

SUMMARY

Support for the global implementation of the 2030 Agenda



Monitoring of the Strategy of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development 2024

In accordance with the 2030 Agenda, each country contributes to the achievement of the sustainable development goals. The goals can be achieved globally if each country achieves them nationally. In the Strategy of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (2022), the global implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is addressed by monitoring how Finland fulfils its global responsibility. Bearing global responsibility means that Finland also participates in the efforts to find solutions to sustainability challenges outside its national borders. In the monitoring, a systemic approach was adopted to this topic.

The perspective was selected and the monitoring of the article was implemented on the basis of interviews with experts, scientific articles, and studies and reports on the theme. In the monitoring of the area of change 'Support for the global implementation of the 2030 Agenda', the focus was on the role of Finnish companies in reaching the goals.

Finland is part of the global system and community. Ecosystems function across state borders, and the global economic structures require a cross-border approach to many questions concerning the economy and wellbeing. Therefore, it is impossible to limit the discussion on solutions and problems related to sustainable development to Finland alone.

Finland's support to the global implementation of the 2030 Agenda builds on foreign and security policy, successful development policy and development cooperation, influencing through the EU, and activities that promote the development and regulation of the private sector. With development cooperation, Finland helps individual countries in strengthening their own capabilities.

Successful development cooperation often leads to expanded trade relations. The markets of emerging countries offer enormous opportunities to Finnish companies as they are growing faster than other countries. There is demand especially in the energy, infrastructure, digitalisation and education technology sectors.

Companies have an increasingly important role in promoting sustainable development. Finnish companies are becoming more and more active in promoting the goals of the 2030 Agenda, but there is potential to utilise their expertise even more broadly. The demand for solutions that improve the environment and people's living conditions keeps growing, which supports the dissemination of the sustainable development principles to all business sectors in Finland. This requires that the companies' core business operations are ecologically, socially and economically sustainable. At its best, the profitable business of a company promotes sustainable development, which is particularly important now that the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, progress of other ecological crises and conflicts have increased poverty and inequality and turned the global trend into a decreasing one.

The decrease in development cooperation funding in Finland will make it more difficult to reach the level of 0.7 per cent before 2030. This means that the private sector and companies will have an even more important role in development policy. Despite the decrease in development cooperation funding, Finland will contribute to global responsibility through humanitarian assistance and trade policy and by supporting the companies' efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

SUMMARY

Economy and work promoting wellbeing, sustainable consumption



Monitoring of the Strategy of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development 2024

According to the vision of the area of change 'Economy and work promoting wellbeing, sustainable consumption' of the Strategy of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development, the domestic use of renewable natural resources is sustainable and resource efficient and the use of non-renewable natural resources is decreasing rapidly. Finnish companies have a strong handprint in solutions that bolster overall sustainability and are related to climate change, and their business models produce sustainable wellbeing

According to the Commission's strategy, Finland aims for an economy and work that promote sustainable wellbeing and for sustainable consumption through e.g. bioeconomy and circular economy solutions, innovations, and digital and intangible products and services. The strategy aims at an economy of wellbeing, working life that is equitable and of high quality and investments in competences and development that promote sustainable solutions. Environmental harm should be reduced and the use of natural resources should be brought onto a sustainable path.

In the monitoring of the strategy, a monitoring article was drawn up on each area of change where a systemic approach to the theme was adopted. The perspective was selected and the monitoring of the article was implemented on the basis of interviews with experts, scientific articles, and studies and reports on the theme. In the area of change 'Economy and work promoting wellbeing, sustainable consumption' the focus was on the circular economy, as through this it is possible to advance both an economy that promotes wellbeing and sustainable consumption at the same time.

The greatest national challenge of a circular economy in Finland is our material footprint, which is one of the largest in Europe. The problems also include the strong use of virgin raw materials in the construction and industrial sectors and low volume of recycled municipal waste.

In Finland, the development of a circular economy is far behind the expectations, even if there has been a lot of talk and political ambition on the matter. The focus has been on the recycling of materials, even if this is the lowest form of a circular economy. Achieving comprehensive progress in a circular economy in Finland suffers from lack of incentives, attitude problems and weak regulation. Different kinds of measures will be needed, including ways to encourage repair and maintenance works and promote the reuse of construction materials.

It is still possible for Finland to become a model country in terms of a circular economy. This requires that Finland will utilise the many benefits we have, such as the high education level, trust in institutions and people, process efficiency and optimisation of industry, digitalisation and the small size of the country.

SUMMARY

Education, competence and sustainable lifestyles



Monitoring of the Strategy of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development 2024

According to the vision of the Strategy of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (2022), the shift towards a more sustainable society takes place by changes in our worldview and by learning new knowledge and skills. Learning and education are the keys to the societal change required to achieve sustainable development.

