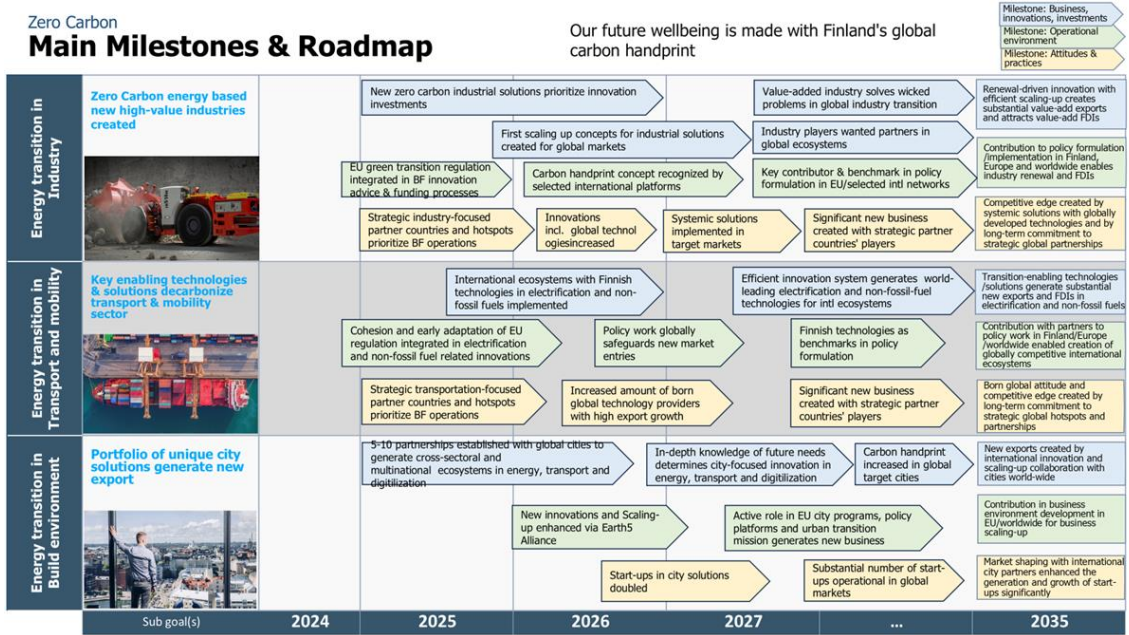


Figure 5. Illustration of the Zero Carbon Future Mission roadmap and its milestones (example). Source: Business Finland.

2.2.2. Programmes and campaigns of the DNF Mission

Programmes and campaigns form the key implementation mechanisms of the Business Finland missions. The Roadmap of Digital Native Finland consists of the following programmes and campaigns:

Table 1. Programmes and campaigns under the Digital Native Finland Mission. Source: Business Finland.

6G BRIDGE PROGRAMME (2023-2026)	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing ecosystem cooperation in research and innovation 5GA/6G technology • Building the business ecosystems of the future and attracting international investment • Strengthening 5GA/6G key capabilities • Strengthening testing and experimentation facilities for 6G technology
Funding target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EUR 130 million
DATA ECONOMY PROGRAMME (2023-2027)	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the emergence of data-driven and innovative solutions • Networking and cooperation between actors interested in data • Increasing the competitiveness and exports of Finnish companies • Support for research and development • Increase investments in RDI activities
Funding target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EUR 135 million
DEFENCE AND DIGITAL RESILIENCE PROGRAMME (2024-2028)	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the achievement of the RDI target (EUR 120 million) • Support the achievement of the SDGs • Encourage ecosystems to develop and better cooperate with, for example, the Finnish Defence Forces • Helps companies grow their exports and create new offerings • Helps Finnish actors to integrate into European and international business and research networks, including with NATO countries
Funding target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EUR 120 million
GENERATIVE AI CAMPAIGN (2025)	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awakening companies to the changes and opportunities brought about by artificial intelligence • Supporting businesses in AI transformation • Improving productivity and competitiveness with AI-based solutions • Supporting RDI activities based on generative AI
Funding target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No pre-defined funding budget
QUANTUM COMPUTING CAMPAIGN (2023-2025)	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness: To increase the awareness of Finnish companies and their ability to solve business problems with the help of quantum technology • Increase the uptake of quantum technologies: Helping companies succeed in the use of quantum technologies, such as developing new products and services based on quantum technologies • Support networking: Helping actors focused on quantum technologies to network and collaborate • Support cooperation: To create a high-quality ecosystem focused on quantum technology in Finland

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen competitiveness and exports: Strengthen the international competitiveness of Finnish companies • Attract international actors: Attracting foreign companies, investments and experts to Finland
Funding target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No pre-defined funding budget

2.2.3. Programmes of the ZCF Mission

The ZCF Mission consists of the three programmes presented in the Table 2.

Table 2. Programmes and Campaigns under the Zero Carbon Future Mission. Source: Business Finland.

DECARBONISED CITIES (2023–2028)	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping Finnish companies find new partners and business partners in the field of carbon neutrality, with the aim of Finland being recognised internationally as a provider of sustainable, carbon-neutral urban solutions. • Increasing Finland's long-term competitiveness and increase exports by encouraging companies to develop internationally successful solutions to the carbon neutrality challenges of selected partner cities, in cooperation with other actors. • Helping to attract new climate tech investments and international talent to Finland, so that Finnish research and expertise are perceived as being of high international quality and Finland is seen as an attractive target market in the field of carbon neutrality.
Funding target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EUR 150 million
HYDROGEN AND BATTERIES (2023–2028)	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting the development and international growth of the Finnish hydrogen and battery industry value chains, technologies, solutions and services. • Achieving significant commercial results for both the hydrogen and battery industries, benefiting from strong synergies. • Attracting investment projects in Finland that generate significant business, creating wealth, new jobs and increase tax revenues.
Funding target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EUR 230 million
FLEXIBLE ENERGY SYSTEMS FES (2024–2029)	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing flexible and sustainable energy systems that can adapt to various demands and conditions. • Enhancing energy security through innovative solutions. • Promoting collaboration among companies, research organisations, and standardisation bodies to maximise EU influence and foster new business opportunities.
Funding target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EUR 180 million

2.3. Project funding under missions

The key figures of actual project funding channelled by the two pilot missions are presented in this chapter. More detailed analysis can be found in the mission specific evaluation reports.

2.3.1. Funding of the DNF Mission

The Digital Native Mission has channelled the total of EUR 257 million funding, with the 6G Bridge and Data Economy Programmes accounting for over half of this amount. Annual funding peaked in 2024. The largest share was granted to the 6G Bridge Programme with EUR 78.2 million, followed by the Data Economy Programme with EUR 68.9 million. The Defence and Digital Resilience Programme received EUR 26.2 million, the GenAI Campaign EUR 40.5 million, the Quantum Campaign EUR 24.3 million, and the Chips Campaign EUR 19.9 million. Funding increased sharply from EUR 12.1 million in 2022 to EUR 80.6 million in 2023, as more programmes were initiated. In 2024, the total funding reached EUR 91.1 million, and in turn, the total funding in 2025 was EUR 73.2 million.

