

HELSINKI

2026

WHAT HELSINKI LOOKS LIKE AS A BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT IN 2026

UB HELSINKI BUSINESS HUB HELS



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10 OBSERVATIONS OF THE FUTURE OF THE HELSINKI REGION

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Helsinki Business Hub, the regional development agency for the Finnish capital region, enables foreign companies to establish their businesses and innovation driven companies to grow and develop in the Helsinki region. The company's aim is to make Helsinki the best place in Europe to accelerate business.

BACKGROUND

Helsinki Business Hub is a regional development agency for the Finnish capital region that enables foreign companies to establish their businesses and innovation-driven companies to grow and develop in the Helsinki region. The company aims to make the Helsinki region the best place in Europe to accelerate business.

In order to celebrate its 10th anniversary, Helsinki Business Hub wanted to gaze ten years into the future. Four megatrends - globalisation, urbanisation, climate change and digitalisation - were chosen as the viewpoint and their effects to the work in the region were to be surveyed amongst the region's companies.

Aula Research was chosen as a partner to help build the report. They were tasked to interview leaders and visionaries from different sectors of society and conduct a larger survey among the region's corporate deci-

sion-makers.

The interviews were conducted between May and September 2016. The interviews provided rich background material for the questionnaire. Selected parts of the interviews were also compiled into special commentary sections, attached as part of this report.

The themes, ideas and problems that emerged in the interviews were presented to the decision-makers of enterprises operating in the Helsinki region. The sample was collected through different channels, using e-questionnaires and telephone interviews. The respondents were mostly CEOs of corporations. The sample was collected between 2 September and 7 October 2016. The survey was directed at businesses employing at least five people in the Uusimaa province. In accordance with the operational focus of Helsinki Business Hub, the businesses represented the following sectors:

PERSONS INTERVIEWED FOR THE REPORT:

- **Kaisa Hietala**
EVP, Renewable Products, Neste
- **Taavi Kotka**
Government CIO, Deputy Secretary General, ICT Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Estonia
- **Matti E. Lehtonen**
Managing Director, GE Healthcare Finland
- **Sanna Suvanto-Harsaae**
Professional board member
- **Saara Taalas**
Professor, Business Model Innovation at Linnaeus University
- **Jan Vapaavuori**
Vice-President of the European Investment Bank

227

CORPORATE DECISION-MAKERS ANSWERED THE SURVEY:

32

FROM THE HEALTH
TECH & LIFE SCIENCES
FIELD

144

FROM ICT
FIELD

51

FROM THE SMART &
CLEAN TECH
FIELD

Health tech & life sciences includes businesses operating in scientific research and development related to natural sciences, biosciences and medicine. It also includes businesses that manufacture pharmaceuticals, medications, and medical and dental instruments. Thirty-two executives from health tech & life sciences businesses based in the Helsinki region answered the survey. Considering its small size, the sector is strongly represented in the sample. The turnover distribution of these businesses does not differ from the rest of the sample. The companies in this group are highly international: four out of five companies have foreign operations and at 40% of the companies, international operations account for more than half of the company's turnover.

In the **ICT sector**, the main industries include software design and manufacture, computer hardware and software consulting and the manufacture of communication, measurement and navigation devices and electronic components. A total of 144 ICT company executives answered the survey. In the sample,

the businesses in the ICT sector are a little smaller than companies in the other sectors. Twenty-five per cent of the businesses operate purely in the domestic market, and foreign operations account for more than 75% of the turnover in one out of ten companies.

Smart & clean tech: Businesses in this sector create added value for the customers while reducing negative environmental impacts at the same time. This category includes companies whose business is electricity, waste and water management, specialised construction, energy production, or the manufacture of engines, turbines or heating equipment, for example. A total of 51 smart & clean tech company executives answered the survey. Considering its size, the sector is well represented in the sample. On average, the smart & clean tech companies were larger than the companies in the rest of the sectors. The smart & clean tech companies in the sample are heavily focused on the domestic market: only 12% say that they have foreign operations.

2

MEGATREND: GLOBALISATION

Growth equals internationalisation. Today's companies must be international from day one.

- JAN VAPAAVUORI

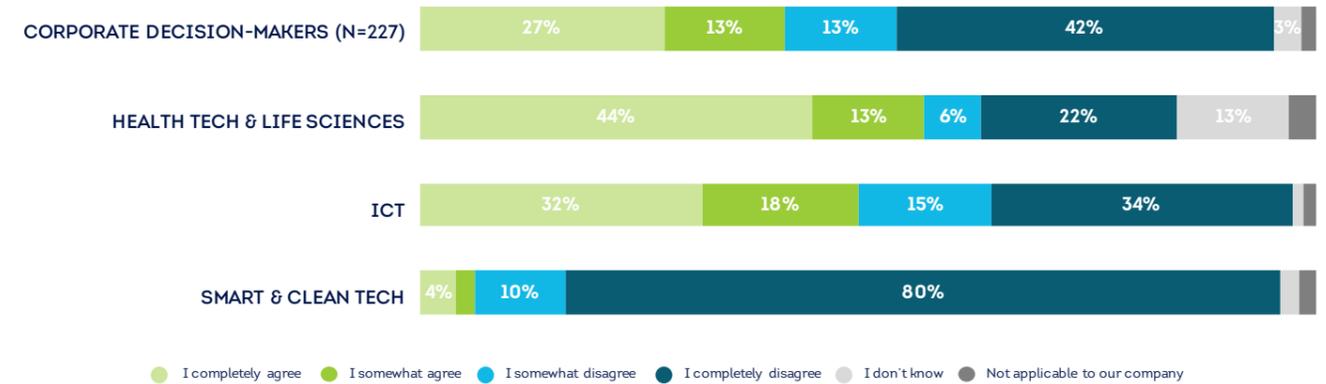
In the interviews conducted by us, globalisation was frequently mentioned as one of the most important forces of change which will affect undertakings in the Helsinki region over the next ten-year period. The leaders we interviewed see globalisation intensifying competition in the domestic market as well. The interviewees emphasised that in the increasingly fierce global competition, only the leaders in their fields will make it in the future—good is no longer enough.

The experts interviewed highlighted the importance of internationalisation from the start. In recent years, we have seen the emergence of a new concept, so-called born global companies, in the Finnish business community. This concept refers to companies that aim to become international as soon as they start. It is hoped that these companies created as international will boost Finnish competitiveness and growth. In the survey conducted among the corporate decision-makers we asked whether their respective companies

had been set up on a born global principle. The survey reveals that four out of ten companies have been set up to become international players right from the start. A majority of the companies were established primarily to provide products or services to the domestic market.

Forty per cent of respondents said that the company was set up as a so-called born global company, while more than half (55%) of the corporate decision-makers said that the company was not established to be an international player from the start. Differences between sectors are significant. In the health tech & life sciences sector, considerably more than half (57%) of the companies were established to be international players from the start and in the ICT sector, half of the companies were founded with the born global concept in mind. In contrast, only 6% of the companies in the smart & clean tech sector were born global.

“OUR COMPANY WAS ESTABLISHED AS A SO-CALLED BORN GLOBAL COMPANY”



Although the majority of the companies were established with the domestic market in mind, many companies set out to conquer the international market at a later stage. Regarding globalisation, the trend is clearly up, with more than half (60%) of respondents believing that their business will become significantly more international over the next ten years. Sector by sector, particularly the health tech & life sciences and the ICT sector believe in future globalisation.

With globalisation, international players have to make decisions regarding location: where to find the best operating environment for the company headquarters, logistics centre and sales offices? Most of the experts interviewed felt that the other Nordic capitals had been more successful in attracting head offices— and that it had greatly benefited the respective regions.

