



**Helsinki
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Toolkit: Social sustainability in Helsinki

Helsinki

Updated in October 2023

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How to use: Sustainability Toolkit

1. **A useful tool for your everyday sales work or communication** with your customers and stakeholders.
2. **A quick way to find:**
 - what is Helsinki's sustainability work about – actions & goals
 - facts and figures
 - rankings.
3. **Get examples on:**
 - how to use the information in your own presentations,
 - quick links to useful material.

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Social sustainability in Helsinki:

In a nutshell

City Strategy 2021–2025

Sustainable growth is in balance with the prevailing ecological limitations, creating benefits that are socially, financially and culturally sustainable. We are proud to continue to evaluate and guide the development of Helsinki in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

A unique urban culture is a key enabler of a good life. It builds Helsinki's exceptional character, attracts visitors, encourages resident participation, increases cultural understanding, lowers segregation and strengthens people's bond with the city.

Helsinki is committed to promoting non-discrimination, equality and human rights in its operations. The goal is to be a city where different lifestyles and opinions can co-exist in harmony.

Helsinki's goal is to be a city where polarisation between districts does not increase and every resident can live a safe and pleasant life in a neighbourhood with its own distinct identity.


All of us, regardless of our age or state of health, should be able to live a good life in Helsinki.

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Helsinki is a small and supportive city of equality, well-being and participation where everyone can be seen and heard and can live and participate on an equal footing without any direct or indirect discrimination.

Helsinki is a city in which people can trust one another and where the social hierarchy is balanced. Finnish society is among the most stable in the world*, and Helsinki is a place where you can move freely, without concern.



Art and culture play a pivotal role in fostering a good life from early childhood. The City of Helsinki has been a leader in making cultural experiences more affordable and appealing to a broader audience, all while maintaining world-class standards.

Helsinki wants to be the world's most equitable and effective place to learn. The city offers high-quality and attractive early childhood education and basic education services close to the residents.

Achievements, rankings & PR

City of Helsinki programmes and plans + rankings on social sustainability

Equality and non-discrimination plan for services 2022–2025 , nearly 100 measures aimed at promoting equality and non-discrimination.	The participation and interaction model includes residents and cooperation partners to join in the development of the city.	City of Helsinki's Accessibility Policies 2022–2025 apply to mobility around and use of buildings and outdoor areas.	Helsinki 2 nd prize for Access City Award European Commission 2022	Helsinki 3 rd in European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity 2023 eudiversity2023.eu	Finland 2 nd least corrupt country in the world. Transparency International 2022
Equality and non-discrimination plan for personnel of the City of Helsinki 2022–2025	Participatory budget OmaStadi , 8.8 million euros allocated to realising residents' wishes.	Accessibility Model , a collection of methods and guidelines.	Helsinki 4 th in quality of life. Monocle's Quality of Life Survey 2022	Helsinki happiest city in the world. World Happiness Report 2020	Finland 2 nd in social opportunity globally. Social Progress Index 2022
Welfare plan 2022–2025 is being implemented by all City of Helsinki divisions.	Values and ethical principles of the City of Helsinki	Procurement strategy , City of Helsinki promotes social sustainability also through procurements.	Finland 3 rd in quality of life. Social Progress Index 2022	Helsinki best in the work-life balance. Kisi Work-Life Balance Index, 2021	Finland 4 th in the EU on the Gender Equality Index. European Institute for Gender Equality EIGE 2022
Avoin ovi palveluihin model project has created a city level unifying model for guidance and advisory services directed at foreign language speakers.	Principles for the ethical use of data and artificial intelligence (AI)	Culture Kids , all children born in Helsinki in and after 2020 are invited to two cultural events, free of charge, each year until they start school.	Helsinki 3 rd in Europe in achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals. 2019 SDG Index European Cities	Finland happiest country in the world. World Happiness Report 2023	Finland 2 nd in Global Gender Gap Report. World Economic Forum, 2022

Helsinki is the
happiest city in the
world.

[World Happiness Report 2020](#)

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Helsinki is awarded 3rd in European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity 2023

eudiversity2023.eu

Helsinki

Helsinki is 3rd in Europe in achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals.

[2019 SDG Index European Cities](#)

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Helsinki is 4th in quality of life.

[Monocle's Quality of Life 2022](#)

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Helsinki awarded 2nd in Access City Award.

[European Commission 2022](#)

Finland is 2nd
least corrupt
country in the
world.

[Transparency International 2022](#)

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Finland is the
happiest country in
the world (6th year
in a row).

