

TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

Finland is a unitary republic with a decentralized and single-tier subnational structure. Its 311 municipalities have their own elected authorities. In addition, among its 15 regions, only the county of Åland has an autonomous administration.¹



Unless otherwise indicated, all the information in this profile is taken from the previously published Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).²

1. NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION

The first national plan for the integration of the SDGs into national processes and policies was submitted in 2017 (Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development – The Future We Want 2050). The current government of the Prime Minister has been preparing a second programme, called '**Inclusive and competent Finland – a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society**', which has strong emphasis and concrete measures that contribute to implementing the 2030 Agenda.

1.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

The national **2030 Agenda Coordination Secretariat** is part of the Prime Minister's Office.³ The **Sustainable Development Inter-Ministerial Coordination Network** includes all ministries to support the Prime Minister's Office Coordination Secretariat.⁴ Another important comprehensive forum for sustainable development is the National Follow-up Network.⁵

Two national commissions oversee the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Finland: the **National Commission on Sustainable Development** (of which the **Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (AFLRA)** is member) and the National Development Policy Committee in the Parliament. Also, among the most innovative institutional mechanisms supporting SDG implementation are the **Expert Panel for Sustainable Development**, which expresses an independent and critical scientific voice, and the **2030 Agenda Youth Group**.

In addition, the national strategy features an online platform that invites companies, educational institutions, political parties, cities and other actors to **make public commitments** towards sustainability. About 40 Finnish municipalities have made around 100 commitments.

1.2 VNR ELABORATION PROCESS

The **Prime Minister's Office** has been responsible for the coordination and development of Finland's second VNR in 2020. All ministries have been involved, and several workshops, consultations and meetings were organized. The report relies on existing data and research studies made out by independent bodies like the National Audit Office, national statistical authorities like Statistics Finland, and other institutions.

1.3 MONITORING

The **National Follow-up Network** is in charge of the development, maintenance and revision of national monitoring framework and sustainability indicators. The **National Audit Office** expressed its interest in assessing Finland's implementation and governance for the 2030 Agenda. Since 2016, there has been a regular dialogue between the auditors and sustainable development officials in different ministries. The **Parliament** has a key role in ensuring accountability of the work of the government. In addition to the Parliament, key forums for monitoring and reviewing the government's work on SDG

1. See: https://www.sng-wofi.org/reports/SNGWOFI_2019_report_country_profiles_DEC2019_UPDATES.pdf

2. See: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10611Finland_VNR.pdf (2016); https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26261VNR_Report_Finland_2020.pdf (2020)

3. The secretariat consists of three officials and supporting assistants. The Secretary General of the National Commission on Sustainable Development, based in the Ministry of the Environment, participates in the coordination function of the Prime Minister's Office.

4. The Coordination Network is mandated to mainstream the 2030 Agenda into all sectors and aims at ensuring and improving balance between the economic, social and environmental sustainability and enhancing Policy Coherence on Sustainable Development in the policy planning.

5. It is chaired by the Prime Minister's Office, and includes representatives from ministries, Statistics Finland, research institutions and various stakeholder groups.

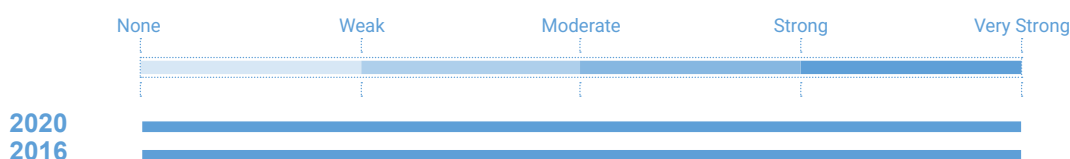
implementation are the **National Commission for Sustainable Development** and the **National Development Policy Committee**. The national follow-up system includes innovative participatory elements, such as the **Citizen panel**.⁶ For the 2020 VNR, the evaluation of the progress in each SDG is based on **two independent assessments**: one by state authorities and the statistical office and one by civil society actors. The national government is raising awareness on the municipalities' core functions and the global SDGs, by offering local governments the **MayorsIndicators tool**,⁷ which allows them to measure the progress made via 140 SDG indicators chosen to be transposable at the local level.⁸

2. LRGs INVOLVEMENT IN SDG LOCALIZATION

The 2020 VNR highlights **the growing reliance of local governments on the SDGs as part of their strategic objectives**. From March 2019 to April 2020, the **Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (AFLRA)** has been participating in the **KESTO project**⁹ (Leadership and implementation of sustainability: Action research on the localisation of the SDGs in Finnish municipalities), that supports strategic and integrative approaches to sustainable urban development.¹⁰

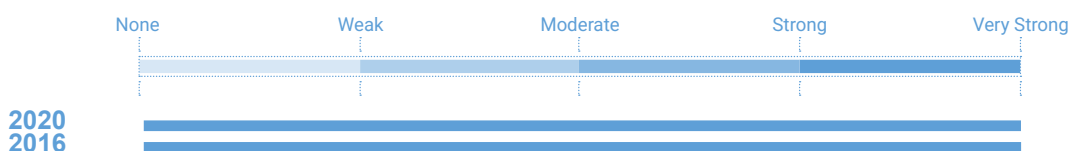
2.1 LRGs PARTICIPATION

► In the VNR process



Comments: The AFLRA presented its own contribution to the 2020 VNR.