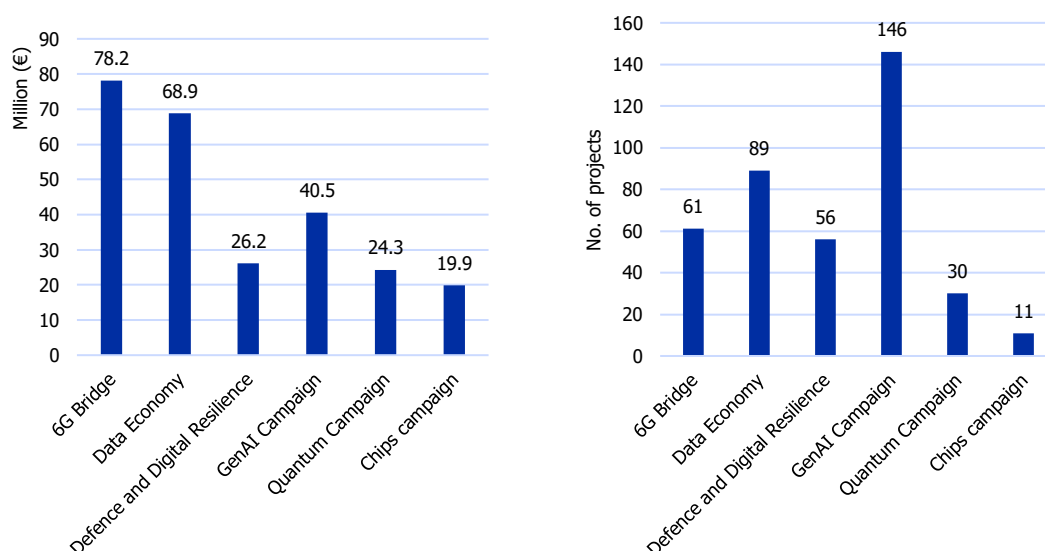


Figure 6. Total volume of Business Finland's funding per programme and campaign (Left: EUR million. Right: Number of funded projects). Source: Analysis based on Business Finland project data.

2.3.2. Funding of the ZCF Mission

The total amount of RDI funding channeled under the ZCF Mission is somewhat complicated to estimate (see Figure 7). A very modest estimate is that the total amount of RDI funding has been EUR 500 million (status 06/2025 when funding data was provided for the evaluation). The three programmes have together received EUR 305 million funding.

Hydrogen and Batteries programme has been the largest with EUR 188 million funding. The thematic tagging that has been used since 2023 shows a total volume of EUR 344 million for the ZCF Mission. A relatively large share (31%) of the RDI funding tagged to the ZCF Mission has not been linked to any of the programmes. Conversely, 24% of the ZCF Mission's programme funding has not been assigned to the ZCF Mission thematic tag. Leading company funding is another stream of Business Finland funding that should be taken into account. The projects most closely aligned with the ZCF Mission goals are estimated to have a total funding volume of EUR 240 million. The leading companies that started in 2023 or later are included in the reporting of the three programmes, whereas the earlier ones are not part of the three programmes and do not have thematic tagging. Furthermore, EU Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) funding has been an important additional resource 2021–2023 targeted to the ZCF Mission areas. The eligible investment projects had to have positive climate impacts, and all projects had to provide their climate impact assessment. RRF funding is partly integrated to the ZCF Mission programme reporting, but not all.

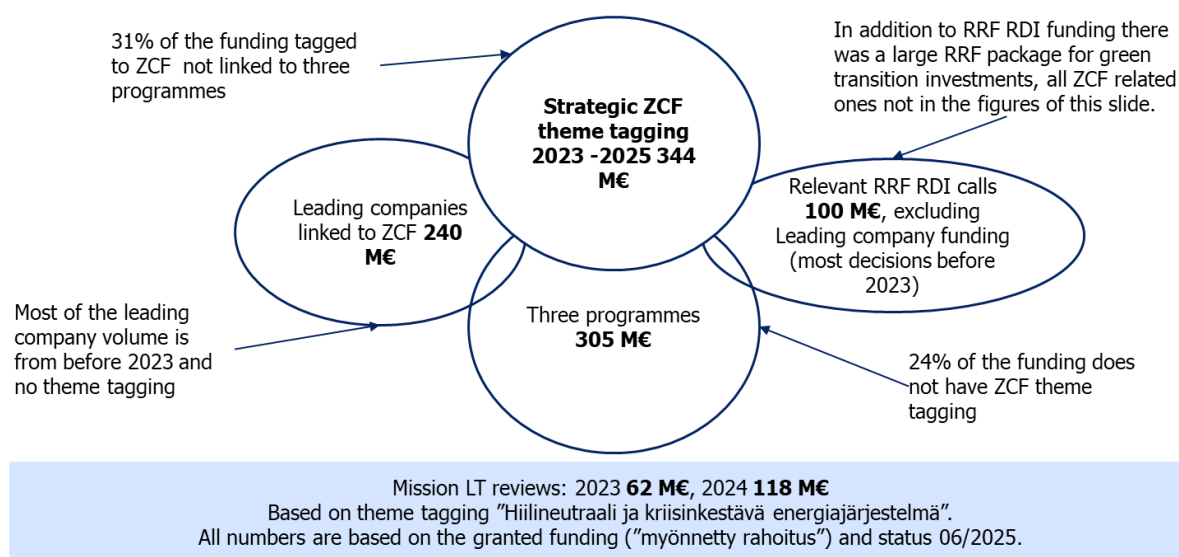


Figure 7. Distribution of the ZCF Mission's granted funding by different programmes and instruments. Figures represent status by the end of June 2025.

2.4. Thematic alignment of missions

The thematic analysis is based on textual information available for Business Finland projects funded between 2016 and 2025, including public abstracts and, where available, proposals and progress reports. These materials were used as input for an AI classification pipeline of each project against the definitions of individual missions and their goals, programmes and campaigns. A more detailed analysis is provided in the DNF Mission evaluation report.

2.4.1. Thematic alignment of projects

The Figure 8 shows the share of projects classified as relevant to each of Business Finland's five missions over the period 2016–2025. In the overall pattern, 2020 appears to be an outlier across all missions, likely reflecting changes in the Business Finland project portfolio related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the overall pattern, a substantial share of projects is accounted for Digital Native Finland throughout the period. The Share of Digital Native Finland fluctuates between approximately 10 and 30 percent and thereby one of the missions with the largest share of projects contributing to it. After the launch of the DNF Mission in 2022, its share rises a bit but without any clear discontinuity, suggesting that the mission formalised a pre-existing emphasis rather than introducing a completely new focus of the project portfolio.