[World Happiness Report 2023](#)

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Actions

Actions:

UN's Sustainable Development Goals

Global leader, European pioneer

Helsinki was the 1st in Europe and the 2nd city in the world to commit to the Voluntary Local Review (VLR) model created by the City of New York. So far, more than 100 cities from all over the world have joined these efforts. Helsinki is completing its third report in 2023.

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Global leader, European pioneer

Sustainable urban development is not an empty promise in Helsinki. Sustainable solutions are not only environmentally friendly and energy-efficient in Helsinki, but they are also made of citizen wellbeing, equality and functional everyday life.

Global leader, European pioneer

The 2023 report highlights five success factors:

- Sustainable development **learning path** integrated into early childhood education.
- Increased production of **renewable energy, improved air quality**.
- Promotion of **cultural equality** an important priority throughout the cultural sector.
- Improved attractiveness of residential areas and high-quality complementary construction enabled via **suburban regeneration model**.
- Development of **mental health service chains**, and investments to support **physical activity and hobbies**.

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Global leader, European pioneer

- [Sustainable.hel.fi](https://sustainable.hel.fi) – compiles all sustainability actions taken by the City of Helsinki
- [Kestavakehitys.fi](https://kestavakehitys.fi) – information on Agenda 2030 (national level)
- [Information on SDGs](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/) (UN website)



Quick guide: 3 x actions



Official partner of Helsinki Pride

City of Helsinki promotes equality and non-discrimination widely in its services and personnel. The City has been the official partner of Helsinki Pride for several years.

[Human Rights Helsinki](#)

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Social responsibility in procurement

City of Helsinki promotes social responsibility also through procurements. The goal is to prevent work-related exploitation and to take human rights widely into account. The City's annual procurement volume is around €4 billion, making it Finland's largest operator engaging in public procurement.

[Procurement Strategy Helsinki](#)



Principles of safer space

Everyone has the right to feel safe. In Helsinki, principles of a safe space have already been drawn up by Central Library Oodi, Yrjönkatu Swimming Hall as the first swimming hall in Finland to do this as well as various youth work units and sports facilities of the City of Helsinki.

[Oodi principles for safer space](#)

[Yrjönkatu principles of safe space](#)

Actions:

Suburban regeneration

Preventing segregation of residential areas

The purpose of the suburban regeneration is to improve the comfort and appeal of residential areas comprehensively and facilitate high-quality infill construction. Suburban regeneration is a tool, which Helsinki uses to achieve the strategic goal of being a city with equally safe and appealing neighborhoods, thus facilitating the equality and well-being of different city districts.

Preventing segregation of residential areas

Suburban regeneration refers to the comprehensive development of the impacted areas. The objectives of suburban regeneration are divided into four different focal areas:

- vitality
- urban environment
- services,
- participation.

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Preventing segregation of residential areas

The pilot areas in this cross-administrative model are the districts of Malminkartano-Kannelmäki, Malmi and Mellunkylä. Each area is also part of the Helsinki Innovation Districts bringing innovation activities and smart urban development to the districts. For residents, the project is particularly visible in the form of experiments in street space and city blocks.

Preventing segregation of residential areas

- Further information on [Suburban Regeneration](#)
- [Video](#) on Suburban Regeneration
- Helsinki Innovation Districts [website](#)

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Actions:

Helsinki Welfare Plan 2022–2025

Helsinki Welfare Plan 2022–2025

The City of Helsinki Welfare Plan 2022–2025 is one way to reduce inequalities in welfare and health of Helsinki residents, to contribute improving the quality of life of the city's residents and to implement the "A Place of Growth" city strategy of the City Council.

Helsinki Welfare Plan 2022–2025

The welfare plan plays an important role in promoting the objectives of social sustainability, in particular health and welfare, reducing inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, and eradicating poverty. More indirectly, the plan supports many other UN goals.

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Helsinki Welfare Plan 2022–2025

The welfare plan is being **implemented by all City of Helsinki divisions** and the City Executive Office in cooperation with partners, such as organisations and educational institutions. The plan has **six priorities** for promoting welfare and health: mental well-being, leisure and recreation, physical activity, healthy lifestyles, good community relations and a safe and beautiful city.

Helsinki Welfare Plan 2022–2025

- [News article](#) (summary)
- [Helsinki Welfare Plan 2022–2025](#) (pdf)
- [Objectives, measures, indicators and responsibilities](#)

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Quick guide: 3 x actions



Physical Activity promotion

Helsinki has launched a Physical Activity Programme, with the aim of encouraging its residents to move more and sit less. Helsinki wants to make physical activity an easy and attractive choice in people's everyday lives. Every step helps!

