



(x^+)



...



Sustainable Growth Targets for Finland

Sustainable Growth Targets for Finland



Publisher: Academic Engineers and Architects in Finland TEK, 2025

Edited by: Salli Joutsenoja, Mikko Särelä and Tapio Heiskari

Graphic design: Helena Hagberg

Photos: page 4 and pages 11-15: Getty Images,
page 7: Teemu Leinonen, LUT and page 8: Suvi-Tuuli Kankaanpää

Cover photo: Getty Images



The story of sustainable Finland

The history of Finland is a story of change, adaptation and difficult choices, but also of the ability to include everyone and act in a sustainable and fair manner. Finland has prospered through honest labour and rewarding good work.

In a changing world, we Finns must boldly defend our values, such as liberal democracy and international co-operation. Our mission is to strengthen the ability of people to get to know each other and accept diversity, as well as their ability to participate in decision-making and influence the future of Finland. We must safeguard equality, openness, fairness, trust and the Nordic welfare society. These factors make Finnish democracy vibrant and Finland a great place to live.

The greatest challenges of our time require sustainable solutions in all areas of society. Our generations must adapt our economies to use natural resources wisely, and society must provide everyone with opportunities to succeed. Addressing these challenges offers new opportunities for business and innovative solutions.

The foundation of Finland's success lies in its skilled people, with our internationally renowned education system once propelling Finland to the top of the world rankings. This is now of particular concern, with results relative to our competitors weakening from basic to higher education – and because,

The goal is to build an internationally competitive economy that utilises the resources of the whole of Finland.

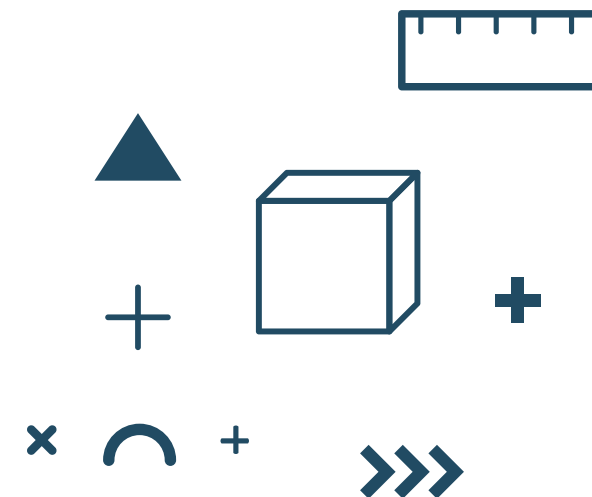
in a changing world, competence offers the best opportunities for success. It enables people to live and function in a changing world, utilise technology to solve major societal problems, and learn new skills our values, such as liberal democracy and international co-operation. Our mission is to strengthen the ability of people to get to know each other and accept diversity, throughout their lives.

We are not afraid of new ideas, we understand the opportunities created by technology.

Finland's success is also rooted in internationalisation and participation in global markets. We cannot keep ourselves isolated within our borders; we must

strengthen our international networks in order to boost economic growth and innovation – at the same time, accelerating sustainable development around the world.

The objective of TEK's sustainable growth programme is clear: to build an internationally competitive economy that utilises Finland's resources, offers high employment and provides people with good salaries for meaningful work in an ecologically and socially sustainable manner. Achieving this goal requires productivity growth, which can be boosted by ensuring three key things: there must be skilled people in Finland, sufficient resources to create something new, and structures that encourage entrepreneurship and innovation.



Changing skill requirements

Finland’s future is built on its ability to sell and develop globally competitive products and services that meet changing international needs. Creating new products and services at the forefront of global development requires new kinds of expertise.

In a changing labour market, cultural understanding and a multidisciplinary approach are increasingly needed alongside technological expertise face of intensifying international competition. **Finland must invest in crossdisciplinary research and education** in fields, such as technology, design, storytelling, cultural studies, international business expertise, media literacy, and the utilisation of artificial intelligence and new tools.

New innovations must be brought to market in dialogue with customers, utilising the best technology available. We need researchers, entrepreneurs and business skills to strengthen sustainable growth. **The importance of entrepreneurship and related skills must be incorporated into education from the elementary level onwards.**

Geopolitics is changing the world around us. Its impact on technological development is very significant. Finnish society must exploit these changes quickly and flexibly. The opportunities offered by

dual-use technologies must be seized in a responsible and innovative manner.

In order for the Finnish economy to grow, it is important to invest in skills related to commercialisation, sales and marketing. Competitive advantage arises when companies enter the market quickly and adapt their products early in the development phase based on market feedback. This ensures that innovations developed through collaboration between universities, companies, research institutes and public organisations are transferred to the market and create value for society.

