

Shared Smart Specialisation Strategy for East and North Finland

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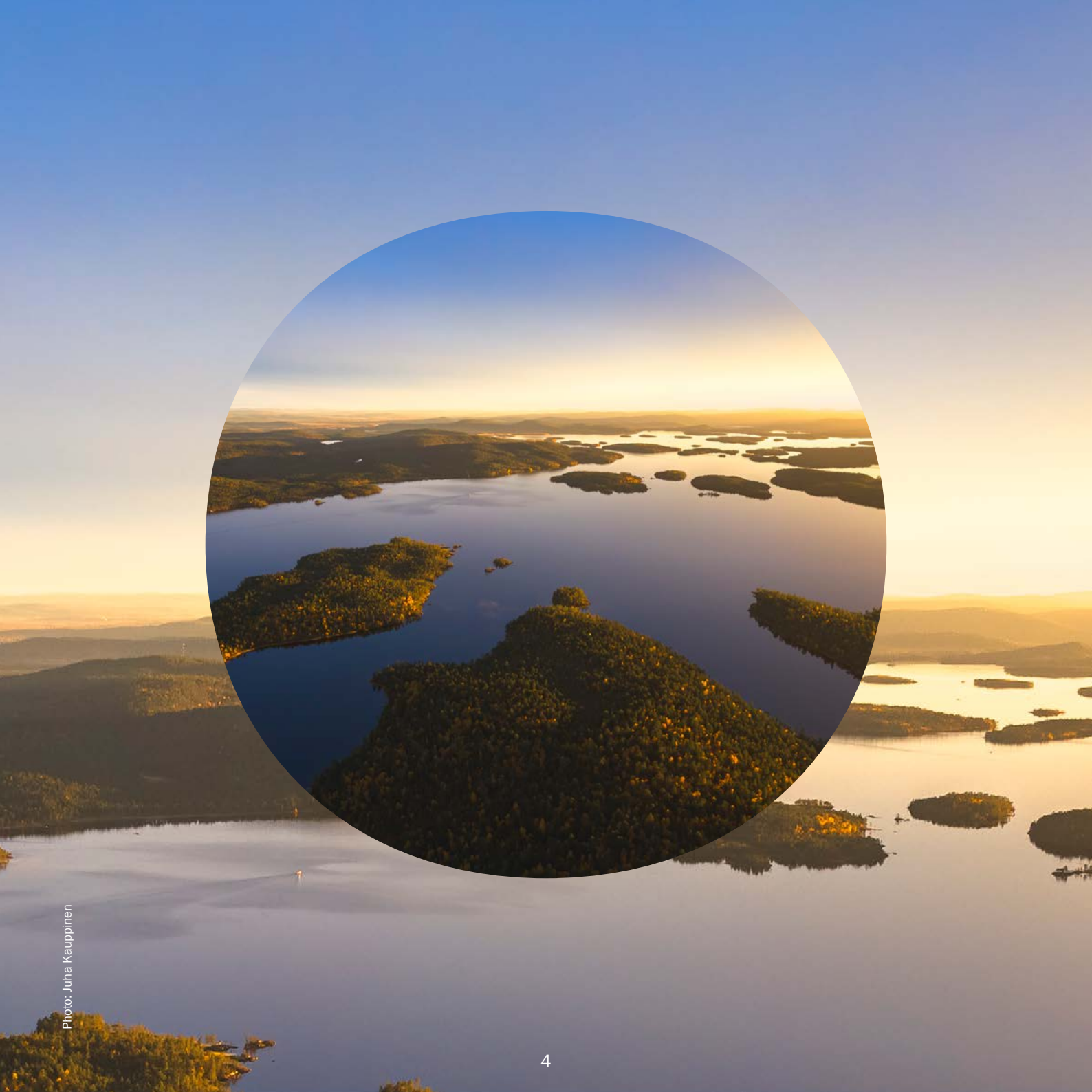


Photo: Juha Kauppinen

Foreword by County Governors

Finland's competitiveness and success in the global market is based on competence, new knowledge and innovations. Research, development and innovation activities (RDI) play a crucial part in the growth of productivity, in the reform of the business sector and society, and in the creation of wellbeing. The R&D spending target of 4% in the Government Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo aims for even more efficient and productive innovation activities in Finland than before. ¹

Finland's competitiveness and success in the global market is based on competence, new knowledge and innovations. Research, development and innovation activities (RDI) play a crucial part in the growth of productivity, in the reform of the business sector and society, and in the creation of wellbeing. The R&D spending target of 4% in the Government Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo aims for even more efficient and productive innovation activities in Finland than before.

The Regional Councils have two statutory main tasks: development of regions and regional land use plans. The division into regions is based on administrative division. Smart specialisation is part of the EU's innovation policy (RIS3), according to which regions should be proactive in identifying and choosing their own strengths and build on their strengths in the development of their region. Smart in this context means a broad vision of innovations, including – but not limited to – technological approaches. Specialisation means focusing on competitive strengths and realistic growth possibilities.

The Regional Councils of East and North Finland have prepared a joint Smart Specialisation Strategy for the regions in East and North Finland. The objective of the strategy is to create a joint framework

for the regions in East and North Finland to promote competence and development within the strategy. The strategy will not exempt the Regional Councils from proactive promotion of smart specialisation in the region, but it rather supports the regional implementation of the smart specialisation strategy in East and North Finland. The shared smart specialisation strategy for the regions in East and North Finland enables cross-regional cooperation and, when necessary, the preparation of and funding applications for joint projects in the regions.

