

Case study – Finland 2030
Government Report on
Future

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1 Introduction

This case study report was prepared as a supporting document for a study completed by Visionary Analytics to provide advice for the Lithuanian State Progress Council to develop the long strategic planning and implementation of the Lithuanian 2030 strategy. The case study was also presented and discussed in a seminar that was held on 9 October 2014. The case study has been prepared by dr. Mari Hjelt who worked as a lead author for Finnish Government future report: well-being through sustainable growth (referred also to as Finland 2030 report in this case study). The case study report and the conclusions are based on expert opinion and do not represent Finnish government opinions.

2 Scope and background of Finnish Government future reports

Since the beginning of 90's, Government future reports¹ have been the main tool in Finland for providing long term strategic vision to cover the gap between short term and long term political decision making. As is outlined in the overall evaluation of the procedure in 2007², the Government future report “contains the Government’s position on what a desirable future should be and what measures are required to achieve it, and represents an expression of its political will. By addressing long-term scenarios and related political choices, the report provides a basis for subsequent decisions by the Government and Parliament concerning long-term issues.”

The first Government future report was published in 1993 and the following in years 1996-97, 2001, 2004, 2009 and the latest, Government Report on the Future: well-being through sustainable growth³, in October 2013.

Following the existing procedure, the Government releases one future report per four year electoral period to the Parliament (see the overview of the procedure in Figure 1). Over the last rounds, the Government Programme has outlined the issues to be covered in the future report. For example, the future report 2004 focused on demographic change and aging

¹ One should note that the terminology to use “future report” or “foresight report” has altered over the years. The latest government future report is named to be “future” report to differentiate this political paper from the supporting “Foresight 2030” report (see <http://tulevaisuus.2030.fi/en/>). This case study report thus uses the term “future report” referring to the government reports on the future.

² Improving the Government Foresight Reporting Procedure – English Summary, Prime Minister Office publications 1/2007

³ Government Report on the Future: well-being through sustainable growth, Prime Minister’s Office Publications 20/2013

population, 2009 focused on the energy and climate change policy whereas the latest one focused on sustainable growth. The preparation of the future report has taken around two years. The Prime Minister’s Office has had the main responsibility over the preparation process which has always involved various stakeholders and experts as well as regional consultation. After the Government has submitted the future report to the Parliament, the Parliamentary Committee for the Future has prepared a statement on the report for submission to the Government for information and further action. The preparation of the statement has taken around one year and also involves stakeholder dialogue and discussion with other Parliamentary Committees. After submitting the answer-report the intention is that the existing Government has still time to react and implement recommended actions. The main impact however, will be seen in the actions of next Governments.

Dialogue on the future: Government - Parliament Future Reports

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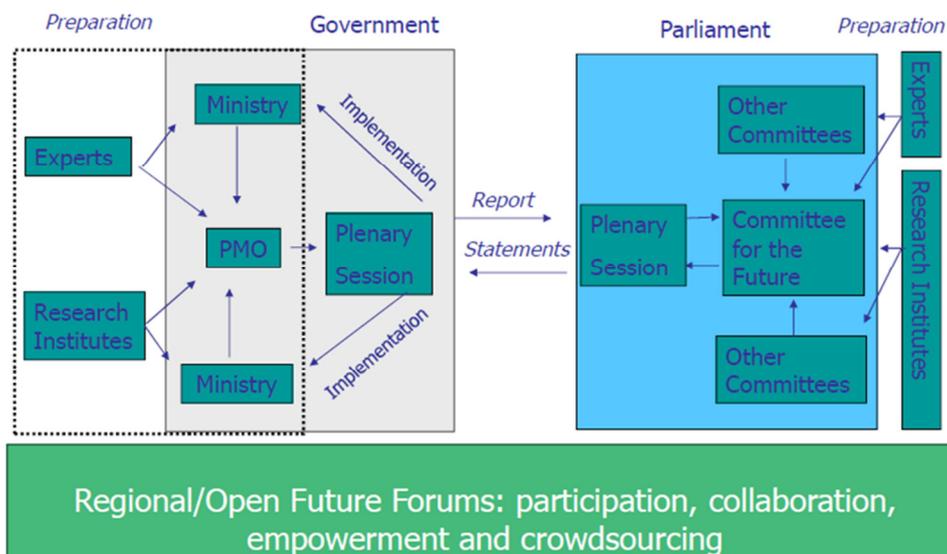


Figure 1: The procedure of Government – Parliament Future Reports (Source: Committee for the Future – Introduction slide set⁴)

Within this general common procedure there is great variation in details of preparing and implementing the Government future reports. Future report 2030 preparation differed in many ways from the preparation of the previous reports. Most notably, the preparation was much more extensive than earlier. There was also much more attention on a wider stakeholder participation over the preparation phase. The details of the process are described in Chapter 3.

