Operating environment

Finnish cities are becoming more diverse and diversified. Resolving the special challenges of cities and taking advantage of the pioneering actions of cities are important for Finland’s success. It is in the interests of both the cities and central government to base urban policy on their partnership. ​

Cities bear key responsibility for reducing the inequality related to differences in education, employment and wellbeing between regions and population groups. To be able to increase social sustainability, cities and central government need a shared knowledge base for the prevention of inequality. In addition, societal participation and social solidarity need to be strengthened. There is a great need for services and measures that promote the wellbeing, health, and security of people of different ages in cities. ​

Cities are platforms for expertise, development and business. Raising the level of expertise, an attractive labour market, and top-level research make cities and Finland as a whole competitive. However, the sustainability gap in the public finances and the increasing scarcity of public resources as a result of the coronavirus crisis, pose challenges to improving the vitality of cities and expanding wellbeing services. Concomitantly, the pressure to utilise digitalisation and the operational changes brought by it, new technological devices or artificial intelligence drive us towards significant changes in service provision. Creative economies and cultural heritage need to be utilised in a cross-sectoral manner to create new opportunities for business. ​

Cities are increasingly in demand of improved capacity, connections and functional ability in the international operating environment. The competitiveness and international position of cities and their position in Finland’s internal network of cities require well-functioning connections and good accessibility. Finland’s economy is extremely dependent on exports, and for this reason, central government, cities and companies must work together to improve accessibility and to develop competitive logistics of goods.

Climate change is the greatest threat to humanity. Tackling climate change in turn is an opportunity for Finland to create vitality, growth, employment and wellbeing. Finland aims to become the first wellbeing society in the world to reach carbon-neutrality by 2035. The transition to a carbon-neutral society must take place in a socially and regionally fair and sustainable manner.

The cooperation between cities and central government plays an important role in successful climate work. To achieve the carbon-neutrality target, we need to make consistent decisions on the jointly chosen path to carbon-neutrality. Cities serve as platforms for climate solutions and the expertise and research required for them. Combatting the effects of climate change and preparing for its unavoidable effects are part of the efforts to increase our national resilience. At the same time, the measures taken to mitigate climate change may improve the health of cities and promote good quality urban environments.

Cities have taken important climate actions in several different emissions sectors, but the transition to sustainable transport and energy production in particular still poses challenges. For the measures taken to mitigate climate change to succeed, cities and central government must together be able to take advantage of the green investment and stimulus package intended for recovery from the coronavirus crisis. Cities aiming at carbon-neutrality must also look after their carbon sinks and ensure pleasant, ecologically diverse natural environments. The importance of nature, and easy access to it, has been further emphasised during recent times.