In the monitoring of the strategy, a monitoring article was drawn up on each area of change where a systemic approach to the theme was adopted. The perspective was selected and the monitoring of the article was implemented on the basis of interviews with experts, scientific articles, and studies and reports on the theme. In the area of change 'Education, competence and sustainable lifestyles' the focus was on the state of teaching and learning that are in line with sustainable development and what kind of work is being done in Finland to promote eco-social education.

Based on the monitoring, the recent global incidents are reflected in the views of the Finns regarding sustainability. The COVID-19 pandemic, war in Ukraine, energy crisis and economic uncertainty have darkened the people's attitudes. Indicators show that the consumer habits and lifestyles of Finns have not changed enough towards a direction that would be required for sustainable development. The attitudes have become stricter and in recent surveys matters such as climate action and sticking to environmental targets receive less weight than before.

Sustainable development is promoted by reforming the value base of society and mainstreaming sustainable lifestyles. Education shapes the way we see the world and our perception of wellbeing, which is why it is a key factor in rooting sustainable development in our society. Education in line with sustainable development provides capabilities to make knowledge-based decisions and act responsibly.

Based on the monitoring, sustainability skills and the green transition are now in the mainstream of the Finnish education system, but a comprehensive change has not been achieved. There is a gap between the value base that guides education and the actions, i.e. actual education and teaching. Competence related to sustainability has been strengthened but this has not been successfully integrated into teaching. Sustainability education offered at present is fragmented and does not give enough weight to practice. In order to turn sustainability values into actions in our daily lives, sustainability education should be integrated into everyday living.

According to the monitoring, foundations, associations and other actors in the cultural and education sectors have an important role in enhancing competence that is in line with sustainable development. In recent years these organisations have managed to patch some of the shortcomings in formal education.

SUMMARY

Wellbeing, health and social inclusion

Monitoring of the Strategy of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development 2024



PRIME MINISTER'S
OFFICE

In the 2030s, more people in Finland will consider their quality of life to be good. People are healthier, and health inequalities have decreased. Finland is a world leader when it comes to preventing health and social problems, and services that support health have been resourced and targeted equally. This is the vision for the area of change concerning wellbeing, health and social inclusion in the Strategy of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development.

Work to achieve the change will be done by shifting the focus from solving problems to a preventive approach. Services are targeted and designed for people with health challenges and groups that are at a higher risk. The aim is to bridge inequality, reduce poverty, achieve social justice and enhance wellbeing because wellbeing and health influence the capability of people to participate in social activities.

In the monitoring of the strategy, a monitoring article was drawn up on each area of change where a systemic approach to the theme was adopted. The perspective was selected and the monitoring of the article was implemented on the basis of interviews with experts, scientific articles, and studies and reports on the theme. In the area of change concerning wellbeing, health and social inclusion the focus was on promoting people's wellbeing and health through everyday mobility.

Based on the monitoring, people's wellbeing, health and social inclusion will benefit in the long term from promoting everyday mobility by walking and cycling. At the same time this improves ecological sustainability. Now cycling accounts for less than 10 per cent and walking just over 20 per cent of commuting. At the moment sustainability is promoted in Finland mainly through the present system and operating models. Increasing cycling and walking require more funding, effective guidance, measures to reduce the use of cars and investments in a well-functioning cycling network.

The economic benefits of walking and cycling are not yet widely recognised in Finland, even if studies show that the annual costs to society caused by immobility may be as high as EUR 3.2 billion. In the future a more diverse approach must be adopted to the impacts of transport systems where the comfort of the living environments and people's wellbeing are also taken into account. To achieve changes in transport systems, bold advocates and decisions are needed both in people's everyday lives and in large-scale national and regional projects.

SUMMARY

Sustainable energy system



PRIME MINISTER'S
OFFICE

Monitoring of the Strategy of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development 2024

According to the vision of the Strategy of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (2022), the change towards a more sustainable energy system will take place by no longer using coal in energy production and consumption, substantially reducing the consumption of fossil oil and gas and increasing the production of clean forms of energy. Social inclusion and justice can be seen in the citizens' opportunities to actively participate in the energy system.

In the monitoring of the strategy, a monitoring article was drawn up on each area of change where a systemic approach to the theme was adopted. The perspective was selected and the monitoring of the article was implemented on the basis of interviews with experts, scientific articles, and studies and reports on the theme. The area of change 'Sustainable energy system', discussed the justice of the energy transition and explored how all parties to society will stay included in the transition into an adequately self-sufficient, resource smart and clean energy system.

Achieving a sustainable energy system is important because the energy sector generates about 75 per cent of Finland's greenhouse gas emissions. About a quarter of these emissions are generated in electricity and heat production. Another quarter comes from transport. These emissions have not seen much of a decrease. The transition towards carbon neutrality is already under way. In 2022 renewable energy sources accounted for 42 per cent of the total energy consumption.

