



HELSINKI

news

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Dynamic Helsinki The Finnish capital is a vibrant scene of action

Streat Helsinki festival at Tori Quarters

Helsinki's historic city centre turned another page in its rich 200-year history in mid-March 2014, when the city's first ever street food festival *Streat Helsinki* filled the area's streets and squares with tens of thousands of people – twice as many as the organisers anticipated.

Streat Helsinki helped to meet several goals of bigger plans in Helsinki: to liven up the city with events, to make food one of the strong themes in Helsinki, and to turn the Neoclassical “Old Town” into a dynamic section of central Helsinki that attracts both residents and visitors.

Event organisers and the many actors that make Helsinki buzz agree that there is a good vibe in Helsinki today. Citizens and private organisations abound with ideas and initiatives, and the City of Helsinki stretches out a helping hand. For example, on Helsinki Day 2013 (the city's birthday) one of the most central streets was closed for traffic and turned into a birthday picnic party with long rows of dining tables.

Another area development project also focuses on food and fun: the Abattoir, a former slaughterhouse, is being turned by the City into a centre of good food in rough industrial surroundings. Several plans seek to turn the busy South Harbour of Helsinki more appealing, including a projected spa built on water

in the harbour basin, as the City actively explores ways to utilise Helsinki's maritime strengths for development and recreation.

Helsinki applied for and won the title for World Design Capital 2012, seeking to make the city a better place with design. An architectural competition for a Guggenheim museum to be built on a City-assigned site will be launched in June 2014 (although no decision on implementation has been made).

Coupled with creative programmes for people, the City of Helsinki partners with creative professions to generate new business. Commission Helsinki is a project that

serves film and TV productions to find locations, crew and facilities, with City staff working to smooth out dealings with the authorities and permits. LOFT Helsinki Pasila Studios unites media entrepreneurs under one roof, fostering opportunities to create new types of media partnerships.

“Ultimately we are dealing with the competitiveness of Helsinki among European cities, making Helsinki more attractive for business, residents and visitors,” says **Saila Machere**, head of Helsinki city marketing.

International evaluators have taken notice, naming Helsinki second in Europe in the quality of life and in the potential to attract foreign investment.



**There is a good vibe
in Helsinki today.**

Marinella Ruusinen / Restaurant Day



Crepe chefs Susanna Kuusisto and Kari Hyvärinen on Restaurant Day 19 May 2012

Private initiative makes Helsinki pulsate

The world's best coders will gather in Helsinki in June 2014 for the finals of the world championships in coding, the *Hello World Open* virtual car race. Their challenge is to create an artificial intelligence and drive a virtual car race. The qualifying rounds to pick the finalists were held worldwide in May. helloworldopen.com

Organised for the first time in 2014, Hello World Open is an example of the creative energy that flows in Helsinki and manifests itself as one-of-their-kind ideas.

The Helsinki digital gaming sector has created and organises the annual *Assembly* events, which are the largest and most respected “demo-scene” digital gaming meetings in the world. The events gather together thousands of digital game enthusiasts from all over the world to demonstrate games and to compete. assembly.org

Restaurant Day is a food festival where anyone can open a “restaurant” for one day in designated Helsinki parks and other public areas or at their homes. Restaurant Day was initiated in Helsinki in 2011 by a handful of creative individuals and has expanded into a huge international event celebrated in hundreds of cities worldwide four times a year. restaurantday.org

Slush is Northern Europe's largest start-up conference that puts together start-ups and tech talent with top-tier international investors in Helsinki. slush.org



Slush 2013 at Cable Factory, Helsinki



Assembly 2013 at Hartwall Arena, Helsinki

The legacy of World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 lives on in Design Driven City

Helsinki and three other cities of World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 have launched *Design Driven City*, a project helping cities to make use of design in the development of public services.

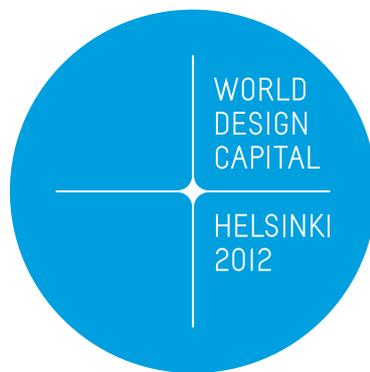
Design Driven City employs three design professionals as City Designers to work hand in hand with city staff in concrete projects. The designers introduce design thinking into the projects, they identify areas where design could be used, and they educate city staff in the procurement of design services.

“Helsinki’s World Design Capital year inspired the participating cities to reflect on the possibilities of design. Design Driven City strives to help the cities [] to utilise design,” says Board Member **Marco Steinberg** of International Design Foundation, the administrative body of both World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 and Design Driven City. “The methods how public services are developed will inevitably be changing. Design provides [] the exact tools required to foresee the future.”

The City Designers start their work with four assignments: they improve street work sites, create new concepts for youth housing, help to develop a festival park where citizens and culture meet and work towards a networked city. Design Driven City will work with about 10 projects over 2014–2015. designdrivencity.fi

Helsinki was World Design Capital 2012 together with four neighbouring cities, so designated by the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (Icsid) for its vision in the use of design for social, cultural and economic improvement.

wdchelsinki2012.fi/



Tori Quarters project makes Helsinki’s Old Town new

The Neoclassical city centre of Helsinki was designed and built in the 19th century to symbolise Helsinki’s status as the capital of Finland, then an autonomous Grand Duchy of Russia.

