

# From Agenda to Action

## The Implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in Helsinki

Laura Uttu-Deschryvere  
Project Director, Strategy  
City of Helsinki  
laura.Uttu-Deschryvere@hel.fi,  
+358 40 717 6415

Helsinki

# Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR) of Agenda 2030 goals in Helsinki

The most important goal for the growing city is to **ensure economic, social and ecological sustainability.**

The Helsinki City Strategy features several goals through which the City takes part in promoting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Cities are responsible for the successful implementation of the Agenda 2030 goals to a great degree.

Helsinki



# Goals of VLR process

To **measure** the success of the Helsinki City Strategy in implementing the SDGs

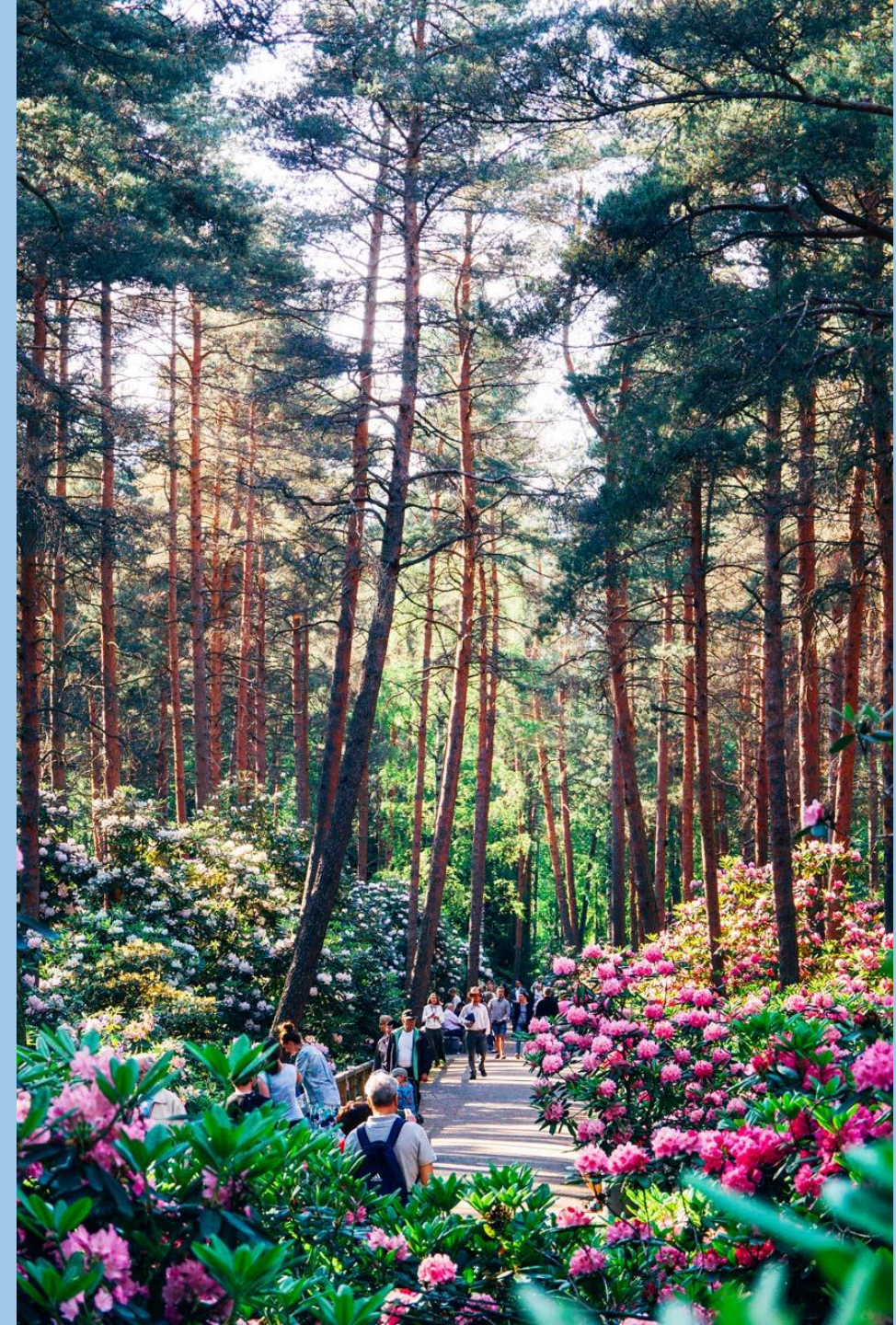
To illustrate our **success and failures** in a transparent manner to make development possible.

To produce **understandable and open data** on sustainable development in the City.

To promote and advance **dialogue and cooperation** with the international community.