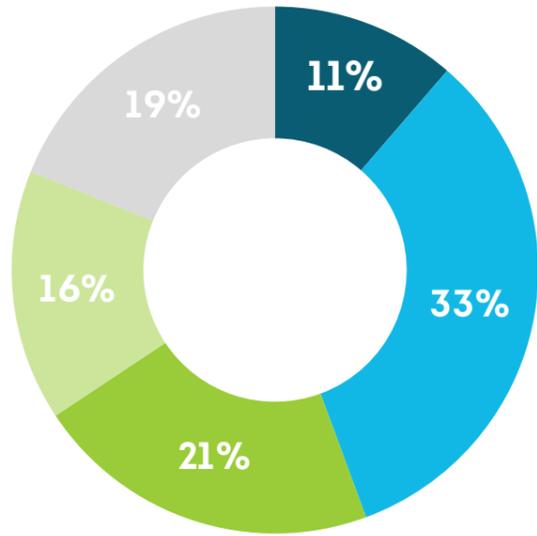
In the spring of 2015, the media reported extensively on the German fashion e-commerce giant Zalando's intentions to set up a technology hub in Helsinki in the autumn of the same year. In Finland, where economic growth is very weak, this news was received

60%
OF THE CORPORATE DECISION-MAKERS IN THE HELSINKI REGION BELIEVE IN SIGNIFICANT GLOBALISATION OF THEIR BUSINESS OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS

with joy, as creators of new jobs are desperately needed. Could such technology hubs bring new energy in Finland to boost growth and employment? Based on our interviews, the policy makers and business leaders in the Helsinki region believe they could.

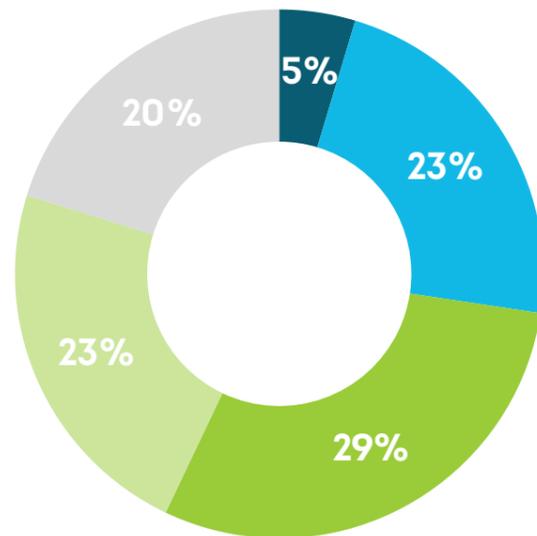
Corporate decision-makers and the experts interviewed are equally pessimistic about the possibilities of the Helsinki region to attract international companies' headquarters in the area. Just over a third (37%) of the corporate decision-makers in the Helsinki region

"THE HELSINKI REGION IS AN ATTRACTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS HEADQUARTERS"



● I completely agree ● I somewhat agree ● I somewhat disagree ● I completely disagree ● I don't know / Not applicable

"THE HELSINKI REGION IS AN ATTRACTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY HUBS"



view the region as an attractive place for the headquarters of international companies, while as much as 44% do not see the potential of Helsinki as a head office location.

The view on technology hubs is a bit more positive, with more than half (52%) of the Helsinki region's corporate decision-makers regarding the region as an attractive place for technology hubs of international companies. The potential of technology hubs is recognised particularly in the health tech & life sciences sector, with up to two out of three corporate decision-makers in the industry believing Helsinki to be an attractive environment for business technology hubs. The ICT sector, too, recognises the potential of technology hubs fairly well.

Even if we were unable to attract head offices to Helsinki, technology hubs could be the next big thing.

- SANNA SUVANTO-HARSAAE



HUBS COULD BRING GROWTH TO HELSINKI

SANNA SUVANTO-HARSAAE
PROFESSIONAL BOARD MEMBER,
MEMBER OF BOARD IN NINE NORDIC COMPANIES

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE MOST INFLUENTIAL DRIVERS THAT WILL AFFECT BUSINESSES AND WORK HERE IN HELSINKI OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS?

Population growth in urban areas is a change with a global impact, and the Helsinki region is not immune to it either. When cities grow and lives change, the demand for services increases. Cities have more residents who want to eat out, go to the pictures, or use all kinds of welfare services. I think that services will become more prevalent, in all fields and at all price levels.

The growing demand for services means also an increased demand for workforce, and the employees in the service sector must be able to live in the city, near their workplace. In order to satisfy the growing demand, we must ensure that everyone who wants to live in the city can live in the city. One way of achieving this is to improve our traffic arrangements.

In addition to urbanisation, I think globalisation is a phenomenon that entails great business potential in the Helsinki region, and we should exploit this potential as soon as possible.

HOW DO YOU THINK GLOBALISATION WILL AFFECT BUSINESS IN THE HELSINKI REGION?

We should be brave enough to admit that we will never attract the Nordic offices or head offices of international companies to Helsinki. The head offices will be located in Stockholm, because the Swedish market is and will be bigger than the Finnish market. What worries me more is that we are unable to keep the head offices of even (partly) Finnish companies in Finland. All the major decisions are made at the head office, and often the Finnish perspective receives more emphasis at head offices located in Finland than in other countries. I think the lack of capital is the main reason for our poor success in the competition for head offices.

Even if we were unable to attract head offices to Helsinki, technology hubs could be the next big thing. We should turn our eyes on hubs and their possible advantages. Finland has some experience with hubs; Zalando established its technology hub in Helsinki about a year ago. A fascinating example of a hub from Denmark is Lego, which used to operate mainly in the Danish countryside, in Billund. In the tumult of the modern world, however, Lego started to question whether Billund is the optimal location for their business. They decided to establish hubs in London and Hong Kong while keeping their head office in Billund. These kinds of hubs could also be an opportunity

for Helsinki.

Helsinki has all it takes to succeed in the hub scene, because we have enough engineers. For example, it has been estimated that Denmark would need about 10,000 more engineers. In other words, we have more expertise in engineering than we know in Finland, and professional engineers' services are moderately priced here. Technical engineering fields are the artery of Finland; we should not allow them to become clogged. I think Finland has excellent opportunities to specialise in technology hubs, and we should definitely promote this to the world.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SAY TO LOCAL BUSINESS EXECUTIVES; DO YOU THINK FINNISH COMPANIES ARE EXPLOITING THE POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH?

Finland's track record in exporting expertise and products is not very impressive. Somehow, Finland seems to be an island, mentally even more so than geographically. Finnish companies should take internationalisation on their agendas at an earlier stage than they do now. In the digitalised world, going international will become a lot easier, and companies can reach new customers globally with less effort. I know a Norwegian company that makes highchairs and sells them mainly in Korea. And Denmark exports all sorts of goods all over the world. Asia is a particularly good export destination for Finland and Finnish companies, because Asians have a high regard for the Nordic countries. What I would like to rid the Finns of is their concern with other people's opinions. When we focus on asking ourselves "What will others think?", we lose our confidence at an early stage, and this lack of confidence hampers our exports.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SAY TO DECISION-MAKERS IN THE HELSINKI REGION AND AT THE NATIONAL AND EU LEVELS?

Helsinki is too expensive, that is a real problem. We also tend to neglect the importance of capital and struggle to keep capital in Finland. Taxation is an important element in this. We must put capital on the move, but not allow it to leave the country.

Technical expertise is our advantage, lack of capital is our problem and hubs are our opportunity. This is my message in a nutshell. We also have a well-functioning traffic system, which we must exploit in the absence of capital.

3 MEGATREND: URBANISATION

Population growth in urban areas is a change with a global impact, and the Helsinki region is not immune to it either. When cities grow and lives change, the demand for services increases.

- SANNA SUVANTO-HARSAAE

The experts we interviewed see the megatrend of urbanisation as one of the most noticeable forces of change in the Helsinki region. The interviewees pointed out that this will bring a lot of opportunities, but also many issues to be solved, as both affluence and problems concentrate in large cities. More and more people move to Helsinki, which means, for example, increasing demand for social welfare and health care services, as well as cultural, entertainment and restaurant services. Many of the interviewees highlighted the positive momentum created by urbanisation, specifically as a driver for the service sector. This development forces service providers to think very carefully about the demographics of the service users and what they want.

