

 Helsinki

# Helsinki News

3/2017



City for entrepreneurs

Maria 01 startup hub

Helsinki grows with

- Smart & Clean
- Life sciences and health tech



# Finnish Startup Olympic Team

Helsinki's Maria 01 is on its way to become the biggest startup hub in the Nordic countries

"Entrepreneurship is catching," says CEO **Voitto Kangas** of Maria 01, a fast-growing community house for tech startups in Helsinki.

"We're striving to be a strong magnet in Fin-

land that attracts startups and venture capitalists – a startup headquarters that speeds up information transfer and investments," Kangas continues to explain the principles of Maria 01.

"We're the Finnish startup Olympic team training together."

The training camp is located on the campus of the former Maria hospital of Helsinki. Wards

## Maria 01

**85**

startup members

**700**

ambitious individuals

**€ 44 million**

of capital raised by members

**200**

events a year

**10,000 m<sup>2</sup>**

of space –  
substantial growth projected

**€ 1,585 billion**

of capital raised and under  
management by member VCs

have been turned into offices for tech entrepreneurs and investors. With no marble floors, mirrors and steel-and-glass surfaces, the rough surroundings that bear the marks of the original use of the buildings are in themselves a source of inspiration.

Doors opened in 2016. The first startup to move in was Soundage, a firm that produces SoundShade ambient noise products. By now the current facilities are full, housing 85 startups, seven investors and four Friends at the House accelerators.

Maria 01 receives an average of 20 applications per month and picks 3–4 of them to the waiting list. “To become a Maria 01 resident, the startup should possess a promising technology and have a sound financial base, and the founders should be part of the team,” Kangas explains.

“We call ourselves a House of Nerds,” Kangas says, explaining that practically all startups at Maria 01 are software development companies. Of the 700 residents in house, half write code. More than one-third are international professionals. The language of the house is English.

An average Maria 01 startup is a team of 5–6 and is expected to stay 1–3 years, until the firm is ready to move on – or closes. Most of the Maria 01 residents are serial entrepreneurs. The areas

of expertise reflect the overall strengths of the Helsinki region: data management, software engineering, digital games, artificial intelligence and health technology.

“Our mission is to help our startups to grow into large international businesses, which hopefully will be headquartered in Helsinki,” Kangas states.

Maria 01 operates 24/7. The community has few rules, except for innovation and mutual inspiration, which can take many forms. There are about 200 events per year, many of them initiated and organized by residents. Maria 01 even boasts a major unofficial ping pong tournament, claimed to be the largest in Finland. The ping pong table was a joint purchase by residents. “We spend a great deal of time together,” Kangas comments.

With a full house, Maria 01 is by no means complete. The next move will be Game House to open in the spring of 2018 – this will be a centre with 25 game companies to serve as a showroom of Finnish digital gaming expertise. Total floor space on the campus will double within three years, as more buildings are renovated for office use.

Ambitious plans for the next decade promise substantial growth. Maria 01 is poised to become the largest hub of startups in the Nordic countries.

[maria.io](http://maria.io)



## Startups about Maria 01 and Helsinki

“ Maria 01 is a community of people with a similar mindset. The network encourages us, supports us and helps us to move forward. The community gives us strength. The facilities are good and the location is excellent.”

**Fredrik Löfberg**, CEO and co-founder of *Nordsafety*, a startup striving to be a globally leading supplier of mobile solutions for occupational safety. [nordsafety.com](http://nordsafety.com)

“ The greatest strengths of Maria 01 are peer support and the serendipity approach.

Maria 01 has a great deal of entrepreneurial activity and a good culture of supporting and

sharing. The community helps us to build our own network of technology companies, as many of our members are already here. We have also gained several customers through the Maria 01 network.

“Today Helsinki has a great and supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem. Successful entrepreneurs provide inspiration to new startups with their example, as well as providing contacts and sharing experiences.”

**Petri Vilén**, CEO and co-founder of *Industryhack*, a startup helping enterprises in traditional industries to find partners for digital transformation. [industryhack.com](http://industryhack.com)

## Supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem

**Ilkka Paananen**, CEO and co-founder of Supercell (developer of *Clash of Clans* among other mobile games) is one of Finland’s most successful entrepreneurs and a mentor for other entrepreneurs. Speaking to startups at a Helsinki Think Company meeting, he urged, “Dream big!” As the keynote speaker at a young entrepreneurs’ event, he was described as a “fantastic role model and source

of inspiration to young people”.