The smart specialisation strategy of the regions in East and North Finland has been prepared as part of the EU-funded ELMO II project. In future, the smart specialisation strategy of East and North Finland will be verified and updated in the normal preparation process of the regions, in connection with the Government's regional development decision, and more frequently, if necessary.

The County Governors in East and North Finland have processed the strategy in their meeting and decided to propose it for approval by each Regional Council.

County Governors of East and North Finland 30 October 2023

Pentti Mäkinen, South Savo

Satu Vehreävesa (deputy), North Savo

Markus Hirvonen, North Karelia

Pentti Malinen, Kainuu

Jyrki Kaiponen, Central Ostrobothnia

Jussi Rämetsä, North Ostrobothnia

Mika Riipi, Lapland

¹ Outcome of the negotiations on the new Government Programme by Prime Minister Petteri Orpo on 16 June 2023, A Strong and Committed Finland, p. 96.



Photo: Juha Kauppinen

1. Strategic priorities create a basis for collaboration in smart specialisation in East and North Finland

The smart specialisation strategy for East and North Finland (ENF) has been drawn up to highlight the opportunities, strong expertise and successful development work created in collaboration through a major union of regions. These regions form a significant entity at the Finnish scale. Twenty-three per cent of the Finnish population live in East and North Finland, the area covers approximately 60% of the land area of Finland and 19.3% of the entire country's gross domestic product (source: Statistics Finland) and 16.58% of exported Finnish goods (source: Statistics Finland and Finnish Customs 2021) are produced in the region. The objective is to strengthen cross-regional and international collaboration in the regions of East and North Finland. The shared priorities for the regions in the strategy are clean solutions, utilisation of digitalisation, and sustainable production of services. The development possibilities in East and North Finland are connected to resolving global and European problems with climate policy goals, energy transitions and strategic self-sufficiency, for instance. The priorities of the Shared Smart Specialisation Strategy support regional growth sectors and create a foundation for sustainable business growth and for reforming economic and innovation activities.

In the regions of East and North Finland, it is possible to identify common strengths that include diverse expertise, developing enterprise and strong innovation platforms. Their collaboration is based on the common features of the business base in the regions of East and North Finland and, on the other hand, differentiation that opens development opportunities at the scale of a major area. Every region in East and North Finland has its own smart specialisation strategy, supported by collaboration implemented in the field of the smart specialisation strategy in the ENF regions.

The smart specialisation strategy for the ENF regions aims to respond to the European challenge of a sustainable economy that is decoupled from fossil raw materials by boosting the green transition through the utilisation of digital technologies (digital green transition). The smart energy transition, digital solutions and low-carbon economy create development needs and business opportunities that can be seized through strong cooperation between the public sector, civil society, research and innovation actors, and the business sector. Clusters and value networks formed by RDI actors and businesses create a basis for coordinated development work. The ENF region offers solutions and new operating models for the global sustainability challenge by pooling high-standard expertise from RDI organisations and businesses.

The priorities of smart specialisation in the ENF region emphasise the development of innovation platforms and structures in support of enterprise growth. In addition to investing in the development of key growth platforms in the region, the growth and development of completely new business forms and industries have also been nurtured. Cross-cutting areas of expertise, such as clean solutions, utilisation of digitalisation and sustainable service production, offer an opportunity for new multidisciplinary development and strengthen the business structure of the entire ENF region.

Technological development creates new needs and, on the other hand, enables completely new kinds of product and service concepts. It is characteristic of new-generation businesses to have a high degree of specialisation that serves the value chains and produces diverse products and services. In practice, an increasing number of enterprises operate at sector interfaces where the integration of services and technologies constantly creates new products and services. Business growth is based on developing value chains that require an effective business environment, diverse partnerships, networking, and strategic expansion to the international market. Cluster and ecosystem development provides companies with a growth platform for internationalisation.

The priority areas of smart specialisation in the ENF regions attach shared competence in the regions to the network of European regions. International cooperation and partners are important to the effectiveness and productivity of research, development and innovation (RDI) activities. The role of the ENF region in selected priority areas in the European networks must be strengthened with determination while opening new opportunities for RDI organisations and enterprises at the same time.

The priority areas in the smart specialisation strategy for East and North Finland regions – clean solutions, utilisation of digitalisation and sustainable service production – support the practical implementation of the strategy by specifying the common areas of expertise as well as the related top-level expertise in the regions. The priority areas are linked by the opportunities related to sustainable development and digitalisation. Through the strategic priority areas, the ENF region acts as a promoter of innovations and a driver of RDI cooperation in Finland and at the international level.

**Leveraging
digitalisation**

**Clean
solutions**

**Sustainable
production
of services**

1.1. Priority I: Clean solutions

The objective is to have sustainable solutions in the energy economy and sustainable use of natural resources and raw materials. Aiming at products with a higher degree of processing and efficient utilisation of bio and circular economy solutions..

The ENF regions are able to utilise natural resources in sustainable ways: the area has developed specialised competence and environmental business operations, offering tailored expertise and technology solutions for environmental challenges, energy demands and the sustainable use of natural resources. Clean, low-carbon solutions are crosscutting themes in business operations. The key industries in the ENF regions are based on the management and maintenance of sustainable development: sustainable use of natural resources and conditions.