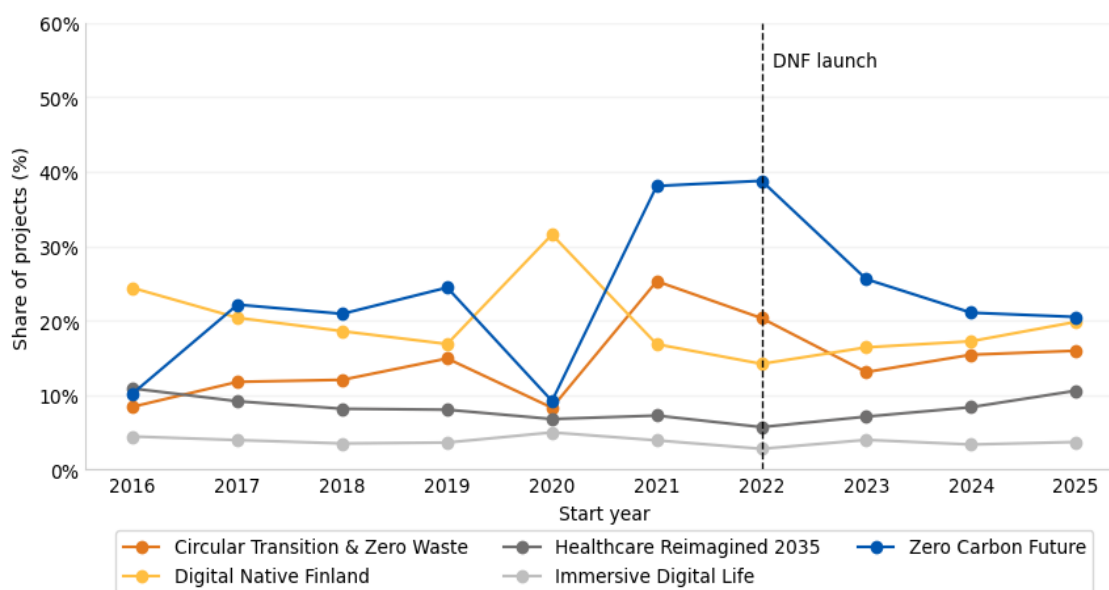


Figure 8. Development of the alignment of Business Finland’s project portfolio with the mission (2016–2025).

Source: Analysis based on Business Finland project data.

2.4.2. Thematic overlaps of missions

The Figure 9 presents the mission-level overlap heatmap. Each cell shows the share (percentage) of projects classified under the mission in the row that are also classified under the mission in the column. For example, the figure indicates a strong overlap between Zero Carbon Future and Circular Transition and Zero Waste, with 74% of projects that are classified under the mission Circular Transition & Zero Waste also being classified under the mission Zero Carbon Future. This is to a lesser extent the case for projects that are classified under the mission Zero Carbon Future, of which only 49% is also classified under the mission Circular Transition and Zero Waste. Similarly, Immersive Digital Life and Healthcare Reimagined 2035 show an increased overlap with Digital Native Finland, indicating that many digitalisation-oriented projects are also relevant for these missions.

	Circular Transition & Zero Waste	Digital Native Finland	Healthcare Reimagined 2035	Immersive Digital Life	Zero Carbon Future
Circular Transition & Zero Waste		5%	2%	1%	74%
Digital Native Finland	2%		6%	7%	6%
Healthcare Reimagined 2035	3%	19%		4%	3%
Immersive Digital Life	3%	36%	6%		6%
Zero Carbon Future	49%	7%	1%	1%	

Figure 9. Thematic overlap of Business Finland’s missions, indicated by the share of projects classified under each two missions (row vs. column). Source: Analysis based on Business Finland project data.

2.5. Alignment with mission typologies

When comparing different types of missions, a useful point of reference is the OECD's mission-oriented innovation policy (MOIP) typology*, which categorises missions according to their scope, governance model and intended system effects. Within this framework, Business Finland's missions are characterised as *challenge-based programmes and schemes*, reflecting their focus on targeted technological or industrial challenges with clear objectives and defined stakeholder groups. At the same time, elements of the wider Finnish mission landscape map into other OECD categories. The LCI initiatives correspond closely to *ecosystem-based mission programmes*, as they aim to mobilise leading firms and their networks around shared strategic goals. National programmes such as the Digital Compass and the Data Economy Roadmap, in turn, fit the profile of *overarching mission-oriented programmes*, given their whole-of-government scope and systemic orientation. In parallel, the Research Council of Finland's Flagship Programme represents a distinct type of *thematic mission-oriented programme*, anchored in long-term excellence and capacity-building within specific scientific domains. This suggests that the Business Finland mission model should be assessed and positioned in the broader policy context.

As a part of the DNF Mission evaluation, a more fine-grained assessment of how Business Finland's missions and the LCI ecosystems align with different mission-oriented approaches was completed. Summary of the assessment is provided in the Table 3 and elaborated in the following. The assessment uses the DNF Mission as an example, but the same conclusions apply for the ZCF Mission as well.

When viewed through the lens of *challenge-based programmes and schemes*, both the DNF Mission and LCI score strongly. They are clearly geared toward ambitious, challenge-driven objectives and draw on cross-disciplinary partnerships across the innovation system. Their portfolios also involve multiple actors from academia and industry, although neither follows a stage-gate logic typical of some mission programmes that progressively narrow the project pipeline.

* STIPCOMPASS. Welcome to the OECD Mission-Oriented Innovation Policy Online Toolkit.

<https://stip.oecd.org/moip/>

In relation to *thematic mission-oriented programmes*, both initiatives show partial alignment. They incorporate established challenges that guide research activity and involve mission managers who steer resources toward R&D efforts. The strongest alignment lies in the presence of substantial R&D project portfolios addressing mission topics. However, these missions differ from more research-driven thematic programmes in that government researchers play only a limited role, and collaboration with public research institutions is less central than in OECD exemplars.

The *overarching mission-oriented strategic framework* category captures structural and governance features. Here, the DNF Mission and LCI again demonstrate some alignment: both are structured around missions and supported by roadmap processes that outline the trajectory for achieving long-term goals. Governance arrangements – such as advisory bodies or mission management structures – are also in place, although in more narrow manner than in typical government-wide programmes. In addition, neither the DNF Mission or LCI employs a broad policy mix typical of large national mission frameworks (such as the Digital Compass in Finland) that integrate regulation, procurement, skills, tax incentives, and public investment.

Finally, the *ecosystem-based mission programme* perspective highlights more decentralised, community-driven dynamics. The DNF Mission demonstrates partial alignment through its Advisory Board mechanism, which helps coordinate shared objectives and agendas among key actors. Yet, LCI exhibits much stronger alignment: ecosystems organised around leading companies commonly agree on strategic priorities, build project pipelines and, in some cases, are closely involved in shaping funding decisions or advising on them.

Overall, the assessment shows that DNF Mission and LCI display a hybrid profile across OECD mission types, with their strongest alignment located in challenge-based and overarching mission frameworks, and with LCI more closely embodying ecosystem-based characteristics.