At one time the heart of the city’s social life, the Neoclassical centre of Helsinki gradually turned into an administrative centre from the early 20th century onwards. The City Hall moved to what was once the lively Seurahuone Hotel, and the rest of the Old Town was taken over by offices. The buildings and their picturesque courtyards were largely closed to the public.

A project is now under way to re-energise the Old Town. Focusing on the blocks of Kiseleff, Bock and Govinius – blocks named after three 18th century merchants that make up the Tori (“square”) Quarters sandwiched between Senate Square and Market Square – Helsinki is renovating old office space for boutiques, cafés, restaurants and other services for citizens and visitors.

The main goal of the re-development is to turn the Tori Quarters into a vibrant and dynamic part of the larger Helsinki city centre. The City of Helsinki urges citizens to carry out their own creative projects in the Quarters’ streets and in the inner courtyards turned into public spaces.



Helsinki honoured Earth Hour 2014 at the downtown Bike Centre with a unique public event powered entirely with cycling energy. The electricity for the PA system and LED lighting of a gig by a local band was produced by the audience with the help of special generator bikes.

Helsinki is Europe’s second best place for foreign investment

This is the conclusion of the Financial Times’ fDi Intelligence Unit in their report *European Cities and Regions of the Future 2014/15*. The unit assessed cities and regions in terms of their potential to attract foreign direct investment (FDI). Helsinki was among the Top 25 European Cities for the first time and immediately sailed to second place. First place was taken by London.

According to the report, “Finland’s capital has been receiving increased attention for its efforts to attract FDI and scored particularly well for FDI Strategy”.

World’s 1st in press freedom, EU’s 2nd best in quality of life, global 8th in social and environmental performance, Europe’s 1st in teenage problem solving, among EU innovation leaders

A long list of other 2014 rankings puts Finland at or near the top.

For the fourth consecutive year, Finland tops the World Press

Freedom index. The index’s producer *Reporters Without Borders* comments that press freedom in Finland is based on strong legal foundations supported by a genuine culture of individual liberty.

Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, declares Finland the second best country in the EU for quality of life after Denmark and followed by Sweden.

Washington, D.C.-based *Social Progress Imperative* puts Finland in eighth place in their global Social Progress Index (SPI) that ranks countries by social and environmental performance rather than economic output. The index comprises 132 countries.

The latest OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) declares Finnish 15-year-olds Europe’s best problem solvers.

The European Commission puts Finland among the EU innovation leaders, side by side with Sweden, Denmark and Germany.

Centennial of Moomin character creator Tove Jansson

Tove Jansson (1914–2001) was a Finnish novelist, painter, illustrator and comic strip author best known for her Moomin characters and books. The Tove Jansson centennial this year is celebrated with exhibitions, documentaries, publications and events in Finland and internationally.

Jansson was one of the leading visual artists of post-war Finland. She kept expanding her repertoire throughout her career, and her works mirrored a life philosophy that has a powerful appeal to both children and grown-ups. She enjoyed huge international success as an artist. The centennial gives the world another opportunity to be acquainted with Jansson's work.

The first of Jansson's Moomin books, *The Moomins and the Great Flood*, appeared in 1945. Her next two books, *Comet in Moominland* and *Finn Family Moomintroll*, were published in 1946 and 1948 respectively and sealed her position as one of the internationally best-known and original writers of Finland. tove100.fi

Tove Jansson © Moomin Characters™



Tove Jansson's self-portrait with Moomin characters

Helsinki attracted a record number of conferences

Helsinki hosted 288 international conferences in 2013, more than ever before. With this record-breaking result, Helsinki was once again the top conference city in Finland. A total of 662 conferences were held in Finland. The conferences brought more than 31,000 conference guests to Helsinki. The biggest conference, both for Helsinki and nationally, was the International Surgery Week 2013, a world congress for surgeons. Overall, conference guests cited accessibility, safety and public transport as Helsinki's particular strengths.

Number of start-ups on the rise, Helsinki to become Finland's most business-friendly city

The number of start-ups in Helsinki increased robustly through 2013. The trend in Helsinki was reverse compared with the rest of the metropolitan area and Finland as a whole; outside Helsinki, the numbers of start-ups declined.

The City of Helsinki actively helps to kick-start new businesses at its EnterpriseHelsinki business counselling service. Last year EnterpriseHelsinki helped to start over 1,000 new businesses, up by one-fifth from 2012.

The City strives to make Helsinki the most business-friendly place in Finland. The City seeks to serve local entrepreneurs increasingly efficiently and flexibly at all stages of business operations. A new service centre gathers entrepreneurs, business services and business know-how under one roof. enterprisehelsinki.fi

EARS turn to Helsinki

EARS stands for Europe-Asia Roundtable Sessions. It is a new platform focusing on creative industry collaboration between Europe and Asia. The EARS meetings explore the latest cultural trends and phenomena in Asia and allow participants to exchange ideas and to network. EARS will be held in Helsinki on 4-7 September 2014. ears.asia

Helsinki Web site revamped

The City of Helsinki Web site www.hel.fi has been re-designed. The main goal has been to improve the usability of the site. The new site is resident-oriented and service-focused. The new site is fully compatible with smartphones and tablet computers. hel.fi

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