

The world's happiest nation also ranks number one in sustainable development – what is Finland's secret?



This year, Finland is not only the happiest country in the world, it is also number one in the comparison of how countries are faring with regard to sustainable development. What makes Finland so successful?

Finland's strongest asset is the Nordic welfare model. Key factors for success are quality education and equal opportunities for all. A strong society is one that is inclusive and respectful of human rights.

Most of all, Finnish society relies on mutual trust and open dialogue. Recent success has required hard work and long-term dedication from the whole of society.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the UN's global plan of action guiding sustainable development in all countries of the world. Finland is committed to promoting sustainable development and achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda, both Finland and globally.

According to studies, Finland is progressing well in its implementation of the 2030 Agenda with regard to social sustainability objectives. Finland's greatest challenges are related to environmental sustainability, including climate work, the protection of biological diversity and the sustainable use of natural resources.

Finland has high-level political commitment to sustainable development. Sanna Marin's Government's aim is to transform Finland into a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society by 2030. The Government's objectives for the 2030s are described in more detail in the *Government's Sustainability Roadmap*.

Finland is also known for its ambitious climate policy, with one of the world's most ambitious climate targets. Finland aims to be climate neutral by 2035 and climate negative soon after that.

Involving society as a whole is considered an important priority in the work on sustainable development in Finland. Finnish cities, municipalities, businesses, organisations and other operators have been working together for years – including on implementing the 2030 Agenda. According to estimates, two thirds of our national progress on sustainable development depends on the actions of municipalities and cities.

The National Commission on Sustainable Development has been in place in Finland for many decades with the goal of discussing national work on sustainable development together with different operators in society. The Commission's work is based on dialogue between the government, researchers, businesses, cities, civil society organisations and other stakeholders.

Finland has gained international recognition for its participatory model of sustainable development: for example, this spring, Finland received the Catalyst 2030 award for its work on sustainability.

The Commission is currently preparing its own roadmap, which aims to bring about systemic change. *The 2030 Agenda Roadmap* is a plan for how Finnish society as a whole can achieve all of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Change is needed in areas such as the food system, the energy system, the use of land and forests to strengthen biodiversity and carbon neutrality, and an economy that promotes wellbeing, work and sustainable consumption.

The Commission, chaired by the Prime Minister, has operated without interruption since the early 1990s. This high-level political commitment has created an encouraging environment for building a common understanding and adopting practical approaches to sustainable development.

According to an [annual international ranking](#), Finland has achieved or is close to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to poverty alleviation, health, education, water, energy, reducing inequality, peace, and the rule of law. Finland's greatest challenges are related to the fight against climate change, the need for more sustainable consumption and production patterns, and halting biodiversity loss. On top of this, Finland, like many developed nations, struggles with its negative effects on other countries' abilities to achieve the SDGs.

Key facts – the 2030 Agenda and Finland

- Finland has a [national plan](#) for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which has been submitted to the Parliament as a Government report. The implementation plan describes the actions of the current Government in each of the SDGs and explains how Finland is working to promote the attainment of the SDGs globally.
- [The National Commission on Sustainable Development](#) (NCSD) has been in place in Finland since 1993, with the goal of discussing national work on sustainable development between different operators in society. The NCSD is chaired by the Prime Minister.
- In order to strengthen and concretise the participation of society as a whole, the NCSD created a [Society's Commitment tool](#) in 2013. Any Finnish organisation can contribute to the promotion of sustainable development by making a concrete and public commitment, thus becoming part of the national community of sustainability leaders.
- In Finland, cities and municipalities play an important role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. For example, municipalities have their own carbon neutrality network known as [HINKU](#).
- The state of sustainable development is monitored in Finland using [national indicators](#), which are divided into ten different themes. Each year, experts draw up a situation analysis on each theme. In addition, a [Citizen Panel](#) on Sustainable Development assesses the state of sustainable development based on the indicators.
- In 2019, Finland carried out an independent evaluation of the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda, also known as a [Voluntary National Review](#). The next evaluation of work at the national level is scheduled for 2023. In addition, three cities have prepared a Voluntary Local Review, and more cities are planning to do so in the future.
- In Finland, responsibility for preparing and coordinating the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda rests with the Prime Minister's Office, in the Sustainable Development Coordination Secretariat. Each ministry is responsible for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda within its own sphere of responsibility.

Want to learn more about sustainable development in Finland?

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As the Secretary General of the National Commission, Sami Pirkkala has wide-ranging knowledge of the state of sustainable development in Finland and of current measures taken by the Government and society as a whole to promote sustainability. He leads the preparation of the national 2030 Agenda Roadmap within the Commission.

Press releases and photos:

[14 June 2021 | Finland ranks first in international sustainable development comparison](#)

[29 April 2021 | Government's sustainability roadmap describes the current state of social, economic and ecological sustainability and sets goals for 2030](#)

[25 March 2021 | Finland's sustainable development work recognised with Catalyst 2030 Award](#)

[3 June 2020 | Finland's 2030 Agenda Voluntary National Review](#)

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