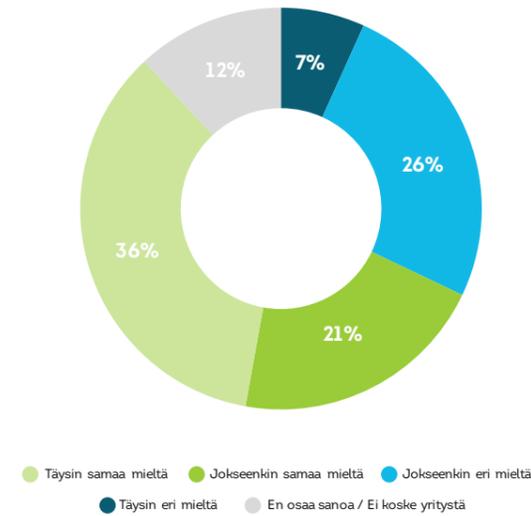
In our survey for corporate decision-makers we asked how companies are seeing the effects of servitisation in the Helsinki region.

More than half of the corporate deci-

sion-makers believe that servitisation will have a significant impact on the company's business in the coming years. Companies in the ICT and the health tech & life sciences sectors, in particular, believe that servitisation will have a strong impact on business operations, while in the smart & clean tech sector, the impact is viewed to be much less dramatic. The result was surprising, considering how much talk there has been in recent years about the changing earning models especially in the construction and manufacturing industries, as well as of the increasing importance of services in the operations of traditional industrial companies. It seems that very few of the smart & clean tech companies in the Helsinki region have really seized this opportunity.

The interviews highlighted the increasing importance of diverse backgrounds. Cities are filling with different people coming from elsewhere in Finland and all around the world. As a result, there has been in recent times

"SERVITISATION WILL HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON OUR COMPANY'S OPERATIONS OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS"



more and more talk about people wanting to shape their lives in a way that best suits them. In the interviewees' opinion, young adults are no longer adopting the old ways and habits, as there is an abundance of possibilities open to them. People want to use services that feel their own, as if personalised just for them. This is forcing service providers to rethink their offering. The experts we interviewed wanted to challenge business leaders to consider whether their services are diverse enough and interesting to different people.

For services to be attractive to a wide range of people, attention to diversity is important already when the services and products are being designed. The interviewees pointed out that it is easier to pay attention to human diversity if the designer team consists of different people. Our survey produced encouraging results in terms of how well diversity is taken into consideration in enterprises.

The corporate decision-makers in the Helsin-

Developing services requires adopting a more human-centred approach. Organisations should hire different people in order to ensure that diversity is taken into account at the design stage. Service development, in particular, should always involve people from diverse backgrounds: men, women, young, old, Finnish, from Helsinki and elsewhere.

- SAARA TAALAS

ki region have recognized the importance of diversity among the personnel, as up to 72% of the respondents say that their company actively seeks to recruit people of different genders, ages and cultural background. Close attention is paid to employee diversity especially in the health tech & life sciences and ICT companies' recruitment processes.

The interviewees bring up that one of the natural changes caused by urbanisation is the increase in housing demand and the consequent rise in prices. The more people move to the Helsinki region, the more homes are needed. The interviewees have observed with some concern the steady rise in housing prices in Helsinki, and were calling for quick

72%

OF CORPORATE DECISION-MAKERS SAY THAT THEIR COMPANY ACTIVELY SEEKS TO RECRUIT PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT GENDERS, AGES AND CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS

measures to curb the price increase. Housing prices should be at a level which would enable everyone to live fairly close to the job if he or she so wishes. If we cannot put a stop to the rise in housing prices, it will also significantly influence the development of the supply of services.

In our survey, we asked corporate decision-makers to share their views on how the high housing costs in the Helsinki region will affect future business.

The interviewees are not the only ones who are worried about the rise in housing costs: up to 42% of the corporate decision-makers

The growing demand for services means also an increased demand for providers and performers, and these people must be able to live in the city, near their workplaces. In order to satisfy the growing demand for services, we must ensure that all those who want to live in the city will be able to do so.

- SANNA SUVANTO-HARSAAE

are of the opinion that the high cost of housing will impair the availability of labour. The corporate decision-makers' concerns about the growing housing costs should be taken seriously: according to our survey, the third most important reason for the companies' belief that they will not find enough skilled labour in the future is the fact that the level of housing costs is too high in the capital region.

HOW DO YOU THINK THE **HIGH HOUSING COSTS** IN THE HELSINKI REGION WILL AFFECT YOUR COMPANY'S BUSINESS OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS?



Corporate decision-makers (N=227)



GROWTH AND INNOVATIVE SERVICES THROUGH DIVERSITY

SAARA TAALAS
PROFESSOR OF BUSINESS MODEL INNOVATION
LINNÆUS UNIVERSITY

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE MOST INFLUENTIAL DRIVERS THAT WILL AFFECT BUSINESSES AND WORK HERE IN HELSINKI OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS?

In my work, I look at things from the perspective of everyday change. Cities play a major role in this, because the majority of Finns live in cities nowadays. In the past, we knew what to aspire for in life by the experience of others. Today, most of us want to lead a satisfying life that represents our personality, and for many people the city offers the best setting for achieving this. Urbanisation has been a growing trend for years, also at an international level. Jobs and education centre around cities, and the urban lifestyle seems to have potential for financial and market growth, but also great challenges that are related to sustainability and high costs.

Helsinki has become a trendy congress, event and tourist destination, alongside the more classic Nordic cities Stockholm and Copenhagen. Helsinki has a profile as the window to Scandinavia, which has an effect on the visibility of the city. Increased visibility and appeal give rise to international business potential, but also higher expectations. We must strive to produce services that are far better than "good enough".

One element of the Nordic trend is the role of Helsinki as a communications brand. Helsinki is more than a place of residence; it is a city that affects people's emotions through media also beyond its borders. The media represent Helsinki as modern, human-centred, elegant, easy-to-approach, clean, straightforward, everyday, fashionable and unique. These are also the typical building blocks of the successful Nordic trend.

WHICH SECTORS AND COMPANIES DO YOU THINK WILL SUCCEED AND GROW BECAUSE OF THESE CHANGES?

In my view, finance is a sector that has already adopted a more service-centred logic. New businesses will definitely spring up in the field of digital services, but also in sectors such as renovation and trade. I think this potential has been neglected in discussions on new key sectors.

In my opinion, the everyday perspective, which I mentioned earlier, will also reflect on businesses. Developing services requires adopting a more human-centred approach – who are the residents of the capital region and what are their hopes and wishes. This question should be the foundation of all service design, and I think also public services will have to answer it in the future.

There are also potential threats facing services, and we should be able to avoid these. One of the threats is the limited area of the Helsinki cape; it is getting crammed in central Helsinki. And the rise in apartment prices in Helsinki is quite astounding.

ing. Helsinki might not live in a bubble, but it is certainly has its own bottlenecks. The growth of Helsinki will be limited by rising housing costs; we're not far from a situation when people can no longer afford to live here.

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THESE DRIVERS OF CHANGE, DO YOU THINK THE HELSINKI REGION HAS ENOUGH RELEVANT EXPERTISE TO MEET FUTURE DEMANDS?

Shortage of employees is a major threat in the capital region, and this threat is, of course, linked to immigration. In Sweden, for example, 20-30,000 entrepreneurs retire every year, and the need for immigrants who will fill the gap is immense. This is something that Helsinki should think about, because many entrepreneurs retire in the region every year. Actually, this need will become acute over the next decade.

Another threat is brain drain. For several years, many young Finnish talents have moved abroad for better employment opportunities, and the recent cuts from universities have encouraged several researchers to move abroad. The question is, to what extent does this brain drain affect the Helsinki region. If the economic situation starts to look more positive, returning migrants will play a major role. Will we be able to attract the Finns who moved abroad back to Finland, and are we even trying to? Finns follow the international triumph of young ice hockey players with great enthusiasm, but what about the careers and success stories of other Finnish talents? Many Finns work in interesting, leading roles in global organisations. We talk about our young talents a lot, but also more experienced talents with proven international skills are needed.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SAY TO LOCAL BUSINESS EXECUTIVES; DO YOU THINK FINNISH COMPANIES ARE EXPLOITING THE POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH?

