

Statement by the Finnish Expert Panel for Sustainable Development on the progress of sustainable development in Finland, 7 March 2025

Finland has several assets, such as high-quality education and competence for promoting the sustainability transformation, which is the fundamental target of the UN's 2030 Agenda. However, Finland's socioeconomic wellbeing has not come to fruition without a heavy ecological debt. This calls for urgent action. Consequently, to foster the sustainability transformation in Finland, the Panel highlights the need for more credible national sustainability strategies, systems thinking, science-based decision-making and bold visions for possible sustainable futures as follows.

The nationally disorganised and fragmented execution of sustainability actions must be clarified and structured. The complex and unestablished coordination model for national sustainable development policy means that the sustainability transformation in Finland lacks a clear vision and leadership. Further, decision-makers have not drawn up distinct and determined sustainability action plans. Decision-makers must determine comprehensible thresholds for ecological and social sustainability according to which society needs to operate.

More systems thinking is needed to advance the sustainability transformation. This means that national sustainability strategies and policies must include both sector-specific and cross-sectoral sustainability assessments that pay attention to complex interdependencies in society. For instance, Finnish circular economy solutions are often linked to renewable energy solutions that further support national security of supply. If sustainability assessments are conducted only in a mechanistic way with regard to individual SDGs and without systems thinking between the goals, this will isolate sustainability actions from each other and lead to sub-solutions that do not genuinely contribute to the sustainability transformation.

The implementation of the sustainability transformation must rely more on science-based decision-making. Finland has a world-class sustainability science research community whose work makes it possible to understand the complexity of the sustainability transformation. The status and effectiveness of existing, well-functioning national structures and mechanisms for implementing scientific knowledge in political decision-making must be further secured in the future.

Finnish sustainability policies should be bold and ambitious. The sustainability transformation is a paradigm shift that challenges our current ways of living and thinking. Tangible, positively oriented visions of a sustainable future support and empower organisations and individuals to take the leap towards sustainability. It is important that all groups of our diverse and multilingual society are represented in the visions.