



# Helsinki builds open city with digitalisation

*The city serves  
as a platform  
for the creation of  
new digital services for  
increased liveability  
for citizens and  
competitiveness  
for businesses.*

In 2011 a group of creative individuals in Helsinki made a revolutionary idea come true: they organised a Restaurant Day food festival in which anyone could set up pop-up restaurants in public places. Restaurant Day has since become a huge success, relying on social media for communication and coordination. The role of the city administration has been to enable the festival, offering the city as a platform that promotes dynamism and enriches the lives of residents.

The city as a platform is the underlying philosophy of Helsinki in its larger efforts. This is particularly true for the strategic efforts of the

city administration to digitalise services throughout the organisation.

“Helsinki seeks to create a better everyday life for people, openly and together with people, putting the user in the centre of development,” says **Ville Meloni**, Manager of the Digital Helsinki Programme.

Helsinki started to create an open city through digitalisation first by releasing its public-sector data as open data. One of the datasets to be opened has been the city’s decision-making documents, turning decision-making into an increasingly transparent process.

To date, Helsinki’s digitalisation programme has produced a list of electronic services including an online Service Map that shows all municipal services. Social and public health care services keep introducing new online service alternatives. Most applications, such as those for public day care, can now be made online.

Digitalisation naturally has its flip side of the coin, shutting out those unable to use digital technology. “Digitalisation should be viewed as an opportunity rather than as a threat,” Meloni comments. “When more people can help themselves with online services, resources are freed for those who can’t. Digitalisation will by no means abolish human contact in city services.”

[digi.hel.fi](http://digi.hel.fi), [#digitalhelsinki](https://twitter.com/digitalhelsinki)



## Helsinki Loves Developers

Helsinki's outdoor sports sites served city residents increasingly well over the past winter season: a new digital Outdoor Exercise Map produced by the cities of the Helsinki metropolitan area showed skaters, ice hockey players and cross-country skiers the available rinks and ski tracks as well as their condition in real time. As summer approaches, the online map expands to show the locations and conditions of Helsinki's public swimming beaches.

[ulkoliikunta.fi](http://ulkoliikunta.fi)

The development of Outdoor Exercise Map started with the needs and wishes of users explored on social media. A focus group of users tested the first Beta version of the software on smartphones. Software development continues with users with the help of a feedback function and regular user testing.

Outdoor Exercise Map illustrates the principles of digital services development in the Helsinki public sector. The first principle is to

put the user in the centre of development. The second principle is to base all development on open data and open-source code to be freely utilised by anyone to develop new services.

One of the channels for Helsinki to promote open-source software development is through a community called *Helsinki Loves Developers* (Hel<3Dev). This open community encourages developers to utilise public-sector open data and open APIs from the Helsinki metropolitan area cities. The community organises meet-ups for discussion and co-creation. Other ways to serve developers include the Helsinki Developers' Portal maintained by the Helsinki Open Software Development team. [dev.hel.fi](http://dev.hel.fi)

Helsinki Region Infoshare HRI is a portal that compiles open data from the region to be freely used by any public- or private-sector actor for the development of new digital services. [www.hri.fi](http://www.hri.fi)



*Helsinki Code Fellows  
Timo Tuominen (left)  
and Tero Tikkanen*

In the vanguard of Digital Helsinki Programme:

# Code Fellows

*Helsinki turns ideas digital. The city's Open Software Development team is at the core of a digitalisation programme that runs across the city organisation.*

Software developer **Timo Tuominen** and user interface designer **Tero Tikkanen** work on a whiteboard at the office of the Helsinki Open Software Development team. They are writing up their notions on how to improve sports site maintenance in Helsinki by digital means – how to have the City of Helsinki Sports Department's maintenance data be updated more efficiently.

The two men are Helsinki Code Fellows. They have just visited the Sports Department to explore the site maintenance problem with the staff. Earlier in the day, Tuominen had visited the Department of Early Education and Care to discuss how to render their online day-care placement application system more user-friendly.

There is much demand for the expertise of the Code Fellows and the rest of the sev-

en-member Helsinki Open Software Development team, who complement digital expertise found throughout the city organisation. The city's to-do list comprises diverse projects to ease the everyday lives of citizens and the work of the city staff by digitalising services and everyday routines.

Tuominen joined the team from the European Union's Code for Europe initiative. His first task was to develop further the Helsinki metropolitan area Service Map, an application that shows on a map the area's 12,600 municipal services. Thanks to Tuominen's efforts, the Service Map now shows the services' accessibility, events offering, how to reach them, the routes on public transport and even information about road work on the routes. Users can personalise their Service Map by selecting their preferred modes of transport and by entering their needs in terms of accessibility. [servicemap.hel.fi](http://servicemap.hel.fi)

The Service Map exemplifies Helsinki's approach to digitalisation: digital services are largely based on public-sector open data and open-source code, with open interfaces. "Thus our work consists of putting data to work for the benefit of citizens," Tuominen points out. The map is based on OpenStreetMap, which is an international crowdsourced map site.

One of the Code Fellows' current development projects is a citizen hearing service "tell us what you think", in which citizens are asked to comment on various matters, such as changes to school districts and proposals from the City Planning Department put on display. "This is a participatory service that increases democracy," Tuominen explains.