Industrial circular economy forms a strong, complementary area of competence in the entire region of East and North Finland. The utilisation of industrial side streams has created a new, rapidly growing business area. Different regions have become nationally and internationally recognised experts as a result of systematic development of efficient solutions and practices. In order to become even stronger and knowledgeable, we need measures that support sustainable development and we need to take biodiversity into account with eco-efficient production processes. It is key to ensure that the use of natural resources in the ENF area is sustainable and resource-efficient. The development of wastewater engineering methods supports the implementation of the circular economy. The circular economy has been profiled around the development of business opportunities for major industrial enterprises and their service operators.

Data management is a key element in the circular economy. Solutions enabled by digital technologies (e.g. data analytics and data integration) promote resource efficiency, the extension of product life cycles and the closing of material flows. The ENF region has strong digital expertise, and it is extremely important to combine this expertise with circular economy processes and business models. Building value networks between them creates an opportunity to build strong RDI cooperation between enterprises, different organisations and the public sector.

The areas of East and North Finland have solid traditions and expertise in bioeconomy. Entrepreneurship and RDI organisations are strong, especially in relation to forests, wood and various natural products. In addition to the mechanical and chemical forest industry, there is specialist expertise, e.g. in the utilisation of side streams, timber construction and the upgrading of natural products. The challenge is to build even closer value networks between bioeconomy operators, enabling the research, development and testing of products with a higher degree of processing. There is also top-class research infrastructure in East and North Finland, enabling various pilot projects.

The energy transition is a crosscutting theme in all priority areas of the ENF region. There are plenty of opportunities for renewable energy production in East and North Finland. In addition to wind and solar farms, there are plans to build hydrogen plants as well as hybrid projects combining various energy production forms in the regions.

Areas of competence in East and North Finland:

Bioeconomy based on sustainable use of natural resources

- Clean natural products and downstream products
- Timber construction
- Food products and food services
- Further processing of biomass

Expertise in industrial circular economy

- Utilisation of side streams in the process industry
- Resource-efficient production
- Energy-efficient machine and equipment manufacture

Smart solutions in the extraction and mineral sector

- Material efficiency and processing of minerals
- Circular economy expertise in the extraction industry
- Battery chemistry

Solutions in renewable energy production and energy efficiency

- Bioenergy and biofuels
- Wind and solar energy
- Hydrogen economy
- Energy efficiency, energy storage and new technical solutions

Water expertise and solutions in water supply management

- Wastewater processing and water treatment technology
- Circular water economy



1.2. Priority II: Utilisation of digitalisation

The objective is to utilise energy-efficient digital opportunities and data economy expertly in businesses and organisations across sector boundaries. The changes aim to reform practices and services while increasing sustainability and productivity.

In the ENF region, there is a high level of expertise in ICT (Information and Communications Technology) and digitalisation. Enterprises and research institutes in the region develop, pilot and scale digital and virtual applications and services that can be freely and extensively utilised by businesses and other sectors of society.

The deployment of high-tech applications creates new operating possibilities for both service providers and end users. Technologies that utilise extensive amounts of data materials are at the peak of the digital transition, and companies must raise their technological maturity level in order to harness these technologies. Utilisation of advanced technologies increases the competitiveness of the businesses in the region, provides more business opportunities and promotes efficient use of resources.

Expertise in the ENF region promotes the deployment of digital services that utilise 5G and 6G networks. Digital services have a key role in increasing the efficiency of industrial production processes and many functions in society. While the transition to a data economy provides opportunities to create completely new services, the significance of cyber security is also emphasised further.

Companies that utilise digital solutions grow and expand faster internationally than other companies. Innovative technologies improve efficient use of raw materials, the energy economy and energy efficiency. They also optimise existing production and supply chains, which consequently increases the profitability of business operations. Digital service solutions also make it easier for citizens to carry out transactions and access services, and they increase cost-effectiveness in many sectors. Digital services are used to an increasing extent in health and wellbeing services, for example, where it is vital that the customer aspect and data security are taken into account when new digital services are deployed. Gamification and extended reality applications can be used for creating new development and learning environments, enrich services, and improve productivity.

The significance of artificial intelligence is growing at an accelerating rate in all sectors. Artificial intelligence can be utilised, for example, in the improvement of security, quality control and diagnostic applications. In the ENF region, the capacity and the related expertise of high-performance computing, such as the LUMI super-computer, offer one of the world's most advanced platforms for developing artificial intelligence for research institutes. Companies also have an opportunity to gain a significant competitive edge by utilising high-performance computing in product development and innovation activities.