⁴ <http://web.eduskunta.fi/Resource.phx/parliament/committees/future.htx?lng=en>

One should note that the main benefits from the Finnish future report process do not stem from the final report alone, but more from the process of having extensive stakeholder consultation and parliamentary discussions on the future issues over the period that covers almost the whole Governmental term. Finnish Government Future Reports have an important role in enhancing the policy learning and increasing the ownership and commitment towards the most critical future issues. On the other hand, the long preparation process and broad consultations mean that the future reports tend to be more vision papers, do not include detailed action plans and have weak implementation power. The process focuses on the preparation and dialogue rather than on the implementation. There are no mechanisms that would ensure that next Government takes into account the conclusions of the previous Government.

3 Finland 2030 report preparation

3.1 Scope of the future report

Finland has faced challenging economic situation over the last years. After the elections in 2011, the Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen's Government Programme outlined also the main content issues for the Government future report to focus on sustainable growth. The ministerial working group representing all six political parties of the Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen's Government was appointed in January 2012 to work with the future report. The ministerial working group had the responsibility to define in more detail the scope and content of the future report. Each Government has a lot of freedom to define their future report as they like and there is no common format or specifications for the content.

The process to define the content under the relatively broad title of sustainable growth was iterative. The ministerial working group first defined the topics for the external expert foresight phase (in March 2012) and then, based on the results from the foresight, decided the final themes for the future report (in April 2013). Regarding the process of preparing the future report, it was decided that the stakeholder involvement and expert consultation as well as the use of research knowledge should be more extensive than with the previous future reports. As a guideline, it was also decided that the report is not a detailed action plan, but more a vision paper of the shared Government's understanding of what Finland should take into account in future in political decision making and that the final future report should be concise and relatively short political statement paper. An additional challenge was that the Government Programme includes a large number of other strategies and action plans that were prepared or were ready at the same time as the future report was prepared. The future report should be in line with other Government strategies that are linked to the theme so that there would not be too much overlapping work and, more important, there would not be conflicting views. Examples of other Government strategy processes were the strategy for sustainable development, bioeconomy strategy, and public ICT strategy as well as a number of action plans and ideas from a number of working groups.

3.2 Process of preparing the report

The process to prepare the future report took two years from autumn 2011 to autumn 2013. The preparation had two phases and following that, the implementation of the report is a separate phase that is on-going. Two main phases of the preparation of the report were the “foresight” phase that produced ideas and scenarios for Finland in 2030 and the “strategy” phase when the ministerial working group focused on drawing the political Government’s conclusions. The preparation steps are described in more detail in Appendix 1 of the future report.

This was the first time when the preparation of the future report was divided clearly into two phases. The “foresight phase” was completed as an independent work of experts with extensive stakeholder consultation involving independent specialists and experts from research institutions, enterprises and non-governmental organizations. The foresight work was based on a panel approach where thematic panels led by two chairpersons representing academia and business produced the visions for the future. The work produced a separate foresight web-report that the ministerial working group used as an input for the actual future report. The ministerial working group was following the foresight work (for example through the process of regional events) but did not participate in writing of the foresight report. The “strategy phase” then was the work of the ministerial working group to produce the actual future report which is a political statement paper. The clear distinction between the expert visions and knowledge (foresight report) and political discussion (future report) has overall been a good choice.

The Prime Minister’s Office has the main responsibility over the future report preparation. At this time, the project and particularly the foresight phase was implemented in close collaboration between Tekes - the Finnish Funding Agency for Innovation, the Academy of Finland and Sitra – the Finnish Innovation Fund. The Ministry of Employment and the Economy also had a major role and participated closely in the preparation of the future report. These organizations had a joint consortium project with also a combined budget for the future project⁵. This project structure enabled a clear connection of the work to those organizations that have a lot of responsibility over the implementation of the future report.