Services will become more important, and companies can gain competitive advantage by paying attention to diversity in their service development. Women are responsible for the majority of daily purchase decisions. For some reason, many companies seem to ignore this, and women have not been duly considered in, for instance, the digitalisation of services and products. Maybe this is due to the prevailing male majority in the industry; for example, only 3.5% of the developers working in Silicon Valley are female. Women are, of course, only one of the many groups service and product developers should pay more attention to. Helsinki has a lot to offer in terms of diversity. Paying attention to diversity means a wider target group for products and services. Organisations should hire different people in order to ensure that diversity is taken into account at the design stage. Service development, in particular, should always involve men, women, young, old, Finnish, Helsinki-born and people from diverse backgrounds.

4

MEGATREND: CLIMATE CHANGE

The Helsinki metropolitan area has exceptionally good opportunities to be a pioneer in developing and testing sustainable services.

- KAISA HIETALA

The climate change has forced companies and public authorities to consider alternative ways to create growth. The views expressed in the interviews on the challenges and opportunities of climate change were somewhat divided. On the one hand, some of those interviewed believed strongly that the Helsinki region will provide a particularly good environment for developing and testing sustainable services. Some of the interviewees, on the other hand, were rather pessimistic about the notion that the revolutionary clean tech breakthrough will occur at a company operating in the Helsinki region. Many saw the 10-year timescale as too short and that, by 2026, we will not have taken significant steps in solving the climate change problem in the Helsinki region, Finland or globally.

However, many interviewees shared a view that Finnish companies are increasingly paying attention to sustainable development. In the past, businesses regarded environmental protection largely as a cost element, and the availability and price of energy and raw materials, as well as the increasingly stringent environmental standards created challenges for businesses. Today, however, companies

are also seeing business opportunities in environmental protection, which has facilitated growth in the environmental business sector. Transport innovations, energy efficiency and circular economy are among the areas where the interviewees see significant potential for business.

In our survey we asked companies in the Helsinki region to list the areas with the best business opportunities in the field of environmental business. In the corporate decision-makers' view, the best business opportunities were to be found in energy-efficiency solutions and in energy production, whereas urban infrastructure, measurements and consulting were considered less optimal in this respect.

Half of the leaders of smart & clean tech companies in the Helsinki region felt that energy efficiency in industry, construction and services will create significant new business opportunities for the company over the next 10 years. Forty per cent of respondents believe that energy production and renewable energy will create opportunities for their business by 2026. Water management (24%), as well

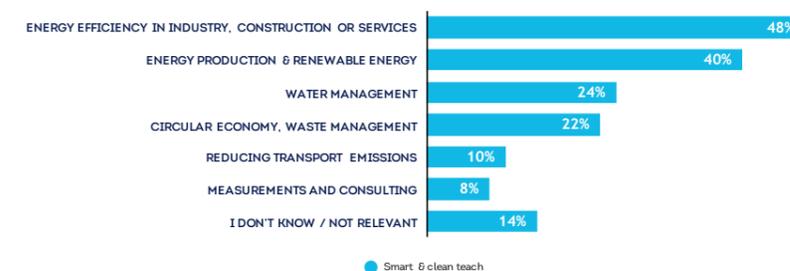
as circular economy and waste management (22%) are among the sectors in which business leaders see opportunities.

New innovations cannot emerge without conditions that are conducive to the development of innovations. Finland invests strongly in the development of a culture of experimentation and one of the Finnish Government's top priorities is the introduction of a culture of experimentation. The experts interviewed by us believe that, thanks to strong social support and a highly educated population, Finland has excellent chances to build a culture of experimentation. In addition, the infrastructure in Finland and in the Helsinki region can be further developed, as the cities have not yet been fully built. Finland's small size is seen as an advantage in promoting a culture of experimentation. The interviewees also emphasised the excellent and close co-operation between the various stakeholders in Finland, which enables the development and testing

of new prototypes. According to the experts interviewed, the conditions for piloting innovations are good, a view that is shared by the corporate decision-makers who responded to our survey.

Many of the corporate decision-makers who responded consider the Helsinki region to be currently very attractive as a piloting platform (38%). On the other hand, many feel that the region has potential as a piloting platform, but the conditions for piloting need to be improved (28%). In the interviews, the importance of a culture of experimentation and diverse networks of co-operation was highlighted from the perspective of both environmental business and health technology. In the survey, no differences were seen between the various sectors, but concept piloting in the Helsinki region is seen as an interesting proposition in the ICT sector, health tech & life sciences sector, as well as in the smart & clean tech sector.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ENVIRONMENTAL BUSINESS AREAS WILL CREATE SIGNIFICANT NEW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR COMPANY OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS?



FROM YOUR COMPANY'S POINT OF VIEW, HOW DO YOU SEE THE HELSINKI REGION AS A BUSINESS PILOTING PLATFORM?





HELSINKI AS A LABORATORY FOR GLOBAL METROPOLISES

KAISA HIETALA
EVP, RENEWABLE PRODUCTS
NESTE OIL

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE MOST INFLUENTIAL DRIVERS THAT WILL AFFECT BUSINESSES AND WORK HERE IN HELSINKI OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS?

For me, the most natural perspective into the future is that of the circular economy and the new ways of improving energy efficiency in the world's metropolises. The phenomenon driving this change is, of course, climate change. Another trend that increases the need for high-quality, sustainable services is the influx of people to cities. In my opinion, the Helsinki metropolitan area has exceptionally good opportunities to be a pioneer in developing and testing sustainable services.

WHICH SECTORS AND COMPANIES DO YOU THINK WILL SUCCEED AND GROW BECAUSE OF THESE CHANGES?

We should be able to create a sustainable financial foundation and foster growth while securing a good, viable living environment for future generations. The attention is slowly shifting to seeing environmental protection as business. This is the only way to ensure that Helsinki becomes one of the global metropolises of the next century. How to get more out of less?

The Helsinki metropolitan area can serve as a laboratory or a pilot for other world cities. Being small works to our advantage. We also have existing infrastructure which we can still develop, compared to, for example, metropolises like Los Angeles, New York and Singapore that have no buildable area left. I think Helsinki has great potential for closed-circle pilot projects in tightly regulated areas with strict security demands. A good example of this is the utilisation of leftover food, which is governed by strict hygiene requirements. The pilot projects should have clear responsibilities, limits and procedures. They would allow us to develop our thoughts into ideas and ideas into new business.

In public transport, for instance, we could experiment with a fully new model that relies heavily on digitalisation. New ways of powering vehicles, such as electricity and biofuels, also offer new opportunities in the field of public transport. Why don't we allow people, services and goods to move with a clear conscience? Another area in which Finland could lead the way globally is creating new products out of waste.

HOW DO THESE MEGATRENDS AFFECT EMPLOYMENT AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS? WHAT KINDS OF NEW WORK DO YOU THINK THESE MEGATRENDS WILL BRING?

Working in an international network requires paying attention to leadership and the development of work communities.

When the work community is international and fragmented, the leaders must assume a new approach to leadership; it is not always possible to meet face-to-face, but people will interact with each other using different channels.

Telework and remote management force us to think how to foster team spirit and make everyone work for the same goal when we're not working in the same place. These questions will become more and more important in the future.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SAY TO LOCAL BUSINESS EXECUTIVES, DO YOU THINK FINNISH COMPANIES ARE EXPLOITING THE POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH?

I think businesses should move away from a Finland-centred approach and look at their operations from a global perspective. I do not think creating solutions and models only for the Finnish context is a sustainable business choice. Companies should also ask themselves "What should we change in order to export our products and services?" This is not possible if the business is designed purely for the Finnish market. This is also my message to politicians: let's not shut ourselves in.