Areas of competence in East and North Finland:

Smart manufacture, processing and logistics

- Artificial intelligence; machine learning
- Photonics
- Utilisation and development of industrial automation
- Geoinformatics, logistics
- Utilisation of open data and software
- Other specialist areas and their applications

Solutions and gamification of extended and augmented reality

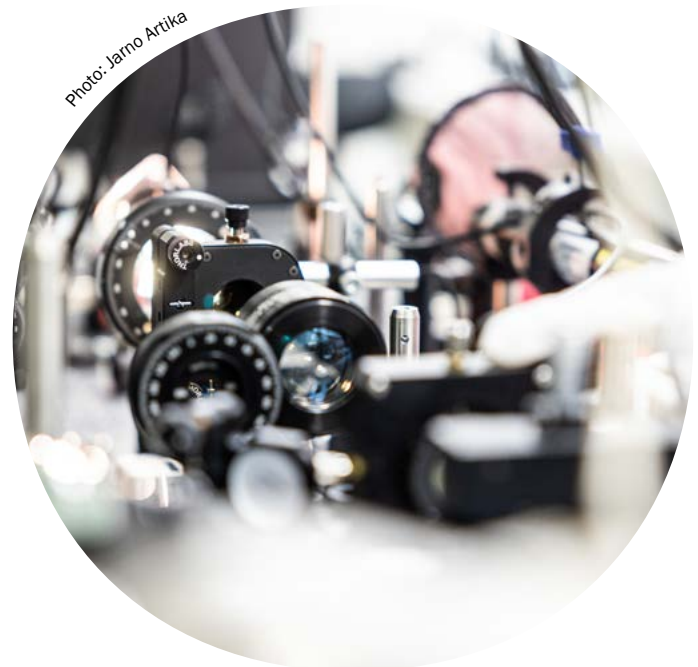
- AR, MR, XR, VR technologies (Augmented Reality, Mixed Reality, eXtended Reality, Virtual Reality)
- Simulation, visualisation
- Utilisation of gaming technology and gameful elements, serious gaming
- New research and learning environments (metaverse, digital twins)

Wireless communication solutions and growth of the ICT sector

- 5G and 6G product development and deployment
- Distributed AI
- Secure industrial networks and IoT (Internet of Things)
- Citizens' health data solutions
- Digital systems for energy efficiency
- Cyber security

Measurement and knowledge management

- Energy-efficient data economy and high-performance computing
- Energy-efficient data centre functions
- Data management, optimisation and system integration (e.g. energy, the health sector)
- Measurement of the environment and people's wellbeing (e.g. health and top-level sports)
- Utilisation of artificial intelligence
- New applications and services
- Security of supply



1.3. Priority III: Sustainable service production

The objective is to develop service production in East and North Finland to meet the growing global demand with respect to high-quality services that provide wellbeing and are produced in a sustainable way. The aim is to support sustainable growth of enterprises through innovative solutions that bring added value to the region, enterprises, residents, customers and the environment.

The development of sustainable service production in the ENF region must be based on flexibility, agility and foresight because this enables companies to adapt to the rapidly changing market conditions and customer needs. While the export of services plays a significant role in the Finnish economy, consumers are demanding more and more high-quality services that provide wellbeing and are produced in a sustainable and responsible way. Responding to these requirements and foreseeing changes in the operating environment are factors that are even more important for many companies with respect to successful business operations.

The utilisation of service design competence in the ENF region offers methods and tools for the planning and development of services. Servitisation, i.e. moving from a traditional product-focused business operation model towards the provision of services as part of the main business, is a necessary step towards a more sustainable business model. Servitisation aims to increase interaction between the company's products and services and to integrate services as part of the products or to offer them as a separate added-value service. This makes it possible to improve resource efficiency, build long-term customer relationships and have more eco-efficient business operations.

In East and North Finland, clean nature and rich biodiversity are cornerstones of the tourism services. Nature is utilised in a sustainable way as an operating environment for activity tourism and a source of wellbeing services. Attractive, high-quality tourism services and products draw content from the characteristics and culture of the regions while also improving the wellbeing and vitality of the local communities. Digital platforms, smart solutions and service design are an integral part of the development of the tourism service structure. Platform economy solutions are constantly developed to meet the needs of mobility and accommodation services.

Fitness and event services in East and North Finland rely on the tourism industry, but also offer services for local residents. Tourism in East and North Finland is attractive both nationally and internationally, due to which it is particularly important to ensure sustainable and responsible development of the growing tourism industry. In sustainable production of tourism and event services, efforts are made to develop travel chains in order to improve the travellers' safety and travel experience and to reduce travel's harmful impacts on nature.

Effective health and wellbeing services are promoted in East and North Finland with the objective of improving the residents' wellbeing and health and increasing profitable business operations in the region by utilising technical innovations. The high-standard research data produced by the research organisations in the regions is utilised in the development of wellbeing services. Cooperation between the public and private sectors is emphasised in the operating environment that supports experiments, which is essential in terms of the implementation of growth possibilities.

Competence areas in East and North Finland: :

Sustainable service production is also related to industrial service production where a company offers various services to industrial customers, especially to the manufacturing and industrial sectors. This business model focuses on offering added value to customers by producing services that support the quality of their production processes, the maintenance of equipment, logistics, ICT services, training, and other needs in industry.