Government future report projects have typically involved different regional consultations. At this time, the regional discussion events were organized before drafting the future report rather than afterwards for commenting and getting views on the results. This made it possible for a larger audience to contribute to the content of the future report before it was finalized. Seven regional discussion events were organised, one for each foresight theme (events were opened and chaired by ministers of the ministerial working group) and one cross-

⁵ Technically, the budget and tasks were divided among the participating organisations who managed their own parts of the budget, but the consortium planned and completed the work together in a project group consisting of all the organisations. One should also note that there were also multiple layers of steering groups for the overall project coordination.

cutting event (chaired by Prime Minister). The chairpersons responsible of each theme participated in preparing the content and discussion questions for each regional event. The work in the events was based on facilitated group discussions and each one of them followed a same structure containing for example panel discussions where the chief editors of regional newspapers were involved as moderators for the discussions. In total, over 1,000 people took part in the events – around 150 in each and it was also possible to participate in the events online (web-casting and twitter interaction). The results were also distributed over the 2030-website for public commenting.

In preparing the future report, this time a special attention was paid to get younger persons' views incorporated. Regional discussion events were particularly designed to collect views of younger people. They were designed and organized together with local schools and universities. For example the event in Helsinki opened by the Prime Minister's was facilitated by Helsinki university teacher students. One tool for incorporating views of younger people were the discussion sessions with the "Group of young people to think of EU"⁶ and NGOs representing younger people in March 2013.

At this time, the future project tested and used new internet tools for stakeholder consultation. Examples of the tools in this were the following:

- Throughout the process, website www.2030.fi was used to inform stakeholders on the progress and to get a platform for open communication. A group of bloggers were invited to contribute to the discussion. Twitter and facebook accounts were used particularly at the time of regional events to get on-line discussion. All regional events and other main events were videostreamed over the internet.
- The foresight phase report was published only as an interactive web-report. There is no paper copy of the report available (see tulevaisuus.2030.fi). Both the foresight report and the final future report were open for on-line commenting.
- Over different working steps, internet surveys were used targeted to different stakeholder groups to get feedback on the results.
- It is also a worth of noting that the final report was modified to an "easy to read" version targeted to people with reading difficulties, immigrants etc. This was done in cooperation with Finnish centre for Easy to read⁷.

⁶ <http://vnk.fi/ajankohtaista/tiedotteet/tiedote/en.jsp?oid=383365>

⁷ <http://papunet.net/selkokeskus/in-english/>

4 *Implementation and follow-up*

4.1 *Key stakeholders involved in the implementation*

4.1.1 *Parliament and political decision making*

Government submits the Future Report to the Parliament, to the Parliamentary Committee for the Future. The Committee for the Future is unique for Finland with the main task of developing futures policy dialogue with the Government and with society at large. The Committee evaluates and replies to the Government's reports, organizes and coordinates Technology Assessment (TA) of the Parliament and conducts research associated with futures studies, including their methodology⁸. The Committee for the Future was established 1993 at the time when also the first Government future report was published. Year 2000 the status of the Committee was established to be permanent. The main task of the the Committee for the Future is to provide the parliamentary response to the Government future report.

4.1.2 *Ministries*

Ministries have the main responsibility to take ahead the Government decisions. One should note that in Finland the ministries have also their own future report procedure which is partly linked also to Government future report procedure. The interministerial coordination takes place in the government working group for the coordination of research, foresight and assessment activities (the TEA Working Group⁹) which has an important role in taking ahead also the implementation of the future report.

4.1.3 *Broader groups of stakeholders*

The broad scope of “well-being through sustainable growth” means that also the group of stakeholders involved in the preparation of the report and in the implementation is large covering a variety of organisations from public and private sector. Over the short term, in addition to the ministries, the bodies involved in the preparation of the report have had an important role in implementing some of the future report visions. Particularly the RDI funding organizations Tekes and Academy of Finland have their role in taking ahead some of the actions. Sitra has a special role in the Finnish system as an independent fund directly under the Parliament and has means to take ahead many implementation actions independently.

⁸ <http://web.eduskunta.fi/Resource.phx/parliament/committees/future.htm?lng=en>

⁹ <http://vnk.fi/hankkeet/TEA/en.jsp>

4.2 Processes, tools and monitoring of implementation

The implementation activities of the future reports start already during the preparation of the report and continue after the report submission to the Parliament without interruption. Ministerial level processes and tools for implementation vary and the implementation processes also vary between the future reports (i.e., each of them has been unique and also the follow-up and implementation processes have varied). There is no unified process or formal mechanisms for detailed implementation and monitoring of the future reports at the detailed action level. Future report is part of Government Programme and thus the monitoring of the implementation follows the practices of monitoring the Government Programme implementation.