Table 3. Comparing the DNF Mission (and other Business Finland missions) and LCI ecosystems with the OECD typology and criteria.

TYPOLOGY (OECD)	CRITERIA (OECD)	DNF	LCI (VETURI)
Challenge-based programmes and schemes	Programmes and projects are challenge-driven and geared towards ambitious and concrete performance targets	+++	+++
	The agencies or moonshot programmes cut across various disciplines, sectors and stages of the innovation chain	++	+
	A portfolio of research projects delivered by partners across the innovation system (i.e., academia, industry, and government)	++	++
	Challenges often operate through a stage-gate model, where they provide larger sums of funding over subsequent funding rounds but to a smaller number of projects	-	-
Thematic mission-oriented programmes	Established challenges guide research	+	+
	Mission managers provide leadership and direct resources towards research projects	+	+
	A portfolio of research projects to address the mission	+++ (R&D)	+++ (R&D)
	Government researchers often play a larger role, and collaborate with academia, industry and other partners as needed	-	-
Overarching mission-oriented strategic frameworks	Structured around missions	+++	+++
	Accompanied by an implementation roadmap on how to achieve the missions	+++	+++
	Established governance arrangements for each mission (mission expert groups or boards, mission managers, etc.)	+	+
	Broad policy mix deployed to achieve the missions	-	-
Ecosystem-based mission programmes	Implicated communities commonly agree on objectives and strategic agendas / roadmaps in specific challenge areas	+(Advisory Board)	+++
	Some ecosystem bodies build a pipeline of projects that can address the missions, and encourage other actors to apply for funding	-	+++
	Some ecosystems are involved in funding decisions, either directly making the decisions on what projects to fund, or providing recommendations to a government body	-	++

3. Evaluation findings

3.1. Strategic use of missions

This section draws upon evaluation findings concerning the strategic use of missions – to which extent Business Finland has been able to utilise the missions as tools for strategic steering and to align its funding and instruments with the thematic objectives.

3.1.1. Findings on the Digital Native Finland Mission

The DNF Mission has generated added value internally, but strategic alignment within Business Finland has remained complex. The DNF Mission reflects a bold and forward-looking interpretation of mission-oriented innovation policy, consistent with international developments in systemic digital transformation strategies. Its thematic scope, i.e., spanning AI, data economy, 6G, quantum and defence technologies as well as digital resilience, allowed Business Finland to position itself within the digitalisation domain and to articulate a long-term vision for Finland's digital competitiveness.

The mission helped foster collaboration across digitalisation-related programmes and thematic areas, offering a shared umbrella that encouraged joint planning and cross-organisational dialogue. The DNF Mission enabled collaboration across service areas and enhanced visibility of interlinked themes such as AI and data economy, or 6G and digital resilience. The mission also played an important role in initiating new programmes and campaigns, providing a framework for prioritising emerging topics.

However, achieving strategic alignment within Business Finland proved challenging. The interplay between mission-level strategic steering and service-area operational responsibility created ambiguity, especially as mission leads lacked formal authority, clear mandates or dedicated resources. The matrix structure often diluted accountability and required mission progress to depend on voluntary cooperation rather than institutionalised processes. This led to uneven uptake across units and limited the mission's ability to consistently influence decision-making, resource allocation or portfolio development.

Overall, the mission's strategic role was recognised, but its operational impact was hindered by resource constraints, fragmentation and the absence of mechanisms that would allow it to shape the funding landscape in line with its objectives.

3.1.2. Findings on the Zero Carbon Future Mission

Preparation of the ZCF Mission in 2021 took place mainly as Business Finland's internal work and was not based on close collaboration with customers and other stakeholders. Business Finland's work in 2022 to define strategic thematic priorities was, however, based on more extensive stakeholder consultations and validated the ZCF Mission's theme to be one of the strategic priorities. Based on the interviews conducted in the evaluation, the low-carbon focus is generally seen to be appropriate and well justified. It was also a good decision to keep the ZCF Mission focused on low-carbon, and not to mix the mission with a circularity theme. Despite this, the ZCF Mission still has a very broad scope, and even more focus may be needed in the future. Interviews also highlighted that the ZCF Mission's thematic content is not very new or renewing.

A lot of the ZCF Mission's activities in programmes and beyond programmes were targeted to global outreach focusing on the impact goals to affect operating environment. This choice of focus aligns very well with Business Finland's strategy, and the global growth work has been appreciated. There is a need to increase awareness of Finland's brand abroad in the thematic areas (like hydrogen economy) as well as of the mission itself. It was mentioned in the interviews that existence of long-term missions is an important message for global target markets about Finland's commitment to climate targets.

The ZCF Mission started at the time of the green transition "hype" when additional RDI funding resources were also available. The large amount of RDI funding allocated to the ZCF Mission focus areas have created a good basis for advancing the ZCF Mission's goals. In the future, when there are fewer resources and more missions seeking RDI funding in their own areas, the ZCF Mission will need to focus more its strategic priorities.

3.1.3. Summary of findings on the strategic use of missions

The evaluation of Business Finland's first two missions reveals several key observations regarding the strategic use of the missions. There is a shared understanding, both within Business Finland and among external stakeholders and beneficiaries, that the organisation needs clear strategic thematic priorities. Missions have played an important role in establishing societal impact goals, helping Business Finland to demonstrate and verify its role in society.

The long-time span associated with these missions is widely appreciated, as it allows for the pursuit of ambitious objectives and systemic change. However, there is concern that expectations for results may have been set too early, risking the discontinuation of mission work before the full benefits become visible. Another challenge is the generic nature of mission topics, which has made communication difficult and sometimes hindered the recognition of their value among stakeholders.

Business Finland currently faces limitations in mandate, resources, and expertise, which restrict its ability to achieve the ambitious strategic goals required for systemic change and to act as a true change agent. Additionally, the organisation is managing five missions simultaneously, which has stretched its capacity to resource, manage, and communicate these initiatives effectively to external audiences.

3.2. Mission additionality

This section draws upon evaluation findings concerning the additionality of missions – to which extent the missions have changed the way Business Finland and its customers and stakeholders operate and steer their activities. Also, additionality towards policy and regulatory developments have been addressed.

3.2.1. Findings from Digital Native Finland mission

The DNF Mission has clearly created value for stakeholders as a strategic umbrella, but it has remained largely invisible to beneficiaries. Stakeholders perceive the DNF Mission as an

important strategic frame that brings coherence across Business Finland's digitalisation activities. It has helped connect Business Finland's work to national and EU-level policy agendas, provided continuity in thematic priorities, and strengthened Finland's international visibility in technologies such as AI, quantum and digital resilience. The Mission has also offered a platform for policy dialogue, allowing Business Finland and partners to engage in longer-term discussions that transcend individual projects or programme cycles. Stakeholders also recognise the DNF Mission as an ambitious and modern policy instrument that elevated digitalisation as a national priority. The role and contribution of the Mission Lead was highly valued by all stakeholders.