Wellbeing and health services

- Data-based wellbeing services
- Services in health technology
- Knowledge-intensive services in the health and social care sector
- Sustainable tourism and event management

Sports and fitness services and products

- Nature and activity tourism
- Service provision in the creative sectors
- Food and cultural tourism
- Linking service design and digital services to tourism services

Digital accessibility – marketing and sales

- Physical accessibility – travel chains, platform economy solutions in movement and accommodation
- Multi-location solutions
- Industrial service production
- Service solutions that support the quality and longevity of production
- Other service production in support of industry and manufacture

Kuva: Studio Artica / Lapin materiaalipankki



2. East and North Finland as a cooperation area

2.1. In facts and figures

1,27 mill. people
23%
of the Finnish population
5,4 people / km²

235 450 km²*
60,2%
of Finland's
total area

Land area
203 523 km²*

Water area
32 927 km²
(14% of land area)

*source: National Land Survey of Finland 2023

36 123 €
GDP/person

€43,049 whole country

Source: Statistics Finland

10 014 €
Export of goods / person

€12 420 whole country

Source: Finnish Customs &
Statistics Finland 2021

6 metallic mineral mines

13 industrial mineral mines

Forest area

66% of Finland's forest area
98% of Finland's organic collection areas

Finland has a total of 4.6 million hectares of organic collection area forests

Energy

66,5% of Finland's renewable energy production
70,1% of Finland's hydropower production
59,6% of Finland's wind power production

Tourism

40% of tourists in Finland
44,9% of Sustainable Travel Finland destinations

Source: Visit Finland

1. Lapland

Smart and international Lapland is an Arctic forerunner. We build sustainable competitiveness, wellbeing and success in the cleanest region of the world.

2. North Ostrobothnia

North Ostrobothnia is an attractive hub of top-level ICT and technology expertise. The region's strengths lie in the fields of bioeconomy, metal industry, wood processing and RDI expertise in health technology. The region aims to develop through the opportunities of the green transition, especially the reform and competitiveness of enterprises.

3. Kainuu

Kainuu has abundant and versatile natural resources, an attractive environment for life and travel, and the skills to utilise these assets as products and services. The industrial spearheads in Kainuu are bioeconomy, mining and chemical industry, tourism and technology (metal industry, ICT and electronics).

4. Central Ostrobothnia

Central Ostrobothnia is known for its diverse centre of expertise in chemistry, bioeconomy and mineral industries, developed around abundant natural resources in the area, and for its strong primary production. The region's role in the energy transition is nationally and internationally important because the area has Europe's largest lithium reserves. Clean transitions and digitalisation create opportunities for sustainable tourism.

5. North Savo

North Savo produces the world's leading machine and energy technology products and services. In addition, the area's strengths include a diverse wood industry, food product industry and biorefining. Developing areas include tourism, knowledge-intensive wellbeing and water technology.

6. North Karelia

The vision of smart specialisation in North Karelia is "Reforming, sustainable and international North Karelia". We see and seize the opportunities offered by social phenomena and global changes. We seek growth, partners and opportunities for new business operations in an unbiased way. We take part in international networks and are proud to showcase our experts. We believe that we will continue to do well through information, innovation and entrepreneurship in the future as well. We make progress towards our goals together, through excellent cooperation.

7. South Savo

The foundations of growth and development in South Savo are its wood, forest and water expertise and sustainable food production. In tourism, we are world-renowned for our unique lake environment, enterprises and services. The wellbeing of the people and companies arises from a safe environment rich in natural values, through international operations and sustainable growth.



3. Smart specialisation priorities in East and North Finland per region

1. Lapland

1. Circular economy as a basis for sustainable growth
2. Wellbeing and experience services from nature
3. Renewable energy solutions promoting self-sufficiency
4. Technologies reforming sustainable production and services

Elements supporting the priorities: Competence, research and development; business reform; international cooperation.

2. North Ostrobothnia

1. Reforming and prosperous North Ostrobothnia
 1. Digital services and products
 2. Health and welfare sector
 3. Reforming and low-emission industry
2. Climate-smart North Ostrobothnia
 1. Energy production and storage
 2. Sustainable building, logistics and mobility
 3. Innovative circular and bioeconomy
 4. Smart food production
3. International, networked and attractive North Ostrobothnia
 1. Internationally competitive and interesting locality
 2. Networked innovation activities, strong ecosystems and RDI
 3. Innovative tourism

3. Kainuu

1. Measurement technology
2. Gaming and advanced simulation technologies
3. High-performance computing, data economy and data analytics
4. Circular economy in the mining industry and bioeconomy
5. Knowledge-intensive services; top-level and competitive sports, activity tourism, social and healthcare services

4. Central Ostrobothnia

1. Energy transition
2. Clean transition
3. Reforming expertise
4. Smart digitalisation
5. Sustainable tourism

Priorities: Sustainable use of natural resources and primary production, companies and entrepreneurship, wellbeing, culture and recreation, internationality

5. North Savo

1. Machine and energy technology
2. Forest industry
3. Food products
4. Welfare technology
5. Tourism
6. Smart water systems
7. Biorefining

Cross-cut: : ICT and digitalisation; climate, circular economy and sustainable development; competence and manpower; wellbeing and culture; innovations, entrepreneurship and growth; accessibility and regional structure

6. North Karelia

1. Reforming industry and developing technologies
2. Clean solutions and green transition
3. Innovative and sustainably produced services

Cross-cut: Digitalisation, competence, cooperation

7. South Savo

1. Forest
2. Water
3. Food
4. Tourism
5. Wellbeing

Cross-cut: Digitalisation; Entrepreneurship, ecosystems and clusters; Green transition and solutions; Competence



4. Background of smart specialisation in East and North Finland

The regions of East and North Finland have long traditions of cooperation. A new phase in the cross-regional collaboration was launched in early 2018 when the ENF regions were chosen as one of the European Commission's pilot areas in the Regions in Industrial Transition pilot to develop new approaches based on smart specialisation.