One should note that over the time period of preparing the latest future report, the Government has introduced new measures to follow the implementation of the Government Programme¹⁰. The Government Programme includes a large number of actions to be implemented. The implementation is closely followed and key parameters have been defined for the monitoring. Prime Minister Alexander Stubb's Government Programme following Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen's Government Programme has further opened the monitoring data of the implementation to be public for wider audience¹¹ (see also below the example of open data activities).

Following three actions are examples of the implementation actions of the Government Report on the Future: well-being through sustainable growth.

1. National foresight model

The mandate given to the ministerial working group to prepare and implement the Government Report on the Future included also a request to develop further national foresight and future activities. A separate working group and a project was launched in June 2013 for developing a national model as a part of the Future Report project. The aim was to "build a national foresight approach which would provide elements contributing to Finland's competitive edge and its role as a pioneer". The project addressed needs and objectives of foresight and assessed the current state of activities as well as explored the potential need to alter the division of responsibilities between various actors. The project results were summarized in a separate report¹² and the Prime Minister's Office has the responsibility to take the implementation ahead.

¹⁰ <http://valtioneuvosto.fi/toiminta/hallitusohjelman-seuranta/en.jsp>

¹¹ <http://valtioneuvosto.fi/ajankohtaista/tiedotteet/tiedote/fi.jsp?oid=424833>

¹² Cooperative and continuous foresight. A proposal for a national foresight approach, Prime Minister's Office Reports 2/2014.

2. Open data

Future Report emphasized the need in the future to be more open with information and the role of public sector to be proactive in disseminating, preparing and publicly discussing information. Over the preparation of the future report different means to share information openly and to have on-going dialogue were tested. After the report submission different activities have continued. One major event has been the Open Finland 2014 conference with its side events in September 2014 organized by the Prime Minister's Office in cooperation with other parties¹³. Various government organizations, private sector and NGOs have been working together to think how open information could be utilized. One concrete example was the action to make monitoring data of Government Programme's implementation to be publicly available on the Prime Minister's Office website. This opportunity was opened on the conference opening day.

3. Experimentation

One key theme of the future report has been the agility and experimentation – instead of rigid structures and slow processes there should be room for learning by doing and public private-people collaboration. As a part of the foresight phase, potential ideas for concrete experimentation were collected and after that different ideas have also been taken ahead as a part of interministerial collaboration. Sitra and Tekes have been active in taking the concrete projects ahead. At the moment, the experimental society activities have some sort of a “hype” in Finland and there are a lot of activities of which some are linked to the future report activities but also many which have more fed into the process of preparing the report over the last years.. The activities related to experimentation cover also a wide range of thinking and activities that will require more careful thinking at the policy level and also conceptual definitions. At the Government level, for example, the “policy experimentation” often refers to actions that require changes in legislation and are thus not easy and quick to implement whereas a local community level ideas may be implemented immediately if there just exists a right attitude. The experimentation was highlighted as a one main theme in the Parliamentary answer-report to the Government that requires further actions.

The main long term implementation and monitoring of the future report actions takes place, however, through the dialogue within Government and Parliament. The Committee for Future prepares the answer report on the future report and the Government needs to react to that and report on their actions. The answer report to Government Report on the Future: well-being through sustainable growth was published on 25 September 2014 and was discussed in the Parliament plenary session 1 October 2014. The future report was accepted and

¹³ <http://avoinsuomi2014.fi/>

the Parliament agrees with the statements in the report with the following orders to the Government (not official translation):

- The Government should prepare a science strategy for Finland
- The Government should speed up the implementation of the new national foresight model
- The Government should prepare a Government resolution for political commitment to implement experimentation and also implement a programme to support experimentation.
- The key themes for the next Government programme should be employment, renewal of working life and entrepreneurship, including also the views of early intervention to prevent social exclusion of younger persons.
- The Government should promote sustainable growth that also solves social and environmental problems.

Over the long run, the implementation of the Government future report takes place through the Government Programmes as the content of the future report often affects the preparation of the next Government Programme. In Finland, the last Government Programmes have been very influential and the future report is bridging some issues over the parliamentary periods. For example, the Future Report from 2009 on energy and climate policy conclusions can be seen in the Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen's Government Programme 2011. The impacts of Future Report 2013 on the following Governments can be seen after the next elections 2015. One should note that there has also been a lot of discussion on the role of the Government Programmes and that they have become too detailed. Prime Minister's Office own future report released 3 Oct 2014 for example summarized that shorter and more clearly prioritized Government Programmes are needed. The overall changes and developments in Finland related to long term strategic planning naturally also affect the role and follow-up actions related to the Government future reports.

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