

# World Design Capital Helsinki 2012

**World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 was all about making a better city. Above all, the goal was to make a permanent impact. It was more than a year of events or a festival – it was about making the role of design visible.**

Helsinki was the World Design Capital of 2012 together with its neighbouring cities of Espoo, Vantaa, Kauniainen and Lahti. WDC Helsinki 2012 promoted design with 550 projects and 2,800 events. The programme was implemented by a network of 290 organizations in Finland and abroad. The year's exhibitions, events and sites attracted 2.5 million visitors.

The news on the appointment arrived on 25 November 2009. During the following three and a half years the understanding of design in Finnish society was strengthened, citizen interest in urban development was increased and the international image of Finland as a design nation was enhanced.

World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 wanted to achieve things whose impact will reach far into the future. The aim was to inspire dialogue on how design can be used to make life better, easier and more functional. One of the main

objectives was to offer methods for ordinary citizens to participate in developing their living environment.

The World Design Capital is an initiative of Icsid, the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design, which every second year recognizes one global city for its accomplishments in utilizing design as a tool to improve social, cultural, and economic life. Icsid owns the rights to the World Design Capital trademark.

In 2012 Helsinki was the World Design Capital together with the neighbouring cities of Espoo, Vantaa, Kauniainen and Lahti. The previous World Design Capitals have been Turin in Italy (2008) and Seoul in South Korea (2010). Following Helsinki, the appointment of World Design Capital 2016 have been conferred to the Cape Town (2014), Taipei (2016) and Mexico City (2018.)

Founded in 1957, Icsid is a non-profit organisation that protects and promotes the interests of the profession of industrial design.

[www.icsid.org](http://www.icsid.org)  
[www.worlddesigncapital.com](http://www.worlddesigncapital.com)



*World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 Stakeholders Meeting 24.9.2010. (From left): World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 Director Pekka Timonen, Helsinki Mayor Jussi Pajunen, Minister of Economic Affairs Mauri Pekkarinen, and Icsid President Mark Breitenberg. Photo: Seppo Laakso.*

## Open Helsinki - embedding design in life

**Open Helsinki – Embedding Design in Life extends the concept of design from goods to services and systems, for example in the public health care sector. In short, it's about improving our cities.**

In its final strategy, WDC Helsinki 2012 approached the theme defined in Helsinki's application for the World Design Capital title, "Open Helsinki - Embedding Design in Life", through three subsidiary themes: Open City, Global Responsibility and The Roots for New growth.

The Open City theme was meant to launch a process of cultural change in Finland and to put people in the core of design and services.

The Global Responsibility theme focused on solutions to challenges in the urban environment that have a major impact on the quality of people's living conditions and wellbeing.

The Roots for New Growth theme presented new ways to utilize design as a source of growth.

## The residents' expectations

The residents of Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Kauniainen and Lahti expected the World Design Capital year to mainly concentrate on housing conditions, the living environment and services. The expectations were studied in a questionnaire carried out by WDC Helsinki 2012, with responses from more than 900 residents.

Out of the eight emphasis points, the residents chose the ones most important to them. Improving everyday life through design was seen as the central task of the design capital year. Every third resident also expected events and an increase in awareness about their city.

A study carried out in autumn 2011 was part of a research series initiated by WDC Helsinki 2012 with which awareness of the project and materialisation of its aims were studied.

## Organisation

World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 was a joint venture of five neighbouring cities: Helsinki (595 000 inhabitants), Espoo (252 000 inhabitants), Vantaa (203 000 inhabitants), Kauniainen

(8 700 inhabitants) and Lahti (102 000 inhabitants). Together these cities form the metropolitan area with over a million inhabitants.

**The project had the following stakeholders:**

**The Finnish State:** the competent ministries were the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and the Ministry of Education and Culture. Besides these also other ministries, The Finnish Innovation Fund (Sitra) and The Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (Tekes) were involved.

**Corporate partners:** The World Design Capital 2012 was one of the largest cooperative ventures ever organised in Finland. Our main partners were: Blue1, BMW, Finavia – Helsinki Airport, Fortum, HOK-Elanto, KONE, Martela, MTV MEDIA, Nokia, Sanoma Magazines Finland, UPM, Viking Line. Our partners were: Clear Channel, Deloitte, Fjord, Hasan & Partners, IBM, Iittala, Lapin Kulta, Paulig, Stockmann.

**Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences:** Aalto University and University of Helsinki. Also Universities of Applied Sciences located both in the Helsinki metropolitan area and in Lahti.

**Design Organisations:** Design Forum Finland, The Finnish Association of Designers

(Ornamo), Association of Professional Graphic Designers in Finland (Grafiya), and Finnish Association of Architects (SAFA).

**Foundations:** Swedish Cultural Foundation in Finland.

The World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 project was implemented and managed by International Design Foundation. The foundation collected, promoted and coordinated the aims, functions and the entire programme of WDC Helsinki 2012. The board of the International Design Foundation was responsible for the appropriate organising of the foundation, managing the foundation funds and deciding on the foundation's operating principles.

In addition to the board, the International Design Foundation was supported by a committee of opinion leaders and experts in diverse fields. The 45 members of the committee supported the management of the WDC project and offered perspectives from the society as a basis for decision-making.

### Funding

The total funds for the entire World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 project managed by International Design Foundation during 2010–2013

were 17.8 million euro. The Finnish State provided 5 million euro and the participating cities a total of 6 million euro for the project. The additional funding came from corporate partners and foundations, exceeding expectations. International Design Foundation's final accounts show a surplus of 100,000 euro.

The finances of WDC Helsinki 2012 were only partially channeled through International Design Foundation. Projects had their own budgets and were mainly financed from other sources, such as public and private funds and foundations as well as through project financing and corporate partnerships. No estimate is available of the total economic scope of WDC Helsinki 2012.

### Facts and figures on the budget

Budget for 2010-2013: €17.8 million

### Funding

- Cities: €6 million
- Helsinki €3 million
  - Espoo €1.4 million
  - Vantaa €1.1 million
  - Kauniainen €0.06 million
  - Lahti €0.5 million

Finnish State: €5 million

- Ministry of Employment and the Economy: €3 million
- Ministry of Education and Culture: €2 million

Corporations and foundations: €6.8 million

- Corporate partners €5 million
- Foundations €1.5 million
- Sales income €0.3 million

When reviewing the project economy as a whole, it should be noted that the project's actual funding is markedly higher than the budget managed by International Design Foundation. The budgets of the programme components and other WDC Helsinki related activities by various actors are not reflected in the foundation's budget. No estimate is available of the total economic scope of WDC Helsinki 2012.

Expenditure:

- Programme €7.2 million
- Communications and marketing €6 million
- Personnel, licence fees and administration €4.5 million



Kuva: Kimmo Brandt