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The first phase of the cross-regional collaboration of seven regions produced the East and North Finland smart specialisation strategy 2019–2023. The strategy aims to strengthen the regeneration capacity of economies in the region and to promote the growth and internationalisation of enterprises. The common strategy themes were created to promote new collaboration across regional boundaries in a concrete way in the East and North Finland in Industrial Transition project (2019–2021). A smart specialisation task force consisting of experts from the Regional Councils and the East and North Finland EU Office was established to enable cross-regional work.

Cooperation in the East and North Finland smart specialisation task force means promoting common interests and development work that is based on identifying common strengths and supplementary skills. Smart specialisation in East and North Finland forms the core of this cooperation, and the focus areas based on this speciali-

sation support the growth sectors and visibility of all regions involved. From the beginning, the objective has been to develop new practices for companies to utilise the competence and the diverse network of innovation platforms in the entire area of East and North Finland.

The next phase of the innovation cooperation on the basis of the Smart East and North Finland 2022–2027 (ELMO II) project was launched at the beginning of 2022. The objective was to stabilise cooperation as regular work of the Regional Council during 2022–2023. In practice, the cooperation implemented the shared smart specialisation strategy (2019–2023) and produced a new common specialisation strategy for 2024 in East and North Finland to correspond to the altered operating environment and updated development needs. The assessments of regional experts and the ENF clusters on the enforcement and implementation of the smart specialisation strategy for 2019–2023 were used as the basis for the updated smart specialisation strategy. At the same time, ENF cooperation has created a strong basis for the region's position in international cooperation networks (Vanguard Initiative, European Cluster Alliance and European Cluster Labelling Excellence Structure).

During the Smart East and North Finland 2022–2027 (ELMO II) project, East and North Finland also joined the new Partnerships for Regional Innovation (PRI) pilot, which is coordinated by the European Commission and the Joint Research Centre (JRC). In the pilot, innovation activities were encouraged to focus on local and global sustainability challenges. The new regional-level innovation policy was based on the targets of sustainable development and the European green

development programme. In East and North Finland, there is an abundance of expertise related to the sustainable utilisation of natural resources. Therefore, on this basis, we can contribute to meeting the most significant global challenges of our time while creating a sustainable and solid foundation for new growth in the East and North Finland region. From this start point, the new aspects of the PRI pilot were utilised extensively for drawing up this strategy as well.

The project-led coordination of cooperation will end in the next phase of the ENF smart specialisation cooperation as from 2024, and it will be included as part of the regular operations of the Regional Councils. The ENF smart specialisation working group will continue to implement cross-regional cooperation and take care of the enforcement and monitoring of the shared smart specialisation strategy.

Photo: Juha Kauppinen



5. Clusters as engines of smart specialisation in East and North Finland

At the heart of the smart specialisation strategy for East and North Finland are the region's cluster operators that combine the area's growth companies, research, development and innovation operators (RDI), education, investors, public organisations, and organisations into a clearly defined cooperation network with a common regional and/or thematic target that serves the member companies. In cluster operations, the organisations do not compete with each other, but they carry out strategic cooperation that is beneficial to all operators.

The operation of the clusters is different from the ecosystem in the fact that the cluster is able to accurately name and identify the operators belonging to its network. The ecosystem is often wider, and it is not always possible to accurately name its individual operators. The clusters work as engines of smart specialisation because they help their member companies grow and develop commercially. In the European field of cooperation, the cluster is also an excellent gateway to accessing and utilising the entire network of an individual area or theme. A cluster operating according to the livelihood principle serves the needs and development of all of its members with a long perspective.

The development of cluster operations in East and North Finland relies on European cluster work that is directed by the European Commission through the activities of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP). Up-to-date requirements for cluster organisations and cluster networks are available in the ECCP details. The international cooperation promoted by East and North Finland requires that every cluster organisation in the region gets registered with ECCP

and is responsible for keeping its registered data up to date. ECCP registration is free of charge for users, and it opens an opportunity to utilise funding and training possibilities in Europe available for the clusters. The ECCP website drew up and published separate guidelines for registering in 2023. In addition, ECCP also offers the Trend Universe tool for its PRO-level users. To become a PRO user, you need to fill in or complete at least half of the voluntary data in the registration details in addition to the mandatory data. In addition to international collaboration in the East and North Finland region, bringing the competence of different sectors and clusters together is important in enabling new growth and development.

East and North Finland is involved in European cluster networks as a member of the European Cluster Alliance (ECA) and as a founding member of the European Clusters Labelling Excellence Structure (EUCLES). From the viewpoint of smart specialisation in East and North Finland, these cooperation networks enable the development of expertise in the region, the promotion of cooperation opportunities, visibility of operators, and empowerment especially in Europe. ECA is the European cooperation network for national cluster organisations. EUCLES, on the other hand, is responsible for the development of the cluster management system and for quality assessment (granting so-called cluster quality labels for clusters). The East and North Finland region is profiled in European cluster networks as a reliable and competent operator, and both networks offer a vantage point to the European cluster and business field.