Finland has many operators that help SMEs to find partners from abroad, and we should use their services more. Companies should be curious and explore the possibilities beyond our national borders.

HAVE OUR DECISION-MAKERS UNDERSTOOD THE EFFECTS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THESE DRIVERS AND THEIR OWN ROLE IN TACKLING THEM? WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SAY TO POLITICIANS?

Courage, courage! Try nothing, gain nothing. Courage for controlled risk-taking and consistent decisions, even if all of the decisions might not please everybody. The only way to gain something new is to let go of something old.

Innovation can also mean finding just the right solution to our problem from abroad. Isn't it more important to find a suitable, sustainable solution that serves the needs of the Helsinki metropolitan area than to settle for the second best only because it is Finnish? Increasing efficiency frees resources for something else and enables producing added value elsewhere.

5

MEGATREND: DIGITALISATION

It is not only the ICT sector that benefits from digitalisation, but digitalisation combined with anything is the key to global success. The biggest revolutions of digitalisation will take place in the traditional industries.

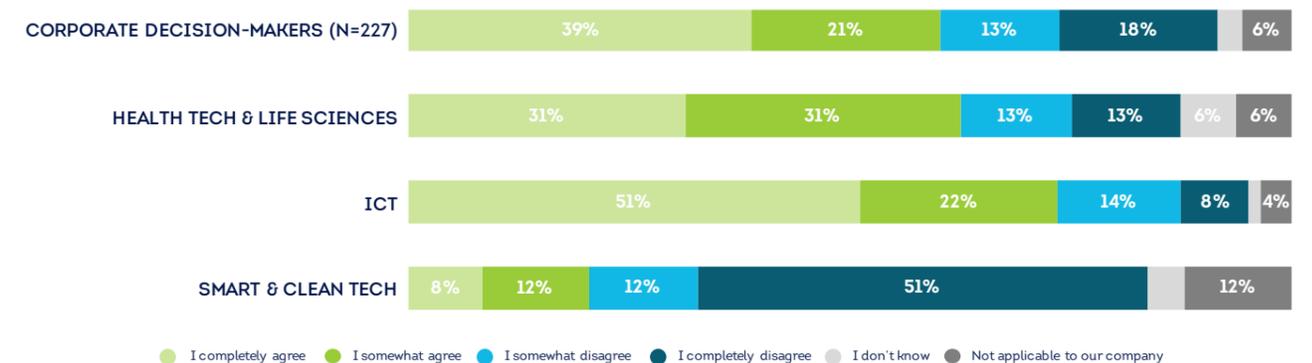
- JAN VAPAAVUORI

The interviewees were in agreement that the digitalisation of services will affect the business community broadly and inevitably. Some of the interviewees further emphasised that the biggest upheavals will be seen in the traditional sectors, where digital solutions have previously had a more limited role. Examples of traditional industries or services where digitalisation is expected to bring significant benefits include transport, tourism, forestry and care for the elderly, to name a few. In

these fields, digital solutions will enable completely new types of user-centric services.

Businesses operating in the Helsinki region also see the digitalisation of services as a major opportunity. The vast majority (60%) of the corporate decision-makers who responded to the survey sees that the digitalisation of services brings business opportunities to their companies.

"THE DIGITALISATION OF SERVICES CREATES SIGNIFICANT NEW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR COMPANY"





IN 2026, WE WILL NEED EXPERTS IN DATA ANALYTICS, AI AND MACHINE LEARNING

MATTI E. LEHTONEN
GENERAL MANAGER
GE HEALTHCARE FINLAND

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE MOST INFLUENTIAL DRIVERS THAT WILL AFFECT BUSINESSES AND WORK HERE IN HELSINKI OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS?

Digitalisation and data could become major competitive advantages for Finland and the Helsinki region in particular over the next decade. Digitalisation is definitely changing our business operations, and I believe it will open up immense opportunities for new business development.

Close cooperation and strong networks make Finland and the Helsinki region unique. GE Healthcare cooperates closely, for example, with the Hospital District of Helsinki and Uusimaa (HUS), VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland and local universities. The partners are motivated and distances between the partners are short, which paves the way for smooth cooperation. For example, our collaborative pilots with HUS have been extremely fruitful. I think these kinds of product and concept pilots should be promoted on a larger scale to allow companies in the field to find hospital partners.

WHICH SECTORS AND COMPANIES DO YOU THINK WILL SUCCEED AND GROW BECAUSE OF THESE CHANGES?

If I were to choose, the focus would be on healthcare and environmental technologies. Finland is one of the global leaders in these sectors, and we still have a lot to give. Finland has robust expertise in data communications in the field of healthcare solutions, and we are top of the class in wireless solutions.

This is a small country, so we should use our resources wisely. We should think about our education profile and the allocation of state aid. Do we need so many all-rounder universities? It is not enough to be fairly good in everything, we should be the best in something. Unfortunately, this cannot be achieved without making some sacrifices.

If we think about the digitalisation of health technology, the process can be divided into phases. Firstly, we need to produce the data by some means. This phase involves using sensor technology and reading and converting biosignals. After this, the data are transferred to cloud-based environments for analysis. The location of the cloud is not important here, but the data analytics phase offers ample opportunities for Finnish experts. At the end of the process, the results of the analysis are applied to healthcare in order to improve the outcomes of care.

HOW DO THESE MEGATRENDS AFFECT EMPLOYMENT AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS? WHAT KINDS OF NEW WORK DO YOU THINK THESE MEGATRENDS WILL BRING?

Routine tasks are being automated in Finland, just like everywhere else, but someone still needs to manufacture the machines. The spinning jenny and the steam engine were supposed to take our jobs, but look what happened. Jobs were not lost, but they changed. I think the pressure for efficiency and competitiveness will increase, but this will not necessarily mean fewer jobs, because the volumes will also increase.

In the future, we should not train people to work in a specific profession, but equip them with diverse and flexible learning skills. The experts of tomorrow should be comfortable with taking a new direction in working life and changing jobs. Finland needs to find its niche as a country, but we also need highly specialised individuals. Versatility and creativity will become notable assets in the future.

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THESE DRIVERS OF CHANGE, DO YOU THINK THE HELSINKI REGION HAS ENOUGH RELEVANT EXPERTISE TO MEET FUTURE DEMANDS?

Our company has grown strongly in Finland. We have been able to find competent personnel so far, but Finland must make wise decisions in education and set its priorities in order to secure the availability of relevant expertise also in ten years' time. In 2026, we will need even more experts who specialise in data analytics and have experience in AI and machine learning.

And do all of these experts need to be Finnish? In my opinion, we should keep our borders open and create an atmosphere and an environment that attracts international experts to Finland. Helsinki has become more welcoming and appealing since the early 1980s when I moved away. If this positive development continues, we will be able to attract many more international top experts to Finland.

Most opportunities are identified in the ICT sector, where three out of four corporate decision-makers think that the digitalisation of services will create new growth opportunities for their business. Also in the health tech & life sciences sector, a clear majority (62%) of respondents believes that the digitalisation of services will create new business opportunities. Surprisingly, only one in five corporate decision-makers in smart & clean

“Digitalisation and data will become major competitive advantages for Finland and the Helsinki region in particular over the next decade.”
- MATTI E. LEHTONEN

tech businesses thinks that the digitalisation of services will create significant business opportunities for their company, and 50% is strongly of the view that the digitalisation of services will not create new opportunities for their company. It seems that the view expressed in the interviews that digitalisation will cause the most disruption in the more traditional sectors, has not yet come true in the Helsinki region.

In their answers, the experts interviewed highlighted that digitalisation and globalisation are said to feed each other, and the one megatrend accelerates the other. This notion is supported by the results of the survey. Of the corporate decision-makers at companies operating in a purely domestic market, only



23% see that digitalisation will bring about significant business opportunities while as much as a third sees that the digitalisation of services will not create new business opportunities for the company. At companies operating mainly in the international market, up to 61% of the executives believe that the digitalisation of services will bring about significant business opportunities and only 6% of respondents do not see new business opportunities in the digitalisation of services. It



seems that companies that have seized the opportunities brought about by globalisation, are also more eager to seize the opportunities created by digitalisation.