When questioned by *Helsingin Sanomat* about their location in Helsinki, Paananen commented to the paper that Supercell is based in Helsinki thanks to good public transport and other services. “The central location, good connections, English-language schools, daycare centres and services have been important factors in our success,” he elaborated.

# City strengthens its startup community

Pertti Nisonen / City of Helsinki



Finland has evolved from a country known for large corporations to a country known for a growing number of startups. The country, and its capital city Helsinki in particular, are distinguished by small enterprises looking to enter the global marketplace with innovative products.

Today Helsinki is witnessing a tremendous startup ecosystem emerging in the city. Why is that?

First, startups have good access to venture capital and to accelerators that take them from ideas and dreams to business.

Second, and importantly, Helsinki offers the conditions that a startup needs to be successful and for entrepreneurs to want to live and work in the city.

Entrepreneurs cite a list of benefits. There is a great amount of technical talent in Helsinki, with skilled people working on the core technologies that make success possible. The city is design- and technology-driven. Hierarchies are low, and institutions are accessible. The society works. People speak English. Above all, the entrepreneurial community is close-knit, and people work together supporting each other; we push forward together.

The City of Helsinki plays an active role in the Helsinki startup ecosystem in multiple ways. First, the City has created a hub for startups at Maria 01, turning City-owned premises into a self-fostering community of innovation. The City enterprise services at NewCo Helsinki provide mentoring for startups and open doors with their comprehensive network. The City also offers acceleration services for early-phase startups.

Perhaps the most momentous benefit that the City can offer to startups is testing platforms in various city operations – places in real-life situations where startups can test their products and obtain their first references. Such piloting and reference platforms are offered in urban planning, climate services, social services, health care, and many other.

Helsinki is proud to be the scene of inspiring startup meetings, ranging from hackathons to the Slush mega event. They attest that Helsinki is the place to be.

**Santtu von Bruun**

*Head of Competitiveness and International Relations  
City of Helsinki*

Smart & Clean:

## Helsinki to Hold Keys to Urban Challenges

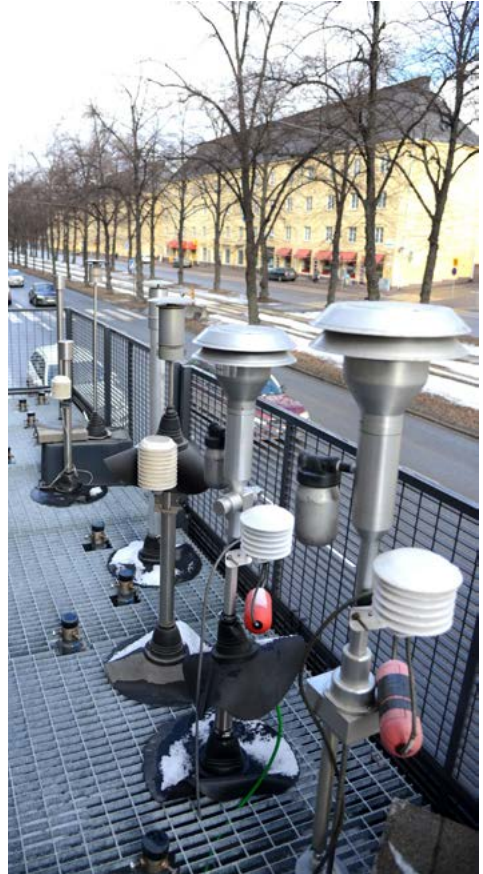
Tero Pajukallio / HSY

The Smart & Clean public-private partnership seeks to develop the Helsinki metropolitan area into the world's best test bed for solutions to climate change and circular economy.

The Helsinki metropolitan area is about to launch a cutting-edge experiment to boost urban air quality: the environmental measurement and emissions monitoring companies *Vaisala* and *Pegasor* of Finland partner with municipal and governmental authorities to build the world's first city-wide and comprehensive network of air quality monitoring stations. The system can produce air quality data with up to 1.5-metre accuracy throughout the city. The data will be used for air quality information and in a predictive model to anticipate poor air quality 24 hours in advance. The authorities can use the system to design air quality improvement measures. All data is made available as open data to ensure that it will generate new innovations. When installed in big urban hubs, the system can produce major advances in areas troubled by poor air quality.