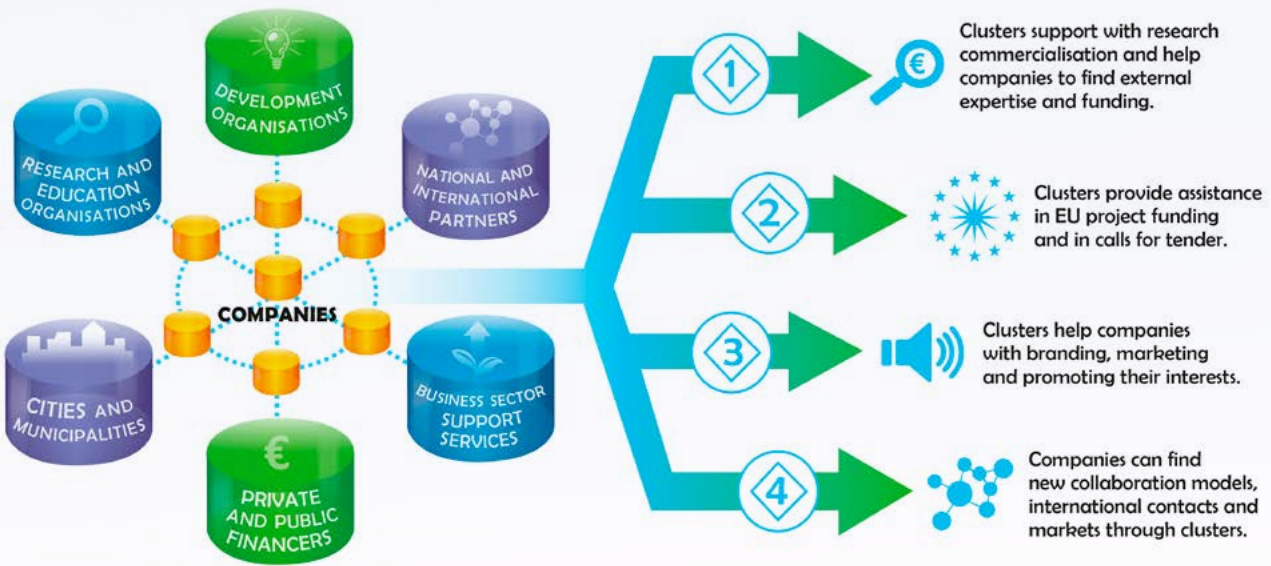


Figure 1. Description of cluster operators drawn up by East and North Finland. (Source: East and North Finland Smart Specialisation Strategy 2019–2023)



6. Targets and monitoring of the smart specialisation strategy

The contents of the East and North Finland smart specialisation strategy are implemented in collaboration with the Regional Councils of the area. Each Regional Council in East and North Finland is responsible for the implementation of the shared smart specialisation strategy and for the resourcing of the implementation work in their own region. The Regional Council liaises between the operators in its own region and international networks and ensures the implementation of the shared smart specialisation. The leadership of the shared smart specialisation work is determined in accordance with the rotating chairmanship in East and North Finland. Each Regional Council in East and North Finland appoints a person for the implementation of the East and North Finland smart specialisation strategy. Together, the persons appointed by the Regional Councils form a group of experts that coordinates cooperation within the East and North Finland smart specialisation strategy. In addition, an expert from the East and North Finland EU Office takes part in the group's work. The expert group for the shared smart specialisation strategy in East and North Finland reports their results to the County Governors.

The objectives of the East and North Finland smart specialisation strategy:

- We take measures to increase cross-regional, national and international cooperation.
- We actively promote channelling of funding in order to increase sustainable growth and cooperation among the operators in our region.
- Together, we identify and create value networks that support the increase of cooperation between operators in our region.
- We support the growth of employment and entrepreneurship by promoting the effectiveness of cluster measures through development and utilisation.
- We actively maintain and utilise strategic international cooperation networks where we act as reliable members and partners.
- We raise the profile of our cooperation through active communications.
- We monitor the results of our cooperation on an annual basis.

The targets of the East and North Finland smart specialisation strategy promote the efficiency of cross-regional cooperation as common strengths in the field of identified priorities. The implementation and results of the strategy targets are reviewed every year. If they wish, the Regional Councils of East and North Finland may also select certain individual targets as yearly priorities. Further information about the East and North Finland region is published on the Suurin osa Suomea website (suurinosasuomea.fi).

The objectives take into account the memberships, practical work contribution and the appointed representatives of the region in the international networks of the Vanguard Initiative, the European Cluster Alliance (ECA) and the European Clusters Labelling Excellence Structure (EUCLES), in which East and North Finland is an active member. The chairman of the East and North Finland Regional Councils appoints the experts and representatives for the international networks.