Some interviewees emphasised that in the increasingly fierce global competition it is important to ensure that digitalisation and data services will mean a competitive advantage for Finland also in the future.

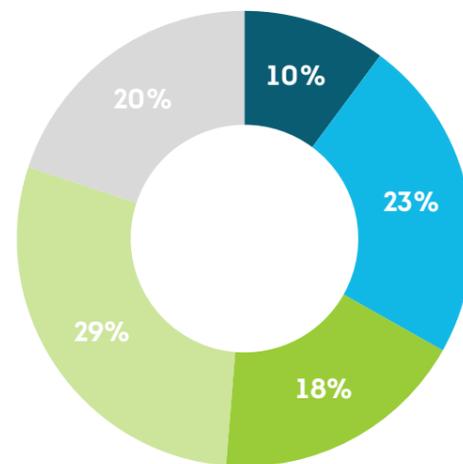
Use of health care data is made easier in Estonia than in the rest of Europe and we are seeing an eHealth start up ecosystem developing here.

- TAAVI KOTKA

see that more than half (53%) of the companies in the health tech & life sciences sector consider it important for the success of the company that the public sector IT systems are always implemented with open interfaces. This result was to be expected, because the health tech & life sciences companies operate in strong interaction with the public health sector and the companies' business environment is dependent on the policy decisions concerning the future of health care.

Companies operating in the Helsinki region also see many opportunities in the utilisation of data. More than half of the corporate decision-makers in the health tech & life sciences and ICT sectors also call for the legislation to ensure transparency of public and private data. Among the smart & clean tech companies, only 12% feel that this is critical to business success.

"FOR THE SUCCESS OF OUR COMPANY IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE INFORMATION SYSTEMS ACQUIRED BY THE PUBLIC SECTOR ARE ALWAYS IMPLEMENTED WITH OPEN INTERFACES"



● I completely agree ● I somewhat agree ● I somewhat disagree ● I completely disagree ● I don't know / Not applicable

As highlighted by Taavi Kotka in his interview, Estonia is an excellent example of a country where the state has boldly seized the opportunities brought about by digitalisation. Estonia is the first country in the world to offer e-citizenship, which allows, among other things, setting up a business in Estonia without a physical presence. One of the competitive tools for attracting business is the transparency of health care data, which attracts health technology companies to the country.

Would public information systems with open interfaces or private and public data transparency create a competitive advantage for companies in the Helsinki region? In our survey, we studied corporate decision-makers' views on the subject: about half of the corporate decision-makers in the Helsinki region hold the view that, for commercial success, it is essential that the information systems acquired by the public sector are implemented with open interfaces. Naturally, the acquisition of public information systems is not relevant to all enterprises: one in five corporate decision-makers did not take a position on the question.

Looking at the result sector by sector, we can



COUNTRY AS A SERVICE

TAAVI KOTKA
GOVERNMENT CIO, DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL, ICT
MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND COMMUNICATIONS
ESTONIA

IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT IS THE GREATEST MEGATREND THAT WILL AFFECT BUSINESS AND JOBS IN THE HELSINKI REGION WITHIN THE NEXT TEN YEARS?

I believe the greatest change affecting business and work in the Helsinki region will be digitalization. Digitalization will be a big disruption especially for the government. I see great opportunities in "Country as a service", which refers to the way governments will be able to provide services for residents physically living in other countries. Estonia is the first country in the world offering e-residency, which means that you don't have to live in the country to use its services. As Estonia is also a better place to start a business than many other European countries, we can attract entrepreneurs from all over Europe to apply for e-residency and then set up their business in Estonia. The system benefits all parties: the country of origin still gets taxes and a new type of entrepreneurship is born.

For example, the use of health care data is made easier in Estonia than in the rest of Europe and we are seeing an eHealth startup ecosystem developing here. Different kinds of ecosystems will be emerging in the next ten years and Helsinki will find its niche. Finnish know-how in telecom services has always been high and I see a great opportunity in that area, for example.

WHAT LINES OF BUSINESS, INDUSTRIES OR EVEN SPECIFIC COMPANIES DO YOU THINK WILL PROSPER DUE TO DIGITALIZATION?

Overall, companies who keep on investing in R&D even through these economically difficult times will be in a better position in the future. Looking at the history of Finland and the Helsinki region, I would say that Finns have always been ahead in following new technologies. I believe that government technology companies, for example, have a good chance of being successful. Nordic countries are known for their efficiency and efficiency will become increasingly important in countries around the world. Governments are finding ways of collecting taxes in the most efficient way possible, for example. Nordic countries are ahead in developing and implementing automation in their governments and this provides a unique opportunity. Finland and Estonia have already shown with the ID-card system that solutions can be copied and developed in two countries.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO ENSURE THAT WE HAVE ENOUGH AND THE RIGHT KIND OF EXPERTISE REQUIRED TO EMBRACE THESE TRENDS IN THE HELSINKI REGION?

Digitalization is often said to destroy jobs, but I think jobs re-

lated with technology will be booming. Education plays an essential role in seizing the opportunities digitalization will create. Especially high school and secondary school levels are important in ensuring that there will be experts in the future. In small countries, it is extremely difficult to get your universities in the top lists, but I believe that, in specific fields, that's where you should aim. In Estonia, we are specialized in Cyber Security and people actually want to come here to study that.

HAS HELSINKI, TALLINN, STOCKHOLM OR COPENHAGEN SUCCEEDED PARTICULARLY WELL IN EMBRACING THE POSSIBILITIES? COULD WE LEARN SOMETHING FROM THE OTHER CAPITALS IN HELSINKI?

We all travel our own paths. Living quality is already high in all these cities. Yet, there is room for improvement in all of them. I would like to see all of them taking pride in good services for their residents and companies and still continuing to improve the environment for business.

Transportation is an important part of an efficient city and digitalization will have a great influence on it. I know some people envy the free public transportation in Tallinn and I personally envy the great bicycle roads in Copenhagen. But I don't know if Helsinki really needs to copy either of them.

In the Helsinki region I really envy the fact that companies, organizations and private persons invested 200 million euros in Aalto University. It shows that businesses in the Helsinki region and in Finland recognise the importance of science.

WHAT KIND OF MESSAGE WOULD YOU SEND TO BUSINESS EXECUTIVES AND POLICY MAKERS IN THE HELSINKI REGION?

Finnish startups are a great example of how companies will seize new opportunities and capitalize on new things. So, business executives, you are doing great! Demand more from your government.

In addition, I would just like to say that the government should aim to be more innovative and try new things. Policy makers, be more like your companies!

6

FUTURE PROFESSIONALS IN HELSINKI

We have more expertise in engineering than we know in Finland and, what is more, professional engineers' services are moderately priced here. Technical engineering fields are the arteries of Finland; we should not allow them to become clogged.

- SANNA SUVANTO-HARSAAE

The experts interviewed were asked to consider the strengths and weaknesses of Finnish know-how, and the verdict was fairly unanimous: Finland has strong expertise in technical and engineering fields, and we should cherish that expertise. Sales and marketing of products and services, on the other hand, is not so strong, and we should invest more to improve in that area. We know how to develop world-class solutions, but we do not know how to sell them. In the interviews, the poor sales skills of the Finns were blamed on the lack of internship and apprenticeship opportunities. Education lays the foundation for competence, but marketing and sales are often learned by doing. In the absence of large corporations known for their strong brands, we just do not have enough good places to learn.

What kind of competence needs do the corporate decision-makers in the Helsinki region see in the future? In the survey, the corporate decision-makers largely agree with the interviewees' views on the future needs.

In the opinion of corporate decision-makers, technological expertise is what is needed in their companies over the next ten years. Technological expertise is considered a key competence requirement in the health tech & life sciences, ICT and smart & clean tech fields. However, the importance of marketing and sales expertise is also widely recognised among corporate decision-makers, as up to 64% of them mentioned one or both as being knowledge areas that will be crucial to the company over the next few years.