To promote cities' opportunities to **interact with the UN** and to advance cities' possibility to have **their voices heard in strategic platforms** like the United Nations

To promote and implement the UN's SDGs **successfully and productively in our city.**



# Voluntary Local Reviews of Agenda 2030 goals in Helsinki

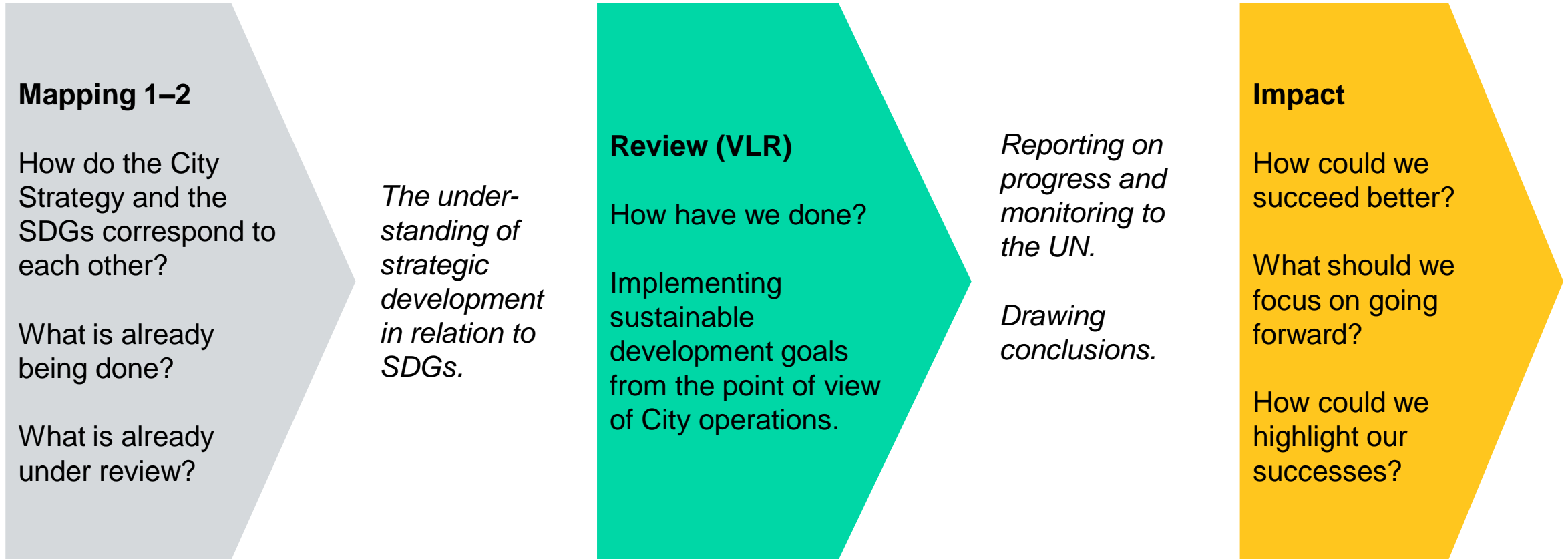
In September 2018 Helsinki decided to follow New York City's example and became the 1st European city to commit to submitting SDG implementation reports at the City level. The 2019 report was published in summer 2019.

Next review, VLR 2021, will be published in May 2021. The work has started – **the VLR process** "more important" than the actual report.



# Implementing Voluntary Local Review (VLR 2019)

A model developed by New York City



# Review based on mapping 1–2 (VLR 2021)

An image of the Helsinki City Strategy and its links to the UN Sustainable Development Goals was created.

## Mapping 1

- The City's strategic goals and set of key performance indicators were specified.
- Examples of concrete actions that Helsinki undertakes to implement its strategy were presented.
- The UN SDGs that the City's goals and actions further promote were identified.

## Mapping 2

- Focus was placed on UN goals and describing how the Helsinki City Strategy links with each UN SDG.
- Examples of Helsinki's actions that promote UN goals were presented.

## Mapping 1: Reviewing Helsinki's goal

- Which SDGs are linked with the goal of becoming carbon neutral?

### Securing sustainable growth



**Carbon neutral**

**Goal:**  
**We will develop Helsinki to become an ecologically sustainable and carbon neutral city.**

- The CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of traffic will be reduced by 69% by 2035, and emissions that are harmful to health will be reduced.
- The CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of the building stock will be reduced by 82% by 2035.
- We will move on to a new economic model based on circular economy.
- Helsinki will be the best testing platform for smart & clean solutions.
- The development program of Helen Oy, the energy company owned by the City, is responsible for emission reductions in energy production.
- The number of carbon sinks will increase, and the remaining emissions will be compensated for

**Indicators:**  
Helsinki's greenhouse gas emissions (total emissions and emissions per capita)  
Amount of cycling traffic at automatic calculation points  
Air quality in selected measurement points (NO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>)

We will implement the 147 actions in the Carbon neutral Helsinki 2035 Action Plan, such as:

- We will improve the service level of public transport and the range of the rail network
- We will prepare an energy renaissance program to support the renovation of neighborhoods and the existing private building stock energy-efficiently
- We will prepare a roadmap for circular economy and sharing economy
- We will prepare an action plan for Smart & Clean growth
- We will make use of demand response in electricity and heating
- We will use Helsinki's green factor method in the planning and implementation of new plots to ensure sufficient green structures on each plot.



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## Mapping 2: Reviewing SDG

- Which City of Helsinki goals link with SDG 13 Climate Action?

### Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts



**13 CLIMATE ACTION**



Diverse nature



Carbon neutral

- 13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.
- 13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.
- 13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.
- 13.a Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly \$100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible.
- 13.b Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities.

- In 2018, the global temperature was the fourth highest ever recorded. The only years hotter were 2015, 2016 and 2017.  
*Source: NOAA*
- The average temperature of the year in Kaisaniemi, Helsinki, was 7.2 °C, which is 1.4 higher than during the reference period of 1981–2010.  
*Source: Finnish Meteorological Institute*
- With the inception of the City Strategy, Helsinki created and approved the Carbon-neutral Helsinki 2035 action plan. The action plan includes 147 actions that aim to reduce Helsinki's direct greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent compared to 1990. By 2018, Helsinki had reduced its total greenhouse gas emissions by 27 percent.

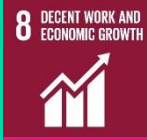
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# Sustainable Development Goals reported in VLR 2019

The Helsinki review focused on the goals determined by the UN for 2019 (excluding SDG17)



Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.



Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.



Reduce inequality within and among countries.



Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.



Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

The description of actions were complemented with **a selection of key indicators** that describe the development following the UN's goals in Helsinki. **The key indicators were picked primarily from the monitoring meters of the strategy.**



# Reducing inequality between population groups and areas alike is one of the most important goals in the Helsinki City Strategy

Controlling the segregation of population groups and regions is high on the City's agenda.

Helsinki is aiming for an extensive and systemic change that would reduce social exclusion, intergenerational exclusion, and regional segregation in Helsinki through various entities of actions.

The actions aimed at reducing inequality are primarily focused on residents and areas of Helsinki, City employees and City operations.

Helsinki is especially focused on the integration of residents with an immigrant background and creating equal opportunities with those of the native population.

*The City Strategy does not cover UN goals that aim at improving the situation for developing countries or for those who live in developing countries. Neither is there a direct link to reducing money transfer costs for immigrants.*



Pleasant and safe



Resident-oriented and engaging



Sound and healthy



Digital



Minds the wellbeing of children and young people



Learning



Athletic and active



Responsible leadership



Functional urban structure

# Examples of actions

- Early support for families
- Increasing the City's English services
- Helsinki Skills Center
- Cultural services integrated with family centers, early childhood education and schools
- Digital services at libraries
- The Joy in Motion program
- Circus groups for babies
- The Students on the Move program
- Promoting cycling



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# What did we learn?

## About the City Strategy and the actions

**Helsinki's City Strategy is an ambitious and comprehensive document and it corresponds with the UN Sustainable Development Goals very well.**

Helsinki has already implemented or is in the process of implementing many actions that promote the UN goals at city level.

UN targets have many references to international development cooperation; in Finland, these goals are managed primarily at national level.

## About the coverage of the review

The review was mainly focused on the City Strategy, on key projects and on the Carbon Neutral Helsinki 2035 action plan.

The review did not cover all of the City's basic services or operations.

**Expanding the review to cover the entire organization would provide a more in-depth understanding of the links between City operations and sustainable development goals.**

# What did we learn?

## About the set of indicators

**Indicators suitable for city-level monitoring of the UN goals should be developed further.**

The challenge is to develop a comparable set of indicators. That is why we selected in VLR 2019 ready-made indicators primarily from the set of monitoring meters of the Helsinki City Strategy.

## About Sustainable Development Goals and their implementation

It would be useful to analyze the links between the UN targets and City operations in more detail. That would help to identify the goals that require more input from Helsinki.

Likewise, it would be beneficial to identify the UN targets that are not relevant from a city-level perspective.

The review should also include an economic angle to enable an assessment of the allocation of resources.

**Experts from all of City Divisions should be involved in identifying these links in the future.**

# Next VLR will be published in May 2021. What will change compared to the previous report?

- **Expanding the scope** to the entire City organization
- Focus on **all SDGs** (or almost all). Focus on real actions (rather than plans&goals).
- Focus on **pandemic situation** – how do we make sure we build-back even better?
- **Feed in information for the next City Strategy**, to ensure the SDGs are realized as well as possible, also over the strategy periods
- Focus on the implementation measures from the start of the process. **The VLR process “more important” than the final report.**
- More **focus on communications** – internal and external. Increasing awareness of the SDGs in increases the chance of success
- **Larger city-wide working group** already from the planning phase throughout the process: City Executive Office (Strategy, Communications, International Affairs, Economic Development), The Urban Environment Division, Education Division, Culture and Leisure Division, Social Services and Health Care Division. Also municipal enterprises will be involved.
- Involvement of citizens and other stakeholders

# Links for Helsinki's materials

## **VLR 2019 publication:**

<https://www.hel.fi/static/helsinki/julkaisut/SDG-VLR-Helsinki-2019-en.pdf>

## **Mapping 1 and 2 publications:**

<https://www.hel.fi/static/helsinki/julkaisut/helsinki-sdg-reporting-part-1.pdf>

<https://www.hel.fi/static/helsinki/julkaisut/helsinki-sdg-reporting-part-2.pdf>