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Perspectives into topical issues in society and ways to support political decision-making.

## Finland aims to become a sustainable development leader

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**Finland has excellent potential for achieving the UN sustainable development goals for 2030.**

This requires an active effort, as Finland's performance in several sustainable development indices has been declining in recent years.

**In order to make Finland the world's best country to live in, we have to improve the potential for people to find productive and meaningful work, among other things.**

Environmental emissions must be reduced and resource efficiency must be increased if we hope to become a sustainable development leader.

**We have high-quality education and a stable society, and we take democracy seriously.**

However, there are several areas where we need concerted action to reach the goals set.

### AGENDA 2030 GOALS AND STARTING LEVEL OF FINLAND



1. No poverty
2. Zero hunger
3. Good health and well-being
4. Quality education
5. Gender equality
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Affordable and clean energy
8. Decent work and economic growth
9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure
10. Reduced inequalities
11. Sustainable cities and communities
12. Responsible consumption and production
13. Climate action
14. Life below water
15. Life on land
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions
17. Partnerships for the goals

Source: Sachs et al. 2016. Preliminary Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) – Finland

## The core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Agenda 2030 was launched at the beginning of 2016. Finland aims to become a leader in implementing Agenda 2030. We are well placed to achieve this, as Finland has a robust tradition in pursuing sustainable development. The core of the Agenda 2030 consists of 17 Sustainable Development Goals, with a further 169 targets.

A group of UN experts has identified 231 preliminary indicators to measure the attainment of the goals globally. Finland's challenges and successes in sustainable development were identified in the Avain 2030 project of the Finnish Environmental Institute and Demos Helsinki, based on international comparisons and the views of stakeholder groups.

The findings of 17 recent broad-based international indices were compiled in the project. We examined both Finland's starting level and recent trends compared to other developed countries.

**The alarming finding is that although Finland performs well in international benchmarking, in recent years its position has actually dropped in several rankings.**

### Finland is the world's most stable society

Finland is doing particularly well in education and in the stability and functioning of society when we compare our current status with the 17 goals of Agenda 2030. In Finland, almost everyone has access to and completes basic and secondary education that is free of charge, equitable and of high quality. Everyone has access to high-quality preschool teaching and to affordable, high-quality vocational and higher education. Finnish society is stable and peaceful.

| Goal and starting level                  | Comparison | Ranking | Recent development |
|------------------------------------------|------------|---------|--------------------|
| 1  SSI Economic Wellbeing                |            | 9.      |                    |
| 2  Global Food Security Index            |            | 17.     |                    |
| 3  World Happiness Index                 |            | 5.      |                    |
| 4  PISA                                  |            | 12.     |                    |
| 5  Global Gender Gap Index               |            | 3.      |                    |
| 6  Water Poverty Index                   |            | 1.      |                    |
| 7  Energy Architecture Performance Index |            | 12.     |                    |
| 8  Legatum prosperity index              |            | 12.     |                    |
| 9  Global Entrepreneurship Index         |            | 18.     |                    |
| 10  Human development Index              |            | 24.     |                    |
| 11  Global Liveability Ranking           |            | 10.     |                    |
| 12  Ecological footprint                 |            | 136.    |                    |
| 13  RECAI                                |            | 36.     |                    |
| 14  Ocean Health Index                   |            | 69.     |                    |
| 15  SSI Environmental wellbeing          |            | 126.    |                    |
| 16  Fragile state index                  |            | 1.      |                    |
| 17  Good country index                   |            | 2.      |                    |

Starting level – Finland:

- EXCELLENT
- MODERATE
- POOR

Recent development:

- NEGATIVE
- SOMEWHAT NEGATIVE
- NO CHANGE
- POSITIVE

Everyone has access to legal and judicial services, and corruption is low. Finnish institutions are stable and efficient. Continued success requires continuous development efforts. Cuts to education funding threaten the positive trend in teaching and the leveraging of knowledge. Social inequalities erode confidence in democracy and in the fairness of decision-making.

### **Climate change and the overconsumption of natural resources must be addressed urgently**

Climate change, loss of biodiversity and the unsustainable use of natural resources are intertwined problems, and to solve them, a profound change in societies around the world is necessary. Finland has a long tradition of environmental protection, and Finns are highly environment-conscious. Nevertheless, our consumption of energy and natural resources is at an unsustainable level. All developed countries are guilty of the excessive use of natural resources. Finland has excellent potential for exploring and implementing new solutions. Finland can, for instance, invest in energy-conserving technology and services conducive to a sustainable lifestyle.

### **Inequality erodes the foundation of society**

Finland is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, and wealth in Finland is relatively evenly distributed. In recent years, Finland's economic development has been weak according to a number of indicators. High unemployment and increasing social inequality in particular have eroded the foundation of Finnish wellbeing. A crucial challenge is how to maintain equitable and sustainable wellbeing under conditions of slow economic growth. To achieve this, employment must be facilitated in a more inclusive and flexible way than before. New ways of ensuring the fulfilment of the fundamental rights of citizens, such as the basic income model, should be tested. Green jobs both increase employment and improve energy and resource efficiency.

## **FINLAND IN 2015**

1



**BEST IN THE WORLD:**

**SOCIAL  
STABILITY**  
(FRAGILE STATE INDEX)

1



**BEST IN THE WORLD:**

**LITERACY**  
(WORLD'S MOST  
LITERATE NATIONS)

2



**2ND BEST IN THE WORLD:**

**LOW CORRUPTION**  
(CORRUPTION  
PERCEPTION INDEX)

## PROPOSALS FOR ACTION:

**Finland will attain the global sustainable development goals when:**

**1.**

We invest in a green economy that, through the efficient use of energy and natural resources, helps us create jobs and solve environmental problems.

**2.**

We conduct bold experiments and learn from them. Such experiments may involve operating models to reduce social inequality and to increase interaction between demographic groups. The simultaneous management of ageing, multiculturalism and urbanisation offers plenty of potential.

**3.**

We use our exceptionally broad base of knowledge for the purposes of political decision-making in an effective and transparent way. Our high level of education gives us good potential for leveraging this knowledge. We continue to invest in education for all and in top-level research.

## SUMMARY:

**Finland has excellent potential for moving onto the global sustainable development track**

The sustainable development goals are deeply interrelated. It is important to find measures to promote the attainment of several goals at once. To address environmental issues and to achieve a more sustainable national economy, we need capacity for rapid social reforms and long-term decision-making that spans beyond terms of government. Recent initiatives in the circular economy and the green economy show that a will for reform exists.

National decision-making must take the international dimension into account and accept Finland's responsibility in contributing to the attainment of the 17 sustainable development goals of the Agenda 2030. For instance, exporting clean technology can both improve wealth and employment domestically and help address environmental problems globally.

## References:

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