[kerrokantasi.hel.fi](http://kerrokantasi.hel.fi)

Key to the work of the Code Fellows is agile experimentation: ideas are tested quickly to find out what works and what doesn't, and many ideas never go beyond experiments.

*Pirkko Tuominen contributed to reporting.*

## Principles of Helsinki digital services development

Helsinki's digitalisation programme has produced an online guide for digital services development. The guide instructs both the city staff and external agents including enterprises and developers in the design and production of digital city services. The guide includes 10 principles to follow in digital services development.

[ 1 ]

Start from a need

[ 2 ]

Do less

[ 3 ]

Use data as basis

[ 4 ]

Find the essential

[ 5 ]

Edit and repeat

[ 6 ]

Build it for everybody

[ 7 ]

Create services

[ 8 ]

Instruct where needed

[ 9 ]

Initiate development

[ 10 ]

Share what you learn



*Helsinki Central Library (still under construction)*

## City spaces and equipment put to better use

The Helsinki Open Software Development team, City Library and other city departments have collaborated to produce a digital service entitled *Varaamo* (“booking place”), which allows residents to reserve city spaces and equipment for their own activities and use. The most frequently booked spaces are music studios and meeting rooms, while the most popular equipment are 3D printers available at libraries.

Also available are video editing rooms, facilities for digitising images and sound, places for skateboarding and games, sewing machines, vinyl cutters and scanners.

*Varaamo* is developed further with feedback from users. Development plans include improvements in the search functions such as a map function to enable users to book spaces by location. [varaamo.hel.fi](http://varaamo.hel.fi)

## Helsinki App: City in a smartphone

A new mobile app produced by the City of Helsinki – Helsinki App – promises to put the whole city in the user’s pocket. Helsinki App could announce roadwork, available doctor’s appointments and upcoming events. The app development stems from the city’s need to communicate with residents easily and the desire of residents to be informed about happenings and city decisions concerning them-

selves. Visitors could be offered tailored programmes.

Helsinki App offers residents a new means to give feedback to the city. For example, they can snap a photo of the problem, send the photo to the city and then monitor the correction of the problem. The first Beta version is being tested by users, who can also join the development through its open-source code.

# Smart Kalasatama develops climate-positive digital services

*An agile piloting programme moves forward in Helsinki's Smart City district*

The Kalasatama inner-city district of Helsinki is designated by the city for the development of Smart City solutions. The development is based on extensive new construction and a dense urban structure: Kalasatama, under construction on former harbour and industrial land, is projected to house 25,000 residents and to provide 10,000 jobs by 2030.

The district's Smart Kalasatama project develops new digital services for residents. One of the goals and benchmarks of the development is to give residents one extra hour a day freed from everyday chores.

The Smart Kalasatama project proceeds with an agile piloting programme comprising up to 20 pilot projects in 2016–2017. Ongoing projects include the following:

Rentapark is a sharing-economy parking service that takes away the trouble of finding a parking space in the city by putting available spaces into productive use. An app allows drivers to book a space and pay for it in advance.

The Smart Minigrad project upgrades electrical outlets for car block heaters into smart electric-car charging stations remote-operated with smartphones. Smart Minigrad stations can use locally generated solar power.

Elwedo has designed a solution based on the solar-power generation technology installed in Kalasatama residential buildings. The solution allows buildings to feed their excessive solar power to the local grid and distributes the revenue among the residents.

Earlier pilots include a solution designed to make car ownership unnecessary: the Finnish startup Tuup created a mobility app integrating



SARA HUHTINEN / CITY OF HELSINKI

*Teurastamo – The Abattoir – in Helsinki's Kalasatama is a developing centre of good food and recreation. The area serves as a testing ground for community concepts.*

rental cars and public transport into mobility packages catering for the transport needs of residents. [fiksukalasatama.fi/en](https://fiksukalasatama.fi/en)

## Jan Vapaavuori is new Helsinki Mayor as National Coalition Party wins municipal elections

The centre-right National Coalition Party of Finland (Kokoomus) retained its position as Helsinki's biggest party – as well as Finland's biggest party on the municipal level – in the municipal elections held on 9 April 2017. The National Coalition Party won the elections in Helsinki with 28.4 per cent of the vote. According to an agreement made by political parties, the mayoral candidate of the winning party becomes mayor. As a result, the City Council will elect the National Coalition Party's Jan Vapaavuori as mayor in June. As of 1 June 2017, Helsinki adopts a governance system according to which the City Council elects the mayor, as well as four deputy mayors, from among its mem-



ESKO JÄMSÄ / CITY OF HELSINKI

*Jan Vapaavuori*

bers for the council term. Mr Vapaavuori was the landslide personal winner of the elections with 30,000 votes.

## Finland is 2nd best prepared for digital economy

The World Economic Forum's Networked Readiness Index puts Finland in second place in preparedness for the new digital economy. The index assesses the factors, policies and institutions that enable a country to fully leverage information and communication technologies for increased competitiveness and wellbeing.

According to the index, Finland has extremely good access to the latest technologies as well as venture capital, and its businesses are highly connected. The top ranking country in the index is Singapore. Finland is followed in the index by Sweden (3rd) and Norway (4th).



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