[Helsinkiliikkuu.fi/en](https://helsinkiliikkuu.fi/en)

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Stadin Safka food aid

Stadin safka is a service provided by the City of Helsinki that develops the food aid process together with other food aid actors and utilises surplus food to benefit people. One of the goals is to develop food aid to support people's inclusion and help build community.

[Stadin safka](#)



Participatory budget 'OmaStadi'

In OmaStadi residents are given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. The City allocates 8.8 million euros to realising residents' wishes. The ideas are developed together into proposals that anybody could vote on. The proposals with the most votes are realised by the City.

[OmaStadi](#)

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Actions:

Helsinki Freedom

Helsinki Freedom

Helsinki is a city where everyone has a right to a good life, a career, education, wellbeing, and functional everyday routines. Launched in 2020 the talent attraction concept [Helsinki Freedom](#) consists of various themes around social sustainability. Building on the ten Helsinki Freedoms, that constitute the corner stones for good life, it is a reward-winning example of value-based marketing that is bold and diverse.

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Helsinki Freedom

In Helsinki, freedom means creating a life that looks like you without compromising.

1. Freedom to find balance
2. Freedom to feel safe
3. Freedom to love
4. Freedom to breathe
5. Freedom to learn and grow
6. Freedom to be equal
7. Freedom to be fragile
8. Freedom to speak from the heart
9. Freedom to take action
10. Freedom for trial and error.

Helsinki Freedom

The concept consisted of 5 mini-documentaries, 30 My Freedom stories, home delivered activation and looking for freedom guerilla campaign. Active collaboration between the different local stakeholders, City of Helsinki, companies and universities among others, was one of the key factors of success.

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Helsinki Freedom

- [Helsinki Freedom](#) (MyHelsinki.fi)
- [Helsinki Freedom](#) (introduction to the concept)
- [Helsinki Freedom mini-documentaries](#) (YouTube)
- [My Freedom Stories videos](#) (YouTube)

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© Julia Kivelä / Visit Finland

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Actions for businesses:

- *Think Sustainably
- *Sustainable Travel Finland
- *Sustainable Meeting Model

What if making sustainable choices could be easily embedded into everyday life?