The culture of lifelong learning must be strengthened, and society must create better opportunities for people to develop their skills. Educational institutions must offer opportunities for lifelong learning, and employers must support skills development, for example by creating opportunities for job rotation. Flexible educational pathways, such as short-cycle degrees and micro-credentials, help support individuals’ development at different stages of their careers. This enables individuals to take greater responsibility for developing their skills, which is the basis for everything.





Sustainability transition: technology, attitudes and social renewal

Sustainability transition is a society-wide change aimed at halting climate change and habitat loss. Decision-making in the future must be based on researched information and take into account the environment, well-being, economy and security in a comprehensive manner. We must ensure social justice; everyone must have the opportunity to participate in change and benefit from its results.

Technology plays a key role: its task is to facilitate the transition to a sustainable society. **This requires long-term, technology-neutral regulation** that supports the emergence of markets and creates a stable, growth-friendly operating environment. **Each issue should be regulated only once** – there is no need for overlapping regulations, particularly alongside emissions trading.

Climate emissions must be converted into sinks – also in the land use sector, for example by strengthening carbon sinks in agriculture and forestry. Emissions trading encourages companies to develop low-emission technologies and target emission reductions where they are most cost-effective. The development of batteries and solar and wind power shows that technology can respond to the major challenges of our time.

Finland must strengthen its competitiveness and attract investment by profiling itself as a leader in the green transition.

Success requires a knowledge-based economy and a high degree of processing – goals that are supported by competitive energy production and available raw materials. **Industrial policy measures must be targeted at reducing environmental damage and strengthening domestic value chains so that an increasing proportion of the value of natural resources remains in Finland.** International cooperation with other countries promoting sustainability strengthens Finland's position as a pioneer in the green transition.

Circular economy and resource efficiency help protect biodiversity and also strengthen security of supply, support energy self-sufficiency and build a new kind of security.

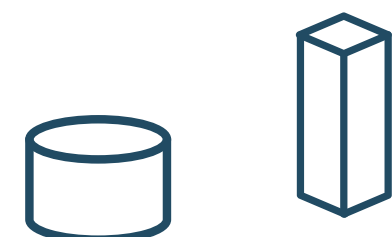
However, the sustainability transition will not happen by itself – it requires radical innovations, industry renewal, and strong expertise in research, education and business.

We need faith in the future, and opportunities to build a better world. This can be achieved by offering solutions that genuinely address global sustainability issues. The transition requires the courage to experiment and the ability to learn from failure. Sustainable business does not arise out of necessity, but from creating value – and Finland has everything it needs to become a pioneer in this area.

Technology plays a key role.

strengthen security of supply, support energy self-sufficiency and build a new kind of security.

:



Importance of technology and research

Research, development and innovation are investments in the future of society. They not only strengthen competitiveness and sustainable growth, but also lay the foundation for Finland to respond to the major challenges of our time. Development is faster than ever before – artificial intelligence, robotics, quantum technology, new materials and biotechnologies are changing the structures of work, the economy and everyday life.

Finland must adhere to its target of increasing research and development (R&D) expenditure to 4% of gross domestic product by 2030, and its efforts must continue beyond that date. The effects of R&D expenditure must be monitored and resources directed to where they are most beneficial. The level of innovation funding, particularly for smaller companies, must also be increased.

In order for solutions to be developed in Finland, we need ambitious investments in basic research, research environments and high-quality cooperation between universities, research institutes and companies. The goal should be world-class expertise and long-term, steadily growing funding. Instead of focusing on government terms, research activities must be viewed in terms of decades. Political guidance should enable free and independent science – not restrict it. Technology entrepreneurship is a resource on which sustainable economic growth can be built. Skilled people

Research, development and innovation are investments in the future of society.

and capital should be directed to companies with high productivity and growth potential. Bringing new innovations to market requires stronger and more ambitious ecosystems than we have today.

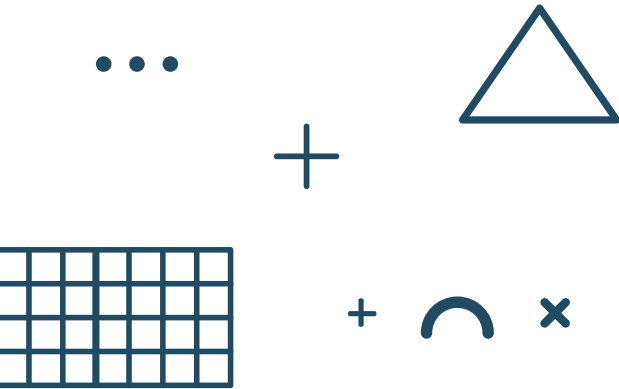
Taxation, business subsidies, competition law and other regulations must be reformed to strengthen business growth. Public procurement should be used to introduce innovative technology and provide a springboard for new companies and businesses.