*Helsinki Air Quality IoT System* is part of the Helsinki Metropolitan Smart & Clean project and a prime showcase of its operation. The project combines a wide spectrum of Finnish public- and private-sector actors to develop urban solutions to the hottest challenges of humankind, using Helsinki as a test bed. In addition to pollution, key areas of concern are energy use, mobility, construction and consumption.

"Helsinki is an ideal metropolis to serve as a test bed for urban innovation," says **Tiina Kähkö**, Executive Director of Smart & Clean Foundation, explaining, "Helsinki possesses world-lead-



An air quality monitoring station of Helsinki Region Environmental Services Authority HSY

ing expertise, the city is the right size for an ideal urban lab, and hierarchies are low."

The project's goal is to produce new technologies and services with substantial business potential.

The foundation's role is to act as an accelerator, facilitator and disruptor in a step change process that will develop win-win solutions to improve the quality of urban life and to mitigate climate change. [smartclean.fi](http://smartclean.fi)

Health Capital Helsinki:

## Finnish life science and health tech expertise goes global



Keksi Agency / City of Helsinki

Three Helsinki-based health tech startups brought news of interest to industry experts on a market exposure tour in Boston in November: *Surgify Medical* has a new technology to make bone surgery safe. *Fimmic* uses deep learning to develop image analysis solutions for digital pathology. *Disior* creates 3D-analysis software for bone fractures. The tour was generated by Health Capital Helsinki (HCH), a hub destined to turn Helsinki-based life science and health tech competencies into startups and to bring them to the market.

“Life science and health tech competencies in the Helsinki metropolitan area are among the very best in the world,” says **Tuula Palmén**, Head of the HCH office. “However, these competencies haven’t produced a comparable number of successful startups, and local venture capital is lacking in this field. Our role is to bridge the gap and to build an effective chain from academic and clinical discoveries to business.”

HCH is a joint initiative by Helsinki, the regional hospital authority, the University of Helsinki and Aalto University to develop a research-based and business ecosystem for Helsinki, similar in function to the innovation environment in Boston, where life science R&D and venture capital meet successfully.

HCH has launched SPARK Finland, a programme modelled after SPARK Global to develop discoveries to stages where they attract interest from industry and investors. A key approach of HCH is to create networks among enterprises to produce new startups. An important partner is Helsinki Think Company, a University of Helsinki entrepreneurship society working at the grass-roots level to generate business from ideas.

To date, HCH has helped to create nearly 20 startups. “Life science R&D can take years or decades to produce marketable results, but these results are long-lasting. Our work will likely bear the most fruit in 5–20 years,” Palmén says.



Lauttasaari, one of the new stations of the Helsinki metropolitan Metro system

## Helsinki Metro system expands

The Helsinki Metro has been extended to the west with eight new stations, two of them in Helsinki and six in the neighbouring city of Espoo. The extension opened to passenger service on 18 November 2017.

The metropolitan Metro system consists of one east-to-west line from eastern Helsinki, where the line divides into two, via the Helsinki city centre halfway through Espoo. The total number of Metro stations is 25 on the 35-kilometre (22-mile) line. The new section of the Metro line is all underground. The planning and construction of a further extension of the Metro to western Espoo is underway.

The Metro now connects important hubs in terms of the growth and development of the Helsinki metropolitan area including the city centre

campus of the University of Helsinki and Aalto University in Otaniemi, which will in the future house all Aalto University faculties.

Metro service begins at 5 a.m. on weekdays, 6 a.m. on Sundays, and ends around 11 p.m. Trains run with peak-hour headways of 2.5 minutes and with 4–5 minute headways at other times. The newest trains are equipped for automated operation, but today trains are still operated by a driver.

The extension of the Metro complements the Helsinki metropolitan public-transit rail system, which includes a network of commuter trains and a dense network of trams in the Helsinki inner city. Future growth in the metropolitan area will largely take place on the rail system, which will also include rapid-transit light rail.

**Helsinki**

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

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