Think Sustainably

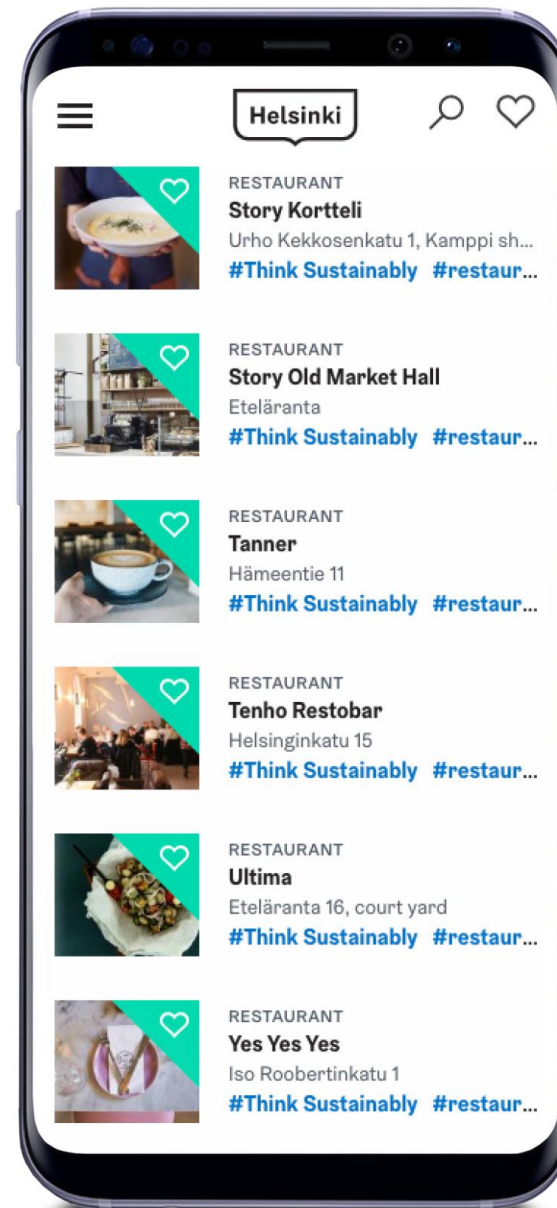
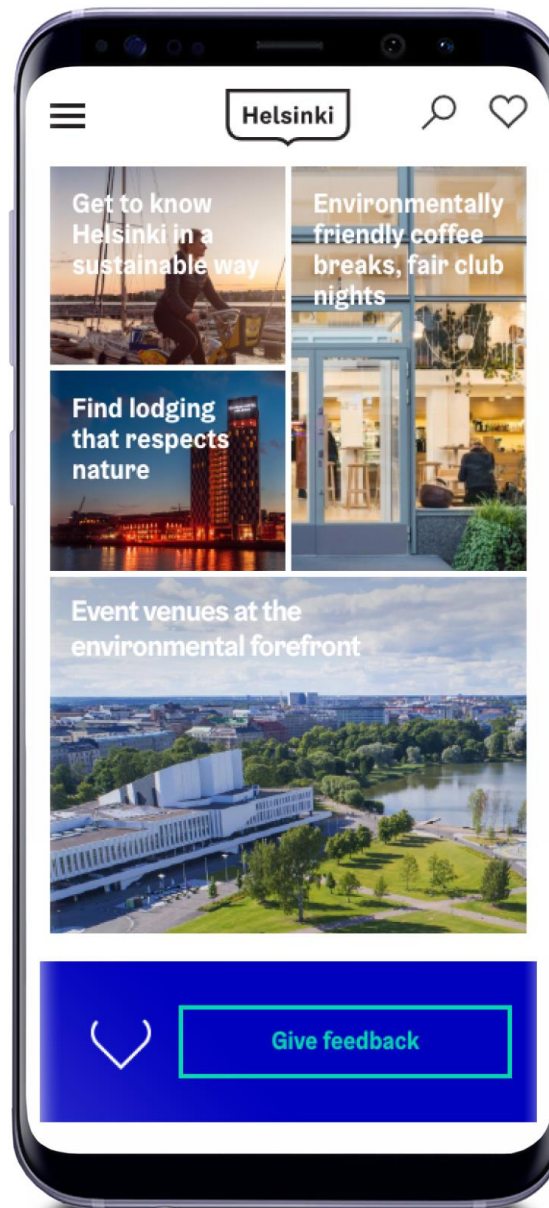
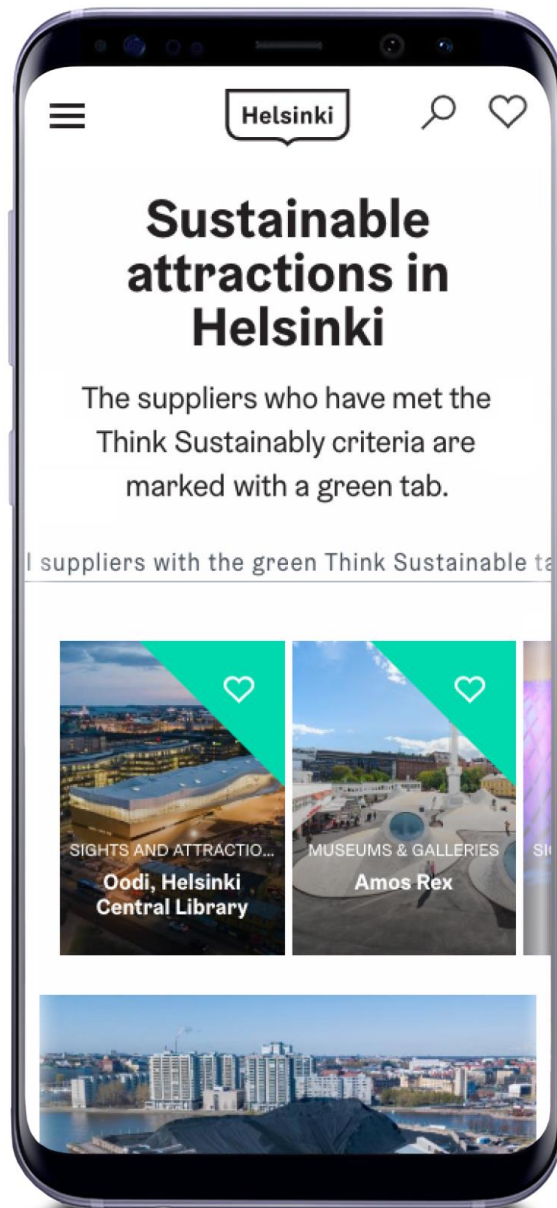
Launched in 2019, Think Sustainably helps visitors and locals to choose more sustainably by combining sustainable services, experiences, and transportation in Helsinki into one easy-to-use **digital service** on MyHelsinki.fi.