The interviewees were concerned about the availability of skilled people in the future. They expressed their concern about brain drain and about whether we will be able to attract professionals back to Finland. As the employment situation is bad, it is understandable that top professionals and bright young people will look elsewhere—outside Finland—for more challenges and interesting work. The interviewees emphasise that we should find ways to turn the tide.

60%

OF CORPORATE DECISION-MAKERS SAY THAT **TECHNOLOGICAL SPECIALIST KNOW-HOW** WILL BE THE MOST IMPORTANT AREA OF EXPERTISE FOR THE COMPANY OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS

OF CORPORATE DECISION-MAKERS SEE **SALES KNOW-HOW** AS THE MOST IMPORTANT AREA OF EXPERTISE FOR THE COMPANY OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS

35%

29%

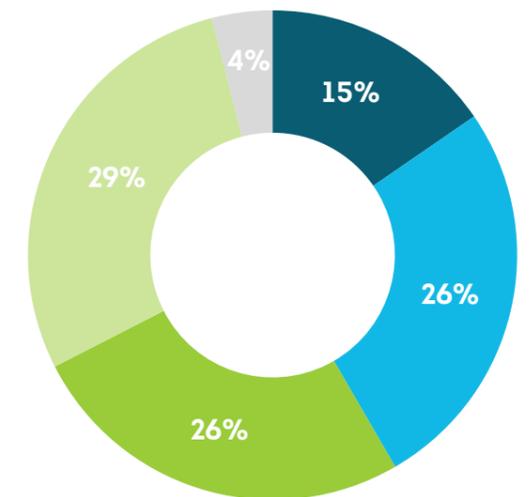
OF CORPORATE DECISION-MAKERS SEE **MARKETING KNOW-HOW** AS THE MOST IMPORTANT AREA OF EXPERTISE FOR THE COMPANY OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS

Corporate decision-makers were asked to share their views on the availability of skilled professionals in the Helsinki region over the next ten years. They share the concerns expressed by our expert interviewees in that they, too, think that finding competent people cannot be taken for granted in the future.

"BUSINESS GROWTH WILL BE LIMITED BY THE **LACK OF PROFESSIONALS** IN THE HELSINKI REGION OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS"

Brain drain is a threat. For several years, many young Finnish talents have moved abroad for better employment opportunities. Will we be able to attract the emigrated Finns back to Finland, and are we trying to?

- SAARA TAALAS



● I completely agree
 ● I somewhat agree
 ● I somewhat disagree
 ● I completely disagree
 ● I don't know / Not applicable

More than half (55%) of the corporate decision-makers think that business growth will be limited by the lack of professionals in the Helsinki region ten years from now. This concern is shared by the health tech & life sciences, ICT and smart & clean tech sectors alike. The main reason for the lack of experts in all areas is the same: the right kind of skills and knowledge are currently not being taught sufficiently, which means there will not be enough domestic supply.

“Who says the professionals have to be Finnish? In my opinion, we should keep our borders open and create an atmosphere and an environment that attracts international top professionals to Finland.”

- MATTI E. LEHTONEN

“Top professionals might be thinking about the bad weather, short summers, remote location and the somewhat reticent people. Yes, I know Finland is clean and safe and we have excellent school and healthcare systems, but it takes more than that these days. Helsinki should be multicultural, lively and busy in order to attract people from across the world.”

- JAN VAPAUVUORI

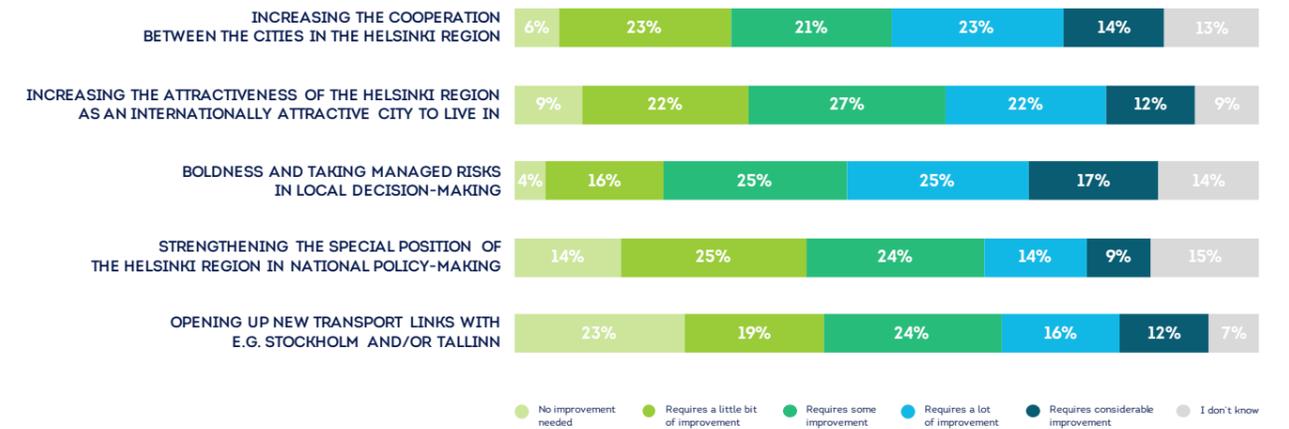
The interviewees point out that in addition to domestic experts, globalisation gives us an opportunity to look elsewhere for professionals. Globalisation makes the world smaller, opens borders and increases mobility. Companies are free to recruit from abroad, and when they do, the attractiveness of the Helsinki region from the perspective of employees will play an important part. Can a small country up in the North attract top professionals?

Our interviewees pointed out that in order to succeed we must be able to attract talented people from abroad, because domestic resources alone will not suffice in the future. Therefore, we must invest in the attractiveness of the Helsinki region in order to be able to compete with other countries for the best professionals. In the words of the technology and startup event Slush: “Nobody in their right mind would come to Helsinki in November. Well, except these 15,000 tech-heads.” We cannot change our weather and location, but we can invest in the attractiveness of the Helsinki region.

In our survey for corporate decision-makers we sought to find out the extent to which different aspects should be invested in to improve the vitality of the Helsinki region. Increasing the attractiveness of the Helsinki region as an internationally attractive city to live in was ranked by the corporate decision-makers in the Helsinki region as the third most important aspect to invest in to improve the vitality of the region.

According to corporate decision-makers, the most important area for development is

TO WHAT EXTENT SHOULD THE FOLLOWING AREAS BE INVESTED IN TO IMPROVE THE VITALITY OF THE HELSINKI REGION BY THE YEAR 2026?



“I would just like to say that the government should aim to be more innovative and try new things. Policy makers, be more like your companies!”

- TAAVI KOTKA

the ability to make bold decisions and take managed risks—up to 42% of respondents chose this aspect as an area for improvement. In several interviews, the experts expressed concern about the inertia of political decisions to be taken in the Helsinki region and at the national level. The interviewees felt that while the companies are promptly seizing the opportunities brought about by the megatrends, the legislation, taxation and planning too often create obstacles for this development.

Another aspect that was considered important was increasing the co-operation between the cities in the Helsinki region. Some of those interviewed felt that the municipali-

ties in the region often concentrate in mutual competition, while it would be more advantageous to co-operate. The importance of co-operation and smooth flow of transport were also emphasised with regard to the Helsinki region's competitiveness on an international scale.

The experts interviewed pointed out that Helsinki should be more active in utilising its proximity with Tallinn and Stockholm—through the development of transport links, for instance. Many of the corporate decision-makers are happy with the current situation, but more than one in four corporate decision-makers would like to see new transport links opened with Tallinn and Stockholm.

“There can be from zero to one global-scale growth hubs in Finland. If Helsinki were to become one, it would benefit the whole country.”