The energy transition can be seen in the everyday life of the Finns as changes related to mobility, housing and livelihoods, and as new opportunities to participate in the energy market. Besides technological innovations, the energy transition also requires social and political decisions that take into account the justice of the transition. So far there has been very little discussion on the justice of the energy transition in Finland, but experts are saying that such discussion is necessary. To ensure justice, the society must recognise the differences related to regions and types of housing and special characteristics of population groups to reduce energy poverty and vulnerabilities. Matters to be considered include energy security, access to critical raw materials and impacts of the decisions on future generations.

In the energy transition, the consumers are expected to be more competent in energy issues and to show greater involvement in improving energy efficiency and in the use of renewable forms of energy. At its best, the energy transition will turn the consumers of energy into energy citizens who participate in improving energy efficiency and producing energy for their own use. The Finns are facing the transition from very different backgrounds. Accepting the change requires that the measures are easy and understandable.

SUMMARY

Food system promoting wellbeing



PRIME MINISTER'S
OFFICE

Monitoring of the Strategy of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development 2024

According to the vision of the Strategy of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (2022), the Finnish food system of the future should promote wellbeing by offering food that has been produced in a manner that is competitive, ethical and comprehensively sustainable and that is healthy, safe and appreciated by consumers. A food system based on the vision must also be profitable, socially just and sustainable in terms of climate and the environment.

In the monitoring of the strategy, a monitoring article was drawn up on each area of change where a systemic approach to the theme was adopted. The perspective was selected and the monitoring of the article was implemented on the basis of interviews with experts, scientific articles, and studies and reports on the theme. The area of change 'Food system promoting wellbeing' discussed the role of plant proteins as reformers of the food system.

According to the monitoring, Finland is still far from a sustainable food system. In nutritional habits the main focus is on meat consumption, which has increased in Finland over the past 30 years. A comprehensive change requires effective coordination of the production and demand and changes in the eating and consumer habits. Plant-based innovations and plant proteins could have a key role in this.

The Finnish food culture lives and evolves in shared everyday lunches. In recent years plant-based products and plant proteins have been offered more than ever before. They have been included in both the nutrition recommendations and the procurement criteria of lunch caterers. According to experts, more research and innovations and experiments that promote plant proteins are needed to accelerate the change. In Finland, for example, there is just one processing plant for legume proteins. This is a bottleneck that restricts the innovation and production of plant protein products, affects the security of supply and increases our dependence on imports.

Despite the steady growth in the consumption of plant-based products, the change in the diet requires broader cooperation, innovations and an open discussion culture. Investments are needed e.g. in the processing of plant proteins if we wish to ensure high-quality production of healthy domestic food and compete in the growing international plant protein market.

SUMMARY

Forest, water and land use promoting biodiversity and carbon neutrality



PRIME MINISTER'S
OFFICE

Monitoring of the Strategy of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development 2024

According to the vision of the Strategy of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (2022), forest, water and land use lie on a sustainable foundation that supports carbon neutrality, the bioeconomy, the circular economy and biodiversity, and the state of the natural environment is recovering.

According to the strategy, biodiversity must be taken into account in all decision-making. This is particularly important in regional and land use planning. Measures to preserve biodiversity, extending from the establishment of protected areas to nature management and strengthening the understanding of the Finns concerning the natural environment, must be adequate.

In the monitoring of the strategy, a monitoring article was drawn up on each area of change where a systemic approach to the theme was adopted. The perspective was selected and the monitoring of the article was implemented on the basis of interviews with experts, scientific articles, and studies and reports on the theme. The area of change 'Forest, water and land use promoting biodiversity and carbon neutrality' explored the views concerning the use of forests and the discussion on forests.

In Finland the discussion on the use of forests is often quite heated and emotional due to the numerous conflicting pressures involved. The use of forests should promote economic growth and create jobs without jeopardising biodiversity and carbon stocks. At the heart of the heated public debate are the diverging views on what sustainable use of forests means. In terms of sustainable development, the key issue is how Finland will increase the added value generated by forests. Based on the monitoring, this requires courage, innovations and investments.

In the future, health and wellbeing will also be even more closely associated with the use of forests. Spending time in forests is beneficial for both physical and mental health. The traditions of the right of public access are strongly rooted in the Finnish culture. The different kinds of relations to forests constitute the forest culture. This unites the Finns and guides the ways how forests will be used in the future and what the forest owners will appreciate.

At the moment the focus of the discussion on forests is on numbers and economic indicators, while the cultural meaning of forests in the lives of the Finns is neglected. Based on the monitoring, a better understanding of the different kinds of relations to forests could curb the acrimonious discussion and help reconcile the targets related to forests that may seem to conflict with each other.