The base of the service is on **sustainability criteria** that have been tailor-made for Helsinki*, highlighting ecological and social sustainability as well as different dimensions of environmental responsibility.

The service is **accessible to all** local service providers and fits different types and sizes of organisations: Restaurants, cafés and bars, Shops, Attractions, Accommodation, Events and Venues.

Not a new official sustainability label or certificate, and therefore the fulfillment of the criteria is not evaluated by a third party. Instead, it is **based on trust and transparency**.





Think Sustainably: examples on social sustainability criteria

- Staff members can spend a certain amount of their working time **volunteering**.
- The operator actively and prominently promotes **equality and non-discrimination**. In addition, both customers and staff have **clear guidelines** for reporting and addressing inappropriate behaviour.
- Some of the proceeds are donated to **charitable activities or charities**. For example, the operator has been granted the Finnish Social Enterprise Mark.
- The location is **fully accessible**. Information about accessibility of the premises is clearly available.
- The attraction also allows **free admission** of certain times.
- The operator **employs** people who may otherwise be difficult to plane in the work environment.



In a nutshell: Sustainable Travel Finland

- The [Sustainable Travel Finland](#) (STF) programme provides companies and destinations a 7-step sustainable tourism development path that makes it easier to adopt sustainable practices in everyday business. Companies and destinations that undergo the entire programme are recognised with the STF label.
- The programme is accessible to all Finnish tourism companies and destinations who wish to develop their operations towards a more sustainable direction, including restaurants, accommodation, travel agencies, activity providers, attractions, transportation companies, events and resorts.
- Operators commit to regularly renewing Sustainable Travel Finland label, including a valid audited certificate/updated frontrunner company documentation, and updated self-assessment, development plan and sustainable tourism indicators.

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The 7-steps approach to sustainable tourism development

Step 1.
Commitment



Step 2.
Increasing know-how



Step 3.
Development & action plan



Step 5.
Certification and auditing



Step 4.
Responsible communication



Step 6.
Verification and measurability



Step 7.
Agreement and continuous development

In a nutshell: Sustainable Meeting Model

- A toolbox that helps event organisers make more sustainable choices when organising conferences and meetings as well as to set clear objectives for the event right from the outset.
- Comprises of a sustainability criteria that includes i.a. material use, waste management, diversity and inclusion, good governance and communication. Aligned with SDGs, supports the city's carbon-neutrality goals.
- The model provides a comprehensive and easy-to-follow check list for:
 - Travel & transportation
 - Accommodation & venues
 - Food & beverages
 - AV & material production
 - Experience design & communication
 - Performance documentation.



Sustainable Meeting Model



Electronic signage



Zero printing or handouts



Easy to get to by public transport



World's best tap water



Accessible event



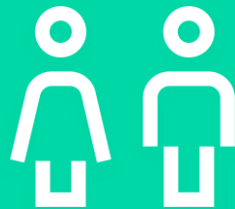
Event minimizes energy consumption



Reduced waste and recycling



Event's carbon footprint is compensated



Social responsibility



Organic vegetarian food and food waste minimized



Organic and fair trade coffee and tea

Photos & videos

Helsinki Material Bank:

- [Equality](#)
- [LGBTIQ+](#)
- [Health and wellbeing](#)
- [Accessibility](#)

MyHelsinki YouTube:

- [Helsinki Freedom](#)
- [My Freedom Stories](#)
- [Sustainable Helsinki](#)

Websites

MyHelsinki.fi:

- [Helsinki Freedom](#)
- [Helsinki LGBTIQ+](#)
- [Think Sustainably](#)

Kestavyys.hel.fi:

- [Sustainable Helsinki](#)

Ihmisoikeudet.hel.fi

- [Human rights Helsinki](#)
- [Helsinki for all](#)

Relevant documents

City of Helsinki:

- [City Strategy 2021-2025](#)
- [Helsinki Welfare Programme 2022–2025](#)
- [Tourism and Events programme 2022–2026](#)
- [Compass – A Handbook for Safety in Tourism and Events in Helsinki 2023](#)

Sustainable Meeting Guidelines:

- [Sustainable Meeting Model](#) (e-publication)

Other useful information

Visitfinland.com:

- [Travel Sustainably](#)
- [Sustainable Travel Finland Label](#)

Business Finland:

- [Guide to Inclusive Travel](#)
- [Tips for sustainability communication](#)

Feedback and comments on the toolkit can be sent to: helsinki.partners@helsinkipartners.com.