

# Leverage from the EU for Finnish environmental projects

European Union structural funds 2007–2013



European Union  
European Regional Development Fund  
European Social Fund

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Cover illustration: Comma Image oy

# The Empress's Park becomes the people's park

During the Crimean War in the 1850s the skies above the town of Kotka on the Gulf of Finland were ablaze when Fort Catherine, built by the Russian empress Catherine the Great, was burnt to the ground by an English-French fleet. Only the fort's church and a few smaller buildings survived the inferno. A century and a half later the same skies were again ablaze – but this time in a more peaceful context, with fireworks – to mark the opening of Katariinan Meripuisto, a new seaside park named after the Russian empress.

This part of Kotka has undergone many changes over the centuries. Recently it served as the location of an oil terminal for almost 70 years. When these facilities were no longer needed, and the area's former tenants had cleaned up the site, restoration work began to create a recreational area for local residents. This work was funded by the City of Kotka and the Southeast Finland Regional Environment Centre, with support from EU structural funds amounting to 121,000 euros. The total cost of creating a park in this area of some 20 hectares has been around a million euros.

The creation of the new park has been planned and overseen by the City of Kotka's parks and

gardens supervisor **Heikki Laaksonen**, with special construction work mainly done by the city's own builders. "The project has involved extensive landscaping work, with the formerly level foundations for oil tanks made into more natural environments," explains Laaksonen.

"We've also landscaped the rocks along the shoreline, created a pond and a stream with suitable plantings in their surroundings, and provided facilities for the local people who will use the park, from benches, lighting and litter bins to grills, playgrounds and fitness equipment. I've also planned the park so that many paths can be used by people with disabilities," he adds.

Laaksonen explains that the park will be managed as naturally as possible, enabling a wide range of wild plants to thrive. For many years the whole site had remained "off limits" due to the presence of the oil terminal. Local residents are delighted that the area has now been opened up for everyone to enjoy. Walkers and joggers can now lengthen their routes, ball games can be played in grassy areas, and picnickers can relish their al fresco fare in pleasant surroundings.





# Leverage from the EU for environmental projects

The European Union subsidises environmental projects in Finland from two structural funds: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF).

Support can be obtained from **the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** during the structural funds period 2007–2013 through five regional programmes for projects in Southern, Eastern, Western and Northern Finland, and the Åland Islands. These programmes are based on the specific development needs of each region. Each programme has its own strategy, actions of different kinds, funding resources, and measures of success.

Funds from the ERDF can be used, for instance, to support the development and adoption of environmentally favourable products and means of production in small and medium-sized enterprises, to subsidise investments in environmental protection and risk management, and to back measures related to climate change mitigation or adaptation. Other projects qualified for support include the restoration of natural or cultural environments in connection with local livelihoods, projects designed to boost nature tourism or cultural tourism, and measures to promote the use of renewable energy.

Funding from **the European Social Fund (ESF)** is divided into national and regional funding. Funds may be granted to support environmental training for people in working life, and for schemes that enhance or network environmental know-how, for instance. ESF funding may also be used for social innovations including new forms of employment and enterprise.

The types of activities that can be supported are described in more detail in programme-specific brochures and documents. EU project funding can be sought by enterprises, educational establishments, research institutions, municipalities, regional authorities and legally registered associations, or by combinations of such bodies.

Details of how and when to apply for funding can be found on the websites of the co-funding organisations listed at the end of this brochure. More information on EU structural funds programmes and application procedures is also available on the website <[www.rakenerahastot.fi](http://www.rakenerahastot.fi)>.



Photo: Kirsi Hellas, Uusimaa Regional Environment Centre

# Projects supported by the European Regional Development Fund

The programmes of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) aim to improve employment and increase the competitiveness and vitality of Europe's regions. Funding is used to help integrate environmental considerations into regional development and economic life, and to strengthen synergies between the environment, the economy and employment. The ERDF also supports projects designed to cope with future climate change and environmental risks, or to alleviate their impacts.

Examples of areas where the ERDF can support projects to improve the attractiveness of regions and the eco-competitiveness of businesses include:

- enhancement of natural, cultural or urban environments, and measures to increase the attractiveness of such areas
- improvements in material- and energy-efficiency
- environmental networking and the development of environmental business ideas
- enhancement and adoption of environmental technologies, and environmental risk management
- measures to promote nature tourism and cultural tourism
- restoration and protection of lakes and rivers
- the use of renewable energy and related research
- promotion of the sustainable use of natural resources, and enhancement of biodiversity
- prevention of risks related to climate change

## Using new technology to monitor runoff from landfill sites

State-of-the-art technology is now being used to monitor runoff from landfill sites in South Savo in eastern Finland, in the shape of wireless real-time monitoring devices developed by M-Motion Ltd. This represents a great step forward in terms of environmental protection from the earlier system, where samples were tested in laboratories only every three months.