- JAN VAPAUVUORI



ATTRACTIVE HELSINKI

JAN VAPAAVUORI
VICE-PRESIDENT
THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK (EIB)

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE MOST INFLUENTIAL DRIVERS THAT WILL AFFECT BUSINESSES AND WORK HERE IN HELSINKI OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS?

The famous, global megatrends affect us also here in Helsinki. Globalisation and digitalisation, which are often interconnected, along with urbanisation, climate change and population ageing. In addition to these, I think individualism and differentiation are important drivers. Other big questions of our times concern, for instance, the future of Europe: will the EU hold together? And what will happen in Russia? The economy will become more service-intensive, and also domestic demand for services will increase. But those elements of business operations that are open to global competition will continue to face an even tighter competitive situation and extremely rapid changes. Globalisation means that, in the future, companies have to be the best in order to succeed internationally – being good is not enough any more.

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THESE DRIVERS OF CHANGE, DO YOU THINK THE HELSINKI REGION HAS ENOUGH RELEVANT EXPERTISE TO MEET FUTURE DEMANDS?

If we look at the most successful companies in and around Helsinki, the one thing they have in common is multiculturalism. It's dangerous to think that a company could succeed with purely Finnish resources. The competition for the best talents is becoming tougher between cities, and Helsinki must be able to attract international top talents. Unfortunately, cities like Stockholm and Copenhagen are ahead of us in this respect.

There are many ambitious experts who are willing to travel anywhere for a top job. For example, I am sure Supercell could attract the best of the best, even if they established an office in Vladivostok. But when it comes to other potential employers, international experts might be thinking about the bad weather, short summers, remote location and slightly grumpy people. Any of these could tip their scales. Yes, I know Finland is clean and safe and we have excellent school and healthcare systems, but it takes more than that these days. Helsinki should be multicultural, lively and busy in order to attract people from across the world. When people are thinking about moving to Helsinki, they want to know if the city has an opera and an interesting restaurant scene. We need something to make up for the weather, language and location.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SAY TO LOCAL BUSINESS EXECUTIVES; DO YOU THINK FINNISH COMPANIES ARE EXPLOITING THE POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH?

Growth equals internationalisation. Today's companies must be international from day one. The world is full of possibilities for talented individuals, and the competition for expert workforce is becoming tougher. We should not let ourselves think

that good salary is the only thing the employees are looking for, because there are also other decisive factors. The key to success is not expertise but creativity, and this is what distinguishes companies. Finnish companies have a tendency to play it safe, which can become an obstacle to growth. My message to business leaders is be creative, be bold, be a bit crazy.

HAVE OUR DECISION-MAKERS UNDERSTOOD THE EFFECTS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THESE DRIVERS AND THEIR OWN ROLE IN TACKLING THEM? WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SAY TO POLITICIANS?

Slowness, stiffness and excessive bureaucracy are major weaknesses in the Helsinki region. The construction around the Toölönlahti bay is finally about to start, after 20 years of planning. I would like to see more daring and faster processes. And I would like to see companionship and cooperation between the cities in the capital region. The cooperation should be strategic and cover also the difficult questions that require more effort before a shared understanding can be found.

There can be many Finnish companies that thrive globally, but there can be from zero to one thriving growth hubs in Finland. Supporting Helsinki in becoming this hub would benefit the whole country. Helsinki deserves special treatment compared to other Finnish cities due to its unique situation. I'm sure Helsinki can make it, but can it pull the rest of the country with it?

IN YOUR OPINION, HOW WELL HAS HELSINKI USED THE OPPORTUNITIES OF THESE MEGATRENDS, COMPARED TO OTHER SCANDINAVIAN CITIES?

The Nordic capitals have similar strengths, but Stockholm and Copenhagen are larger and better-known, also historically. Copenhagen also has a clearly advantageous location. But this is no zero-sum game. When a Nordic city gains visibility and attracts new companies to the north, we all benefit from it. Geography is Helsinki's key asset. Our strength lies in being located near St. Petersburg and Tallinn. Helsinki is a fascinating mix of the east and west, both in terms of its history, culture and architecture. Furthermore, we are living in interesting, dynamic times. Many new neighbourhoods are being built in Helsinki and Espoo, and there have been great projects in recent years, such as Aviapolis. A new urban culture is also gaining momentum.

I think one of the best projects in the Nordic countries from the point of view of global change is the twin cities of Copenhagen and Malmö and the Öresund bridge that connects them. The connection has benefitted both cities immensely. Tallinn and, to some extent, St. Petersburg, could be a similar amazing opportunity for Helsinki—with or without a tunnel! Networking is crucial in today's world, also between cities.



10 OBSERVATIONS OF THE FUTURE OF THE HELSINKI REGION

On the basis of this report, it can be summarised that the corporate decision-makers in the Helsinki region wish for the capital region's cities to have more courage and controlled risk-taking in decision-making – and more co-operation between them. The companies believe that digitalisation, urbanisation and globalisation will create new business opportunities in the region during the next ten years. Helsinki is already now seen as a relatively good platform and attractive location for business piloting. However, limited availability of talent and high living expenses are recognized as potential barriers for growth.

As part of the regional government reform, the role of the cities in realizing the vitality politics will be further emphasized. Actually, as a part of this reform the capital region's cities have an excellent opportunity to set a global standard on how the city's vitality can be developed together with the region's businesses. We compiled the following list of ten observations to the use of the organisations and individuals working with the region's development.

- 1 **SOLID TECHNOLOGICAL KNOW-HOW IS OUR STRENGTH, AND SALES AND MARKETING KNOW-HOW IS OUR WEAK POINT—THIS HAS NOT CHANGED DURING THE PAST 10 YEARS.**
- 2 **SOME COMPANIES EMBRACE GLOBALISATION, AND SOME ARE CLINGING TO THE DOMESTIC MARKET—THERE IS A LOT OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS POTENTIAL STILL TO BE UTILISED IN THE HELSINKI REGION.**
- 3 **A WELL-FUNCTIONING INFRASTRUCTURE, SMALL SIZE AND CLOSE NETWORKS OF CO-OPERATION ARE SEEN AS THE STRENGTHS OF THE HELSINKI REGION – THE HELSINKI REGION ALREADY OFFERS A FAIRLY ATTRACTIVE PILOTING PLATFORM FOR BUSINESSES.**
- 4 **CLEAN TECH IS STRONGLY INDUSTRY-LED: THE GREATEST POTENTIAL EXISTS IN ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND ENERGY PRODUCTION – WHERE ARE THE NEW INITIATIVES?**
- 5 **RISING HOUSING COSTS IN THE HELSINKI REGION ARE A THREAT TO THE GROWTH OF COMPANIES IN THE HELSINKI REGION.**
- 6 **WE ARE TOO LAX ABOUT THE DRAIN OF EXPERTS ABROAD.**
- 7 **URBANISATION AND DIGITALISATION ACCELERATE SERVICISATION – HE WHO BEST UNDERSTANDS CUSTOMERS' NEEDS WILL SUCCEED. ATTENTION TO DIVERSITY IN RECRUITMENT WILL BRING DIVERSE CUSTOMER INSIGHT AND UNDERSTANDING IN THE COMPANY.**
- 8 **IN RECENT DECADES, HELSINKI HAS BECOME A MORE ATTRACTIVE CITY TO LIVE IN, BUT THIS DEVELOPMENT MUST BE PURSUED: A VIBRANT AND MULTICULTURAL CITY WILL ATTRACT TOP PROFESSIONALS.**
- 9 **IN THE NORDIC REFERENCE GROUP, THE HELSINKI REGION'S TRUMP CARD, IN ADDITION TO HI-TECH EXPERTISE, IS ITS LOCATION BETWEEN THE EAST AND THE WEST—AN ASPECT THAT CAN BE UTILISED TO ATTRACT INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY HUBS TO THE REGION.**
- 10 **BOTH THE CORPORATE DECISION-MAKERS AND THE EXPERTS INTERVIEWED HOPE FOR BOLD SOLUTIONS FROM POLICY-MAKERS—AT THE RISK THAT NOT ALL WILL LIKE THE REFORMS.**

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