For most beneficiaries, however, the DNF Mission remains distant and largely invisible. Companies and research actors typically interact only through specific programmes or campaigns, with limited understanding of the mission structure or how it influences their opportunities. The terminology of "missions", "programmes" and "campaigns" is often confusing in practice, partly because the underlying mission theory – distinguishing a mission from a traditional strategic priority or thematic focus – is not clearly communicated or operationalised. As a result, the distinct added value of the mission – beyond existing programme-level work – is not easily perceived outside the core stakeholders (those in the mission Advisory Board). Overall, while stakeholders see the mission as a useful strategic umbrella, most beneficiaries experience little direct benefit from the mission as a separate organisational layer. In hindsight, a less ambitious and a more practical and operational concept (e.g. "thematic priority area") could have been a more feasible approach.

3.2.2. Findings from Zero Carbon Future Mission

Overall, progress towards the ZCF Mission's goals has been made with varying speed and intensity, both when it comes to the focus areas (energy transition in industries, transport and mobility, built environment) and the types of actions. Although goals are very ambitious and cover a wide range of actions, none of them are considered unrealistic to work towards a longer period of time. Positive steps towards visible results can be seen on multiple fronts. This is particularly the case with regard to driving innovation activities in Finnish industry and launching new forms of concerted actions to increase visibility of Finnish products and

services in global markets. Some prioritisation will be however needed in the future since the resources for operations will be diminishing.

The themes of the ZCF Mission have remained relevant despite constant and multifaceted changes in the operating environment. Active engagement with stakeholders and policy makers globally shows progress particularly regarding strategic collaboration with national and local governments. These have been boosted by the ZCF Mission providing a credible mandate for Business Finland staff's marketing efforts particularly in target markets. However, while the actions show positive results overall, establishing a solid foundation for long-term impacts requires that the actions remain coherent and robust over an extended period of time.

The ZCF Mission's low carbon and carbon handprint focus has been in line with evolving attitudes and practices of Finnish companies and other stakeholders. During the past decade there have been positive developments in the regulatory frameworks governing the ZCF Mission working environment, despite recent setbacks in the political landscape. Alongside this, several Finnish companies have progressed in developing their businesses and new ways of working in a more climate-positive direction. The ZCF Mission has contributed to these changes by making the global growth potential, competitiveness and technical leadership more visible to Finnish companies and by inspiring further coordination. However, the ZCF Mission has played more of a supportive role rather than leading the development.

The ZCF Mission's programmes are progressing well and under the ZCF Mission umbrella the RDI funding and investments in green transition have been significant. Overall, the operational environment has been favorable for attracting green investments and funding to Finland, although the peak has, at least for now, passed. The allocations and focus of RRF funding in Finland have given the ZCF Mission further boost and have had an indirect attribution on the innovation developments. Despite challenges in resource allocation and reductions in innovation funding, that hinder access to international markets, collaboration efforts continue, particularly through Nordic partnerships and strategic MoUs. However, the potential of networks has been utilised quite modestly, and more needs to be done to integrate funding mechanisms effectively and to ensure that Finnish companies can commercialise and market innovations globally.

The ZCF Mission's subgoals for influencing the operating environment focused on: 1) sense making of legislation, especially at the EU level, 2) Nordic collaboration, and 3) increasing global awareness of Finnish solutions. These three sub-goals reflect the ZCF Mission's decision to focus on global outreach activities. The activities have focused on building strategic partnerships and collaboration platforms. There has been a clear progress in all three sub-goals, although many of the processes are at an early stage and the work needs to continue. To ensure that these efforts generate more lasting results, resourcing and skills development will require longer-term investments.

3.2.3. Summary of findings on the additionality of mission

Based on the evaluation findings, the missions within Business Finland provide a valuable platform for strategic and policy-level discussions with stakeholders. The dedicated roles of the missions foster long-term national and international collaboration, which is widely appreciated. The missions give staff a mandate and backbone to promote and build external collaboration, positioning them primarily as advocates rather than decision makers. The introduction of new mission activities aimed at influencing the operating environment is still at an early stage.

Collaboration with key stakeholders in Finland has generally worked well, yet there remains a gap in strategic partnership planning and a lack of resources for concrete actions. Communication activities and stakeholder connections have been frequent, but they mostly occur on an ad hoc basis rather than through systematic engagement. Mission programmes have succeeded in generating a significant number of projects and funding, often with varied configurations. In particular, missions have performed well in Business Finland's traditional areas, such as providing RDI funding and supporting export activities through programmes.

Currently, Leading Company Initiatives (LCI, Veturit) serve as the main mechanism for Business Finland to drive systemic transitions with ecosystems. Large companies, many of which are designated as Leading Companies, play a dominant role in several programmes associated with the first missions. However, there is no operative linkage between these initiatives and the missions themselves.

Programme activities—including webinars, documents, and visits—are considered relevant and of high quality, but the toolbox available for missions and programmes remains rather traditional in advancing technological and systemic transitions. There is a recognised need for greater emphasis on concrete co-creation and experimentation, such as the proposed “Business Finland Lab,” though this would require additional resources. Finally, cuts in Business Finland’s budget and personnel have limited opportunities for external collaboration and the expansion of programme activities, underscoring the need for stronger partnerships with organisations like Sitra and Tesi.

3.3. Implementation

This section draws upon evaluation findings concerning the implementation of missions – how well Business Finland has been able to organise, steer and develop its missions and thereby benefit from the new approach across all its operations.

3.3.1. Findings from the Digital Native Finland Mission

The practical implementation of the DNF Mission was constrained by limited resources and lack of system-level instruments. The Mission’s implementation relied heavily on individual leadership and informal networks rather than on established institutional structures. Mission Leads operated without dedicated budgets, formal authority or integrated support functions, making it difficult to steer activities or enforce alignment across programmes or within the Business Finland strategy implementation.

Integration with Business Finland’s funding instruments and portfolio management was also inconsistent. Large instruments, particularly LCIs, were not fully aligned with the Mission priorities. In general, the LCI instrument is seen as an important and highly relevant instrument for industries where clear leading companies exist, but less feasible e.g. in the software industry where such companies do not exist. In addition, SMEs reported challenges accessing suitable early-stage funding due to the discontinuation of key innovation funding instruments. This weakened the Mission’s ability to drive experimentation, emergence of new ecosystems or broader behavioural change.

Feedback from stakeholders also indicates that traditional programme activities do not sufficiently support rapid experimentation in fast-moving domains such as AI. There is a need for activities that support quick testing, iteration and collaborative piloting, especially for SMEs. The idea of a “Business Finland Lab” model was raised as a potential way to facilitate concrete experimentation and cross-sector co-creation.

3.3.2. Findings from the Zero Carbon Future Mission

The ZCF Mission has added a new type of activity to Business Finland’s normal work, aiming to influence the operating environment more proactively. An informal mandate was given for carry out these new types of activities, and there is a permission to pursue them more systematically. However, the challenges lie in the very limited resources available for activities supporting the ZCF Mission’s goals, as well as the absence of an official mandate for this work, which affects, for example, individual performance targets.