The telemetric service providers M-Motion, established in 2003, successfully applied for support from EU structural funds for two pilot projects involving the monitoring of runoff from

landfills in Savonlinna and Mikkeli. The pilot projects were a great success, and have generated many potential customers. The trials also involved the South Savo Regional Environment Centre, the City of Savonlinna and Metsä-Sairila Oy.

The new telemetric technology has greatly increased the effectiveness of monitoring, enabling the prompt identification of environmental risks. Monitoring involves probes that continuously check levels of potentially harmful substances specified by the regional environment centre. The

# Projects supported by the European Social Fund

The European Social Fund (ESF) supports employment and the preconditions for job creation by boosting know-how and developing services that can promote employment. ESF funds can also be used to promote equality, to combat social exclusion, to improve working conditions and employees' welfare, or to enhance the functioning of labour markets.

Examples of areas where the ESF can support projects to enhance employment and labour markets include:

- organising environmental training to meet needs in working life
- enhancing environmental know-how
- networking
- anticipating future training needs in the environmental sector
- social innovations
- developing new forms of employment and activities in environmental work
- environmental work in the intermediate labour market
- promoting corporate social responsibility
- creating new environmental enterprises

client and other authorised parties can access a protected internet user interface, perhaps once a day, to check that limits are not exceeded.

“In fact it's not even necessary to make daily checks, as the system will immediately send an e-mail or text message if something is wrong,” says M-Motion's sales manager **Janne Korhonen**. “If the limits are exceeded, we can go straight down there and find out why. The clients will save on costs in the long run thanks to the new telemetric technology, since the need for expensive laboratory tests will be greatly reduced.”

M-Motion's Telemotion services can also be used for many other applications, for example, for monitoring water quality in lakes, rivers, canals and groundwater, and also air quality.





# Climate change on the horizon

Finland works in international climate policy as part of the European Union, whose target is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20 per cent from their 1990 levels by 2020. Finland is also committed under the UN climate convention to help mitigate climate change by protecting carbon stocks and supporting climatic research.

While actively striving to combat climate change, Finland has also drafted a national strategy for adaptation to climate change. This wide-ranging strategy examines the likely impacts of climate change in Finland, assesses capabilities to adapt to these impacts, and defines actions that will facilitate adaptation. Key areas for adaptation measures include transport and land use planning, flood protection, waste management and safeguarding the energy supply.

One of the fundamental planks of the EU's cohesion policy is the need for developments to be favourable in the context of climate change and the environment. EU structural funds may be used to support projects designed to mitigate climate change and facilitate adaptation. Finland has plenty of cutting edge know-

how and technologies to offer international markets, especially in the fields of environmental technologies and forestry. Projects related to bioenergy and energy efficiency are particularly important with regard to mitigating climate change.

In the funding of projects, assessments must be made of their impacts in the contexts of mitigating climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, or adapting to climate change. Climate-friendly projects include corporate investments or innovations that will improve energy efficiency or reduce the use of fossil fuels. Actions designed to promote mitigation and adaptation should be complementary.

For more information on climate change, see [www.environment.fi/climate](http://www.environment.fi/climate).



Photo: Timo Taurainen, Lapland Regional Environment Centre



## Focusing on the environment, co-operation and equality

Environmental impact assessments (EIA) play a vital role in projects eligible for EU funding. Finland's national legislation also requires that the environmental impacts of projects should be carefully evaluated. The best results in environmental terms are achieved when environmental issues are integrated into projects from the initial planning stage onwards.

Collaboration at different levels, between projects' organisers, the authorities, and stakeholder businesses and organisations, for instance, should be an important element of projects at every stage. Partnerships and co-operation are supported in both project planning and implementation.

Another criterion for EU support is the role of projects in promoting equality throughout society, including equality in terms of gender, age and other social groups. Gender equality must also be duly considered in project implementation according to Finland's national legislation.