The adoption of technology in Finland is at a low level compared to other Nordic countries. Productivity growth does not come from new inventions alone, but from how widely and boldly they are adopted.

We need more training, marketing skills and customer understanding – the adoption of technology is also strengthened by better cooperation between the private and public sectors.

Artificial intelligence and other new technologies are increasing productivity and changing working life. This highlights the need for human skills – creativity, interaction and critical thinking. The ethical aspects of technology and the impact on the environment must be addressed throughout the entire life cycle.

Finland has everything it needs to be a pioneer in the development and application of sustainable technology – but only if we dare to invest boldly in intangible capital, experimentation, education and cooperation.





Skilled people

Finland's success and future growth depend on how well we can educate and attract skilled people. The development of expertise requires long-term investment in training, working life connections and international expertise. We must provide everyone with the opportunity to learn how to use, develop and implement new technology.

The standing of Finnish as a language of technology and research must be secured. Diversity must be ensured, particularly in technical fields, where the proportion of women and foreign students must be increased – and where there are already many people from different minority groups working. Diversity has been proven to improve companies' results.

Children are the future of Finland. That is why we must invest in children's education from early childhood onwards. Particular attention should be paid to mathematics and native language skills, as these are the cornerstones of learning.

The number of people with higher education should be increased to 60% of the age group without compromising on the content of degrees and learning outcomes. Therefore, we must invest in improving the quality of our education system and study completion rates at all levels of educa-

tion. Achieving this goal will require consensus in the Parliament on the means, including permanent reinforcement of resources.

We must systematically attract international experts to become permanent residents in Finland by leveraging our values, such as liberal democracy, the rule of law, work-life balance and a resilient economy. **We must offer skilled workers and their families permanent residence permits, a well-functioning labour market, and opportunities for leisure activities and social life.**

Immigrants and returnees must be helped to integrate, network and advance their careers in Finland. **Finland's sustainable growth is based on expertise and education.** We must ensure that everyone has the opportunity to develop their skills and grow into versatile experts who understand the world as a whole and are able to act responsibly to change it. By investing in the quality of education, strengthening its links to working life and society, and supporting international expertise and the broadening of minds, we are creating a sustainable foundation for Finland's future growth. Higher education must offer not only theoretical knowledge but also networks and work experience.



Good and productive working life

Finland must invest in research and training in management and strategy. The development of working life requires the adoption of new working methods and the improvement of traditional operating models. We need the courage to make long-term decisions that will improve working life amid uncertainty. Leaders must be able to combine technological vision, ethical responsibility and social impact with the ability to build trust and show direction. Good leadership supports well-being at work and increases productivity.

A healthy employee needs a reasonable workload and the opportunity to concentrate on their work without constant interruptions. Ensuring a balanced workload and the conditions necessary for concentration are crucial for maintaining work ability and career continuity. For example, the increasing prevalence of remote and hybrid work requires active development of the work culture.

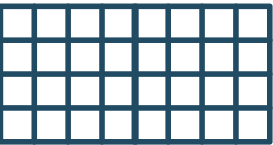
Work environments must be safe. They must be based on trust, be psychologically safe and encourage courage. Workplaces should value diversity and understand that employees from different backgrounds bring different strengths to the table. Factors such as age, gender, ethnic background, different neurotypes and disability affect how people work and what strengths they bring to the community. Organisations that are inclusive perform better in a changing world, as diverse employees enrich the work community and improve its ability to understand change.

We need the courage to make long-term decisions that will improve working life amid uncertainty.

Changes in working life do not only affect working methods; employment relationships are also becoming fragmented. Alongside traditional full-time work, there is a growing amount of part-time work and multi-employment, where people combine paid work with entrepreneurship. People should be encouraged to use their skills for the benefit of society after their careers. The opportunities and problems posed by the platform economy are also entering the field of employment relationships. **The social security system and taxation must ensure that all active pursuits, including entrepreneurship, are always profitable and encouraging for those engaged in them.**

The labour market is also affected by the increase in the number of foreign-born workers. In the future, the ability to recruit foreign talent will become even more important. Finland's attractiveness and retention capacity must be improved, because foreign experts are needed to grow new significant industries in Finland. **Foreigners must be guaranteed the same working conditions as Finns.**

A working life that aims for high productivity is good for employees, companies and society, as it creates growth and well-being for everyone.





Powering your career