The personality and drive of the Mission Lead have been critical in coordinating cross-organisational work in a situation when there are no formal resources. The ZCF Mission Lead got a lot of positive feedback from stakeholders, customers and Business Finland colleagues, both in the level of expertise and in teamwork attitude.

Many interviewees mentioned that missions have succeeded in removing some internal silos, most notably between missions’ programmes. Also, it was mentioned that the ZCF Mission has, to some extent, changed attitudes within Business Finland regarding global outreach work which is no longer seen solely as the responsibility of global network but as a task of Business Finland as a whole.

The ZCF Mission has created clear benefits for Business Finland’s communication. The Mission has helped in focusing external communication with clear messages and has improved networks and collaboration.

In the interviews there were many critical comments that strategic execution of the missions has not been sufficiently supported by management. Although processes and models exist, the missions still remain vague for Business Finland personnel, and practical tools for everyday work are either missing or left for each individual to develop independently. Many interviewees mentioned that the ZCF Mission is still unclear, and more time should have

been devoted at the outset to discussing its practical implications for each person's own work.

The ZCF Mission, like other missions, is based on strong thematic expertise. Expertise on the specific thematic areas of energy transition is critical for being a trustworthy and relevant partner for different policy and stakeholder processes. It was noted that specific experts within Business Finland are in high demand and face challenges in allocating time to all tasks that would be useful for the mission.

3.3.3. Summary of findings on the implementation of missions

The evaluation highlights several persistent challenges in the implementation of Business Finland's missions. One major issue is the generic nature of mission topics, which has made communication difficult and led to a situation where customers and stakeholders often do not recognise the existence or value of the missions. This lack of clarity has limited the missions' visibility and impact externally.

The expertise, role, and activity of Mission Leads are highly valued, but the mission concept itself has become critically dependent on the capability and capacity of a few individuals. These Mission Leads have played a central role in initiating, approving, and planning programmes and campaigns. As a result, the programmes are generally well aligned with the goals of the missions, thanks in part to the wide scope of the missions and a thorough planning process.

Cooperation and joint work among programmes have improved, and this increased collaboration is appreciated within Business Finland. Missions have helped to break down internal silos, fostering a more integrated approach to strategic objectives. However, the actual steering effect of missions on programme execution has been weaker than intended. The practical tools available to Mission Leads for influencing the organisation are limited: there is no operational budget dedicated to missions, no direct connection to RDI funding decisions, and only weak steering mechanisms towards programmes. Consequently, missions have struggled to fully engage the entire organisation and drive systemic change at the desired scale.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1. Overall conclusions

Business Finland's adoption of the mission-oriented approach marks an ambitious effort to achieve greater societal impact and long-term thematic coherence. While the mission model has provided clear strategic benefits—such as aligning programmes under shared goals, strengthening foresight, and supporting Finland's international positioning—its practical implementation has encountered persistent challenges. These include structural, resource-related, and governance issues that require ongoing attention.

The evaluation confirms that the mission approach has added significant value to Business Finland's work. By bringing programmes together under unified objectives, it has enhanced strategic direction and helped position Finland internationally. However, the implementation has been hampered by limited resources, unclear mandates, and fragmented coordination structures. These practical challenges are discussed in detail in the following sections.

4.1.1. Rationale and need for missions

The 2020 strategy introduced a call for higher societal impact across all strategic areas, emphasizing not only sustainability but also cross-cutting themes. There was a clear need to clarify and amplify Business Finland's role in driving systemic change, making better use of thematic priorities, and adopting a longer-term perspective beyond typical programme periods. Policy influence emerged as a new objective, and Business Finland aspired to become a thought leader in its chosen strategic themes.

To address scattered programme activities, the mission model was introduced as a means to focus and streamline efforts. This remains a valid objective today. Missions were designed to steer all Business Finland activities—not just programmes and campaigns—toward ambitious plans and concrete added value, with the aim of driving systemic change. Both internal and

external stakeholders recognise the need for strategic thematic priorities, and the long planning horizon of the missions is widely appreciated.

Despite this, stakeholders and clients often lack a clear understanding of the mission plans and how to engage with them. While missions have clear societal impact goals and help Business Finland demonstrate its role in society, the organisation is generally seen more as a facilitator and enabler than as a thought leader. The current number of missions (five) is considered too many for Business Finland to resource, manage, and communicate effectively. Additionally, the generic nature of mission topics complicates external communication.

4.1.2. Evolution of the Concept

Initially, the mission concept was not clearly defined, and Business Finland learned through piloting with two first missions. The pilot missions began before the thematic strategy and operating model were fully established, which led to some confusion and weak top management support. Mission Leads were given significant autonomy to define and develop their missions, resulting in different approaches and mutual learning between the pilot missions.

Over time, the concept evolved, with adjustments to the programme model and the introduction of campaigns. In 2023, the mission concept was revised with the addition of three new missions, following the clarification of Business Finland's thematic priorities in 2022. This evolution has helped to elaborate and clarify the mission framework.

4.1.3. Mission progress and integration

After the concept revision in 2023, missions were integrated into service areas rather than the strategy unit, aiming to be more operational and closer to clients. Priority actions were defined in the Mission Roadmap, and pilot missions have been making progress, with general satisfaction reported regarding roadmap work and advisory group participation.

Implementation is mainly carried out through programmes and campaigns, with joint coordination and management proving effective. However, coordination tends to be "soft,"

lacking concrete authority for missions to steer programmes. While programme preparation has become more focused and missions guide this process well, there is less direct steering during programme execution. Operationalisation beyond programmes has been less effective, with Mission Leads' individual efforts dominating other activities.

Although there is a strong thematic connection with the Leading Company Initiative (LCI) (with all Leading Companies reported also under missions and related programmes), operational and strategic synergies remain limited. Mission-oriented innovation policy thinking was a driver for both LCI challenge competition concept and for Business Finland's missions, but were, however, designed separately. LCI design took place a little earlier and the first call was launched in 2020. Despite the fact that the ultimate goals of the Leading Companies frequently align with mission goals, are reported under missions or programmes, and constitute a major share of missions' RDI funding, they are still not more closely integrated with the missions.

It is uncertain whether the later three missions could have quickly matched the progress of pilot missions, especially given resource constraints and the need for cost savings. This raises the question of whether missions have simply added an administrative layer or genuinely sharpened Business Finland's societal role and strategic direction. The prevailing view is that missions are necessary, but practical challenges persist. Missions are often defined too broadly or ambiguously, and their societal challenges exceed what Business Finland can realistically address or lead. Engaging partners and customers effectively remain difficult, and mechanisms for shared strategic choices and joint missions are still lacking in Finland.

Missions have been relatively under-resourced, or their scope has been too ambitious for available resources. Even major strategic tools, such as LCI projects, have sometimes been left outside the mission framework. Within the organisation, missions lack sufficient authority over content, implementation, and steering.

4.1.4. Strategic Impact and Directionality

Strategic priorities were set in the Business Finland's thematic strategy 2022, with missions operating as the main vehicle for implementation. However, the balance between strategic

and operational roles has not been optimal, and the proximity of missions to operational programmes has created internal confusion and an additional administrative layer. Mission objectives are broad and ambitious, requiring greater commitment than Business Finland alone can provide. Roadmaps and programmes are also broadly defined, which may dilute their impact.

In the early stages, missions did not focus enough on building strong partnerships with key stakeholders. The “policy play” goal was a new dimension for Business Finland, but there was insufficient clarity on its meaning and execution. Mission Leads had the freedom to interpret and implement this goal but lacked adequate organisational support. Thematic choices have been defined by Business Finland, with minimal influence from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. Therefore, there is a need for a more responsive process, better linkage to national strategies, and a lighter approach.

4.1.5. Additionality and Lessons Learned

The mission model has improved thematic coordination and management between programmes, but its impact on steering remains unclear. Missions have been active, but not sufficiently visible or clear to stakeholders and clients. Leading Company Initiatives (LCIs) may have diverted public attention from missions, and there is potential for closer integration between missions and LCIs.

There has been some success in influencing policy, and organisational changes (including the impact of COVID-19) have affected Business Finland’s ability to formulate and implement missions. Over time, missions have become more operational, and the relationship with communications has grown in importance. However, missions have not had enough impact on steering Business Finland’s operations across services, lacking real implementation power. Internal changes have been slow and would have required strong management support.

The expertise and activity of Mission Leads are highly valued, but the concept is critically dependent on the capacity of a few individuals. Missions lack practical steering tools, such as operational budgets and connections to RDI funding decisions, resulting in weak influence over programmes. Despite these limitations, missions have played a key role in initiating and

planning programmes and campaigns, improving cooperation and breaking down internal silos. Programmes are generally aligned with mission goals due to the wide scope and effective planning process, but actual steering during execution remains weak. The linkage between missions, programmes, and project funding decisions is also weak.

Mission programmes have generated a significant number of projects and funding, with varying configurations. Large companies have a dominant role in several programmes, mainly because they are included in programme reporting. However, the connection between Leading Company ecosystems and missions is weak. Industry and sectoral portfolios are focused on selected industries, and there is a need for more cross-sectoral programmes and campaigns. Cuts in Business Finland's innovation funding (Explorer, NIY, Tempo, etc.) pose significant challenges for implementing missions and programmes.

4.1.6. Remaining Challenges and Questions

Defining clear and pragmatic objectives for missions has proven difficult, and the process of ramping up missions has been long and complex. Implementation has not been as efficient as anticipated, with operationalisation remaining hierarchical and lacking agility. There are questions about whether Business Finland has been able to sufficiently commit and mobilise stakeholders for its missions, as the work required is substantial and there has been a lack of clear strategic priorities to support Mission Leads.

Mobilising all parts of Business Finland around thematic priorities has not been fully achieved. There is an ongoing challenge in balancing long-term objectives and systemic change with the need for agility and responsiveness. Mission themes are relevant to clients and ecosystems and help demonstrate Business Finland's commitment to selected themes, but similar outcomes could potentially be achieved through strategic priorities alone.

Missions provide a platform for strategic and policy-level discussions with stakeholders, and long-term national and international collaboration is valued. They offer a mandate for Business Finland staff to promote and build external collaboration, but missions are primarily about advocacy rather than decision-making. Collaboration with key stakeholders in Finland has worked well, but strategic partnership planning and resources for concrete actions are

lacking. Many communication activities have been conducted, but mostly on an ad hoc basis.

4.2. Recommendations

In light of the lessons learnt from the two pilot missions, and with a view to Business Finland's new strategy, the following recommendations are provided to maximise the effectiveness of Business Finland's thematic priorities.

RECOMMENDATION 1. SUSTAIN LONG-TERM THEMATIC PRIORITIES

Business Finland should maintain thematic priorities that extend beyond short-term cycles. The organisation's strategic choices to act as a thought leader and to pursue significant societal impacts—beyond mere export and company growth—require a stable, long-term, collaborative approach. These approaches have proven essential for aligning programmes, strengthening foresight, and supporting Finland's international positioning. Frequent updates to thematic priorities may risk diluting strategic continuity; therefore, the rhythm of updating themes should be carefully considered to ensure that long-term objectives are not compromised.

RECOMMENDATION 2. STRENGTHEN THE OPERATING CONCEPT FOR THEMATIC PRIORITIES

To ensure that thematic priorities are consistently followed throughout all operations, Business Finland should continue to employ a mission-type operating concept. For this concept to be effective, it must be supported by a clear mandate and sufficient authority to steer not only programmes but also broader organisational activities. Missions should be more than discussion forums; they must have the power to guide and coordinate across teams and functions, reducing dependency on individual relationships between mission leads and programme leads.

RECOMMENDATION 3. ENHANCE POLICY ENGAGEMENT FOR SOCIETAL IMPACT

Business Finland should continue its “new” type of operations by actively participating in policy processes to influence the operating environment. The missions have made good progress in this area, but further support is needed to prioritise, provide mandates, and allocate resources across the organisation. It is premature to discontinue these efforts unless future strategy explicitly removes these goals. Continued engagement in policy processes will help Business Finland amplify its societal impact and reinforce its role as a facilitator of systemic change.

RECOMMENDATION 4. IMPROVE PARTNERSHIP AND STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

Better management of partnerships and stakeholder collaboration is essential. Business Finland should clarify which activities fall within the scope of missions and identify the key partners for focused collaboration. Rather than relying solely on mission leads to build networks, Business Finland should systematically develop and nurture partnerships, ensuring that collaboration is strategic and purposeful.

RECOMMENDATION 5. ADVANCE GOVERNANCE INTEGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

The following concrete actions are needed to support operational framework for implementing thematic priorities:

- Clearer governance and stronger thematic leadership: Thematic priorities should be backed by robust governance structures and empowered leaders.
- Long-term strategic continuity: Thematic priorities must be sustained across organisational changes to maintain focus and impact.
- Better integration of programmes and major instruments: Key initiatives, such as Leading Company projects, should be more closely aligned under thematic umbrellas to maximise synergies.
- Continued emphasis on foresight, experimentation, and cross-sector collaboration: Business Finland should foster innovative approaches and interdisciplinary cooperation.

- Sustained international engagement: Active participation in international forums, especially at the EU level, is vital for maintaining relevance and influence of Business Finland.