► In national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation



Comments: Regular participation of LRGs and their association (consultative).

This assessment is based on the information collected in the VNRs and in the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments' annual survey on the localization of the SDGs.

2.2 VNR REFERENCES

In the 2020 VNR, as part of the section on "Policy and Enabling Environment", the subsection "Work in Regions, Cities and Municipalities" details the commitment of local governments to the SDGs and has been written by the AFLRA (see VNR, 2020, p. 42-43). Following, there are 3 boxes written by the cities of **Helsinki**, **Espoo** and **Turku** on the VLRs they developed (p. 43-46).

2.3 SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND CASES

► The 2020 VNR underlines the work accomplished by the **autonomous region Åland** to integrate the SDGs in its core strategies. In 2014, the Parliament and the government of Åland adopted a goal of total sustainable development in Åland for 2051. A network has also been created for all citizens, organizations, authorities and companies, in order to participate in establishing Åland's sustainable agenda.

2.4 VOLUNTARY SUBNATIONAL AND/OR LOCAL REVIEWS (VSRs / VLRs)

Many Finnish cities have already developed VLRs: the capital city **Helsinki** in 2019 and 2021, **Espoo** and **Turku** in 2020, and **Vantaa** and **Tampere** in 2021.¹¹ Helsinki was the first city in Europe to submit a VLR. Its 2019 report presents the objectives of

6. More information on monitoring and review mechanisms in the VNR, 2020, p. 96.

7. <https://www.mayorsindicators.com/>

8. See it here: <https://Mayorsindicators.com>

9. <https://www.demoshelsinki.fi/referenssit/kesto/>

10. UCLG, 2020, Towards the Localization of the SDGs, <https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Informe%20HLPF-FINAL.pdf>

11. See: [https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Helsinki%20\(2019\).pdf](https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Helsinki%20(2019).pdf) ;

https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/helsinki_2021.pdf ; https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/espoo_2020_0.pdf ;

https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/turku_2020_0.pdf ; https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/vantaa_2021.pdf

the Helsinki City Strategy (2017-2021) and the mechanisms for monitoring it, and highlights the concrete processes by which the city is moving towards the SDGs.

Espoo's VLR reviews the actions that are implementing Espoo Story, the strategy and narrative that guide the city's operations and make them understandable for all, and maps them with the SDGs. The participative dimension of the development of the VLR is highlighted.

Turku's VLR focuses on examining the Turku 2029 City Strategy and its most important operations in terms of the SDGs. 4 of these were given special attention: SDGs 6, 10, 13 and 17.

Oulu is planning to prepare its VLR in 2022.

2.5 MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The 2030 Agenda has been incorporated into the government's planning, budgeting and reporting processes. Recently, the Ministry of Environment launched the **Sustainable City programme (2019-2023)**, that promotes the sustainable development of cities and municipalities through practical urban development and strategic management.¹²

3. RELEVANT INFORMATION

General comments: The 2020 VNR pays very important attention to citizen participation and participatory mechanisms, which are regularly presented as the backbone of the Finnish sustainable development strategy. **Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development** (2016) is one of Finland's key instruments for engaging the whole of society in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: the public sector, businesses, civil society and private individuals. Special attention is also given to **minorities**, for example the indigenous Sámi people and the Swedish speaking autonomous region Åland island, which were included among the members of the National Commission from the very beginning. In addition to youth (through the 2030 Agenda Youth Group) and women, other groups were included as well, in particular the disabled and immigrants. Regarding participation in the development of the VNR itself, multiple stakeholders not only have been consulted, but also participated in the assessment of Finland's performance on every SDG and independently wrote parts of the report.

3.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATION

Women are one of the main targets of public policies and international cooperation in Finland. Regarding their participation in decision-making bodies, particularly political ones, women's participation has increased at the national level. The 2020 VNR does not mention data on the political participation of women at municipal level.

3.2 COVID 19

The 2020 VNR makes very little reference to COVID-19, apart from reaffirming the country's commitment to the SDGs, despite the urgent changes and short-term measures that the national government had to decide in the face of the pandemic.

4. SDG INDICATORS¹³

5.5.1. (b) Proportion of seats held by women (%) in local governments		39 (2018)
6.1.1. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services (%)	Urban	-
	Rural	-
6.2.1. (a) Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services (%)	Urban	-
	Rural	-
11.1.1. Proportion of population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing (%)		-
11.6.1. Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed (%)		100 (2015, Helsinki)
11.6.2. Air pollution – annual means of particulate matter in cities (population weighted)		5.7 (2016)
11.b.2. Proportion of local governments that have adopted local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies (%)		100 (2019)

12. UCLG, 2020, Towards the Localization of the SDGs, <https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Informe%20HLPF-FINAL.pdf>

13. The data used for this table come from the UN SDG Indicators Database. See: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/UNSDG/IndDatabasePage>. More information on the country's progress towards the SDGs here: <https://country-profiles.unstatshub.org/fin>