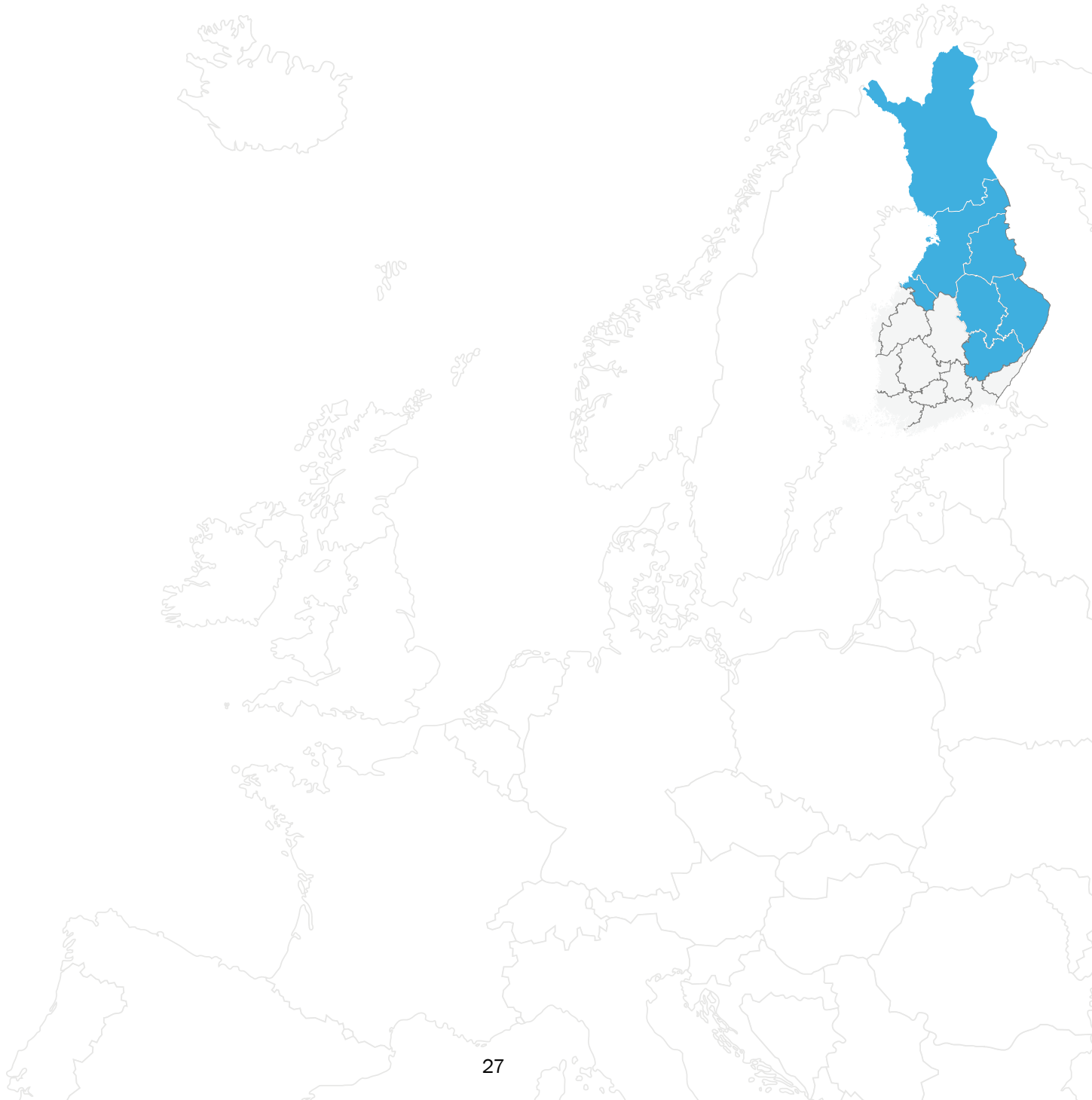
The shared smart specialisation strategy for East and North Finland creates a strong basis to act in the Vanguard Initiative network. The Vanguard Initiative cooperation is based on smart specialisation and the utilisation of competence that complements different areas in order to achieve growth and industrial development in selected fields (so-called pilots). The network promotes interregional cooperation and is a strong policy influencer. Through its activities, the network strengthens the competitiveness of the member regions' growth-oriented enterprises in Europe-wide value chains. The Vanguard Initiative network is a cooperation platform for regions, research institutes, universities, enterprises and clusters with the objective of promoting and commercialising new industrial innovations. The Regional Councils in East and North Finland are responsible for the promotion of

the Vanguard Initiative cooperation of operators in their own regions with the support of the East and North Finland EU Office.

The East and North Finland regions are also involved in S3 thematic partnerships which are maintained and promoted by the regions. In addition, the objective of smart specialisation in East and North Finland is to be an active member in the initiatives and trials of the European Commission, such as Partnerships for Regional Innovation (PRI 2022-2023) and Regional Innovation Valleys (2023-), which complies with the innovation policy. The objective of cross-regional cooperation is to raise the profile of East and North Finland and the possibilities for it to receive concrete EU-level funding for the region's clusters, research, development and innovation operators (RDI) and for enterprises. The Regional Councils substantially support their regional operators' access to networks and funding.

In the implementation of the smart specialisation strategy in East and North Finland, the regions are committed to promoting funding that fosters cross-regional cooperation, especially within the themes of shared smart specialisation. Regional development funding supports the synergy of European funding by supporting the development activities of operators in each individual region.

The regions of East and North Finland communicate about the implementation and results of the shared smart specialisation strategy. In these communications, the regions utilise the elmoenf.eu website, the Suurin osa Suomea website and the newsletter of the East and North Finland EU Office in addition to the Regional Councils' own channels of communication.





East & North **FINLAND**

Most of Finland

The world knows us as a reliable ally and partner.
As the times change, our region thrives through innovations and excellence.
Our true wealth lies in our nature, culture and people.

Leverage from
the EU
2014–2020



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund