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Ms Kirsi Hiltunen works as a project manager in Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council. She coordinated Centres of Excellence evaluation in University education in 2008. Previously she has worked at the Ministry of Education and the Academy of Finland developing doctoral education and research career in Finland.

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**Financial incentives to improve quality and relevance of higher education in Finland**

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Abstract:

Commissioned by the Ministry of Education, the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, FINHEEC, has implemented Centre of Excellence (CoE) selections in higher education since 1997. The CoE system is a significant funding indicator for the Ministry of Education. Its objective is to improve the quality and relevance of education and to provide support for continuous improvement of education also through financial incentives. The designation of CoEs in education is thus one means to promote the enhancement of higher education and to highlight the importance of the quality of education in parallel with research. The paper discusses the development of FINHEEC's evaluation methods and criteria during the past decade as well as some general impressions on the quality of Finnish higher education, both in universities and polytechnics, as well as future challenges related to the evaluation processes.