Annex 1. Evaluation questions and responses

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS
Strategic use of missions	
How well do missions function as a tool for strategic steering in Business Finland, i.e. has the mission-driven approach influenced in and aligned strategic choices, decision-making, and milestone setting within Business Finland and across its various activities?	Missions have helped align programmes under shared goals and supported strategic direction, but practical implementation has faced challenges due to limited resources, unclear mandates, and fragmented coordination.
Has the mission been able to respond to changes in the operational environment, such as geopolitical shifts?	Missions have shown adaptability, especially in global outreach and responding to new challenges, but their broad scope sometimes limits focused action.
Has the mission approach been effective in driving the desired systemic change / transformation, especially in collaboration with stakeholders, and if so, how?	Missions have fostered collaboration and long-term planning, but systemic change has been constrained by resource limitations and lack of operational authority.
What could be improved?	Clearer mandates, better resource allocation, and improved communication of mission objectives are needed to enhance effectiveness.
Input additionality	
What added value has stakeholder collaboration produced? What would be the best practices for stakeholder engagement and commitment?	Stakeholder collaboration has enabled strategic dialogue and policy-level discussions, but systematic engagement and partnership planning need strengthening.
Have allocation and mobilisation of resources been sufficient vs targets?	Resource allocation has often been insufficient, limiting the scale and impact of mission activities.
How well are mission's inputs, activities, and outcomes aligned and contributing effectively to the intended impact.	Alignment is generally good at the programme planning stage, but weak during execution due to limited steering power.
To what degree have other instruments of Business Finland — such as e.g. funding for leading companies, ecosystems, and innovation clusters — been aligned with and support the mission roadmap.	Leading Company Initiatives (LCIs) are reported under missions but are not closely integrated; synergies remain limited.
Additionality in changing attitudes and practices	
To what extent has the mission been driving behavioural change among customers and other stakeholders?	Missions have contributed to changing attitudes, especially regarding global outreach, but broader behavioral change is still developing.
What could be improved?	More systematic communication and practical tools for everyday work would help drive change.
Additionality in driving developments in innovation, investments and business	
To what extent has the mission been driving directionality?	Missions have provided strategic direction and supported innovation, but their influence on steering and funding decisions is limited.
What other added value has the mission produced in this impact path?	Missions have improved collaboration, generated projects and funding, and enhanced Finland's international positioning.
Additionality in changing the operational environment and society	

Are there signs that the mission is influencing policies and the operational environment, and if so, how?	Missions have supported policy engagement and contributed to shaping the operating environment, especially through international collaboration.
What could be improved?	Stronger partnerships, clearer governance, and sustained resources are needed for greater impact.

Annex 2. Mission Workshop Findings

A joint workshop was organised by the two evaluation teams on 5 November 2025 to present and discuss the main mission-level findings of the two parallel evaluations. A total of 22 participants from Business Finland attended, representing individuals currently or previously engaged in Business Finland missions (Mission Leads, Program Managers, etc.) as well as members of the evaluation Steering Group. The following synthesises discussions held in the workshop.

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

Participants expressed a generally **positive view of the mission experience**. The mission model has provided programmes with a **broader, longer-term strategic framework** and created a **shared forum for strategic dialogue**, enabling better coordination and collaboration between programmes. It has also **improved communication** around content and strengthened **stakeholder engagement**.

However, participants noted that the **exclusion of the LCI (Veturi) initiatives** from the missions did not seem justified. They also agreed that the **operationalisation of missions should be strengthened**, particularly in terms of **resourcing and governance**. Mission Leads were widely recognised for their strong performance, but participants also saw room to further develop **foresight and experimental approaches**, as well as to **clarify Business Finland's role in societal missions**.

STRATEGIC VALUE OF MISSIONS

When discussing what should not be lost if Business Finland were to discontinue the mission approach, participants consistently highlighted the importance of maintaining **long-term planning, broad thematic vision**, and **thought leadership**.

Several participants stressed that missions had enabled a **systematic perspective on societal transitions** and encouraged a **cross-programme, cross-sectoral view** on impact. Without missions, there is a risk that Business Finland would lose its **holistic understanding** of global developments and its **ability to position Finland strategically** within them. Many also emphasised that **clear thematic focus areas** — limited in number, well-defined, and internationally relevant — must remain at the heart of Business Finland's work.

Missions were also seen as a means to maintain **strategic continuity, synergies between programmes**, and **stakeholder collaboration** that extends beyond short-term project cycles. The model encouraged Business Finland to act as a **societal actor and thought leader**, strengthening its capacity to influence both national and EU-level developments.

THEMATIC STEERING AND GOVERNANCE

In the poll concerning improvements to thematic steering, participants supported **stronger resource allocation and mandates for thematic priorities**.

A majority considered that part of Business Finland's **budget should be earmarked and managed by thematic areas**, giving missions clearer operational power. Others highlighted the need to **better connect the Leading Company initiatives (Veturi)** to programmes and thematic priorities, ensuring a coherent portfolio approach.

Participants also recognised that **budget cuts to innovation funding** have made implementation more difficult and have weakened links between smaller funding instruments and the larger strategic missions.

PERSONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL BENEFITS

Many participants noted that missions have **enhanced collaboration and knowledge exchange** within Business Finland and with external actors. Mission leaders reported that the framework gave them **strategic visibility and influence** and created **opportunities for international positioning** — especially in clean transition themes and EU cooperation.

Missions were also said to provide a **strategic structure for programme planning, clear thematic guidance, and shared messaging** for Business Finland's international work, including EU advocacy. For some, missions strengthened **cross-programme cooperation, stakeholder dialogue, and the alignment of national and international priorities.**

FUTURE OF STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

Participants agreed that Business Finland should continue to act as a **facilitator and convenor** in system-level transitions. The poll results showed strong support (over 40%) for **broadening the programme toolbox** to better support **systemic transformations**, for example through **experimentation platforms and foresight-based planning.**

Many emphasised the need to maintain **systematic, well-resourced external collaboration mechanisms.** Suggestions included establishing **Advisory Boards** composed of company representatives, **allocating explicit time and resources** for stakeholder cooperation, and continuing **structured engagement in international forums.**

There was broad consensus that **international linkages**, particularly to **EU policy processes and funding frameworks**, are critical for Business Finland's effectiveness. Mission-driven collaboration was seen as a powerful way to **mobilise leading actors and combine national strengths with European opportunities.** Participants urged that this capability should not be lost, even if the mission model itself evolves.

CONCLUSIONS

The workshop confirmed that the **mission approach has provided clear added value** to Business Finland's work — by aligning programmes under shared goals, strengthening strategic foresight, and supporting Finland's international positioning.

Yet, the **implementation has faced practical challenges**, including limited resources, unclear mandates, and fragmented coordination structures.

Going forward, participants called for:

- Clearer governance and stronger thematic leadership,
- **Long-term strategic continuity** across organisational changes,
- Better integration of programmes and major instruments (e.g. Veturi) under thematic umbrellas,
- Continued emphasis on foresight, experimentation, and cross-sector collaboration, and
- Sustained international engagement, especially at the EU level.

In short, while the mission framework may evolve, its core principles — strategic focus, continuity, thought leadership, and collaborative impact — should remain central to Business Finland's future approach.

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