# From ideas to projects, step by step

1. Think of a project idea that could benefit from support from the EU's structural funds.
2. Gather a group of interested people together who would like to take the idea further, including people who would be affected by such a project. Make sure that your idea has support from within your own organisation and from key partners.
3. Contact public funding bodies in your region to discuss your project idea. It is worth contacting such organisations already during the initial planning stage, to ensure that the project starts off in the right direction.
4. Look into the structural funds programmes and also find out about the strategies and implementation plans associated with regional programmes.
5. Make a detailed plan for your project, setting out objectives, describing actions, naming partners, allocating responsibility, and also estimating costs and implementation schedules.
6. Fill in the application form available through the EURA2007system ([www.eurazoo7.fi](http://www.eurazoo7.fi)), unless the project will also receive corporate funding from the Employment and Economic Development Centres, research and development financing from Tekes, or loans and guarantees from Finnvera, in which cases these organisations' own application forms and procedures should be used. Further information on such applications can be obtained from these organisations.
7. Find out about EU programmes and their objectives, application periods for funding and other terms and conditions on the website <[www.rakennerahastot.fi](http://www.rakennerahastot.fi)>. This site also has links to the websites of the relevant regional and public funding organisations. These organisations can also provide expert advice during the planning and start-up phases of projects.

# Lapland's unique cultural environments

Lapland's architectural heritage sites have been assessed over a four-year period with the help of funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). The project "Increasing awareness of Lapland's cultural environments" has aimed to update existing information about Lapland's architectural heritage and incorporate it into a geographical data system, while also increasing awareness of the region's unique cultural heritage.

The project has been administered by the Lapland Regional Environment Centre. To complement EU support, national funding was obtained from the Regional Environment Centre and the Lapland Employment and Economic Development Centre. The project's total budget was approximately 1.8 million euros. Over the four years of the project 90 people were gainfully employed, and inventories covered 4,787 sites with 10,434 buildings in all.

ESF funds were used to cover the training and employment costs of the project participants, while the ERDF provided funds related to the objectives of the project, related publicity work, archaeological work and the culture of the indigenous Sámi people.

Cultural sites were inventoried by selected local job-seekers who received special training for their new assignments. Inventory work was done in all of Lapland's municipalities. The project's findings have been compiled in a new data bank on Lapland's cultural environments.

A surprising number of older sites were found to have survived the widespread destruction that occurred

in the region during World War Two. The project planners had initially believed that the inventory would focus on buildings from the post-war reconstruction period. In some municipalities the large numbers of older buildings requiring inventory meant that buildings from the reconstruction era could not yet be extensively surveyed.

The total number of sites was also surprising. Most are privately owned farmsteads or homesteads, but many public buildings like schools were also surveyed. Most of the former school buildings are no longer used as schools, however. Some are used as village halls or for tourism, but the inventory compilers noted regretfully that many are now empty and unused.

Positive features of the project included fruitful co-operation between various stakeholders, which increased the project's impact. Stakeholders included the region's municipalities, the labour administration, the Regional Council of Lapland, the Sámi Parliament of Finland, the Giellagas Institute of Oulu University, the University of Lapland, provincial museums, the National Board of Antiquities and the Ministry of the Environment. These stakeholders have stressed that the project should not remain a one-off effort, and that its results should be exploited to make a difference in the longer term. Spin-off project applications have already been generated for cultural environments programmes, training, and concrete restoration and maintenance work on the valuable sites spotlighted in this pioneering project.



Photo: Tiina Elo, Lapland Regional Environment Centre

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# Other funding opportunities

Environmental projects may also obtain support from other EU programmes. For more information see the EU website <[www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu)>.

The EU's LIFE+ fund aims to promote the implementation of the community's environmental policies and legislation, and thus to encourage sustainable development. This fund is used to support projects focusing on issues including the preservation of biodiversity, climate change, and environment and health. More information about such funding (mostly in Finnish) is available from the Ministry of the Environment (see [www.ymparisto.fi/life](http://www.ymparisto.fi/life)) or from the European Commission website <[ec.europa.eu/environment/life/funding/lifeplus.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/funding/lifeplus.htm)>.

Developments in rural regions can be supported through the EU's Rural Development Programme and the closely related Leader initiative. For more information see the websites of Finland's national rural development programme ([www.maaseutu.fi](http://www.maaseutu.fi)), the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry ([www.mmm.fi](http://www.mmm.fi)), or the Employment and Economic Development Centres ([www.te-keskus.fi](http://www.te-keskus.fi)).

The Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (Tekes) also funds research and development projects through product development loans, for instance. Companies and public research units may participate in ongoing Tekes technology programmes through their own research and development projects. For more information see Tekes's website <[www.tekes.fi](http://www.tekes.fi)>.

The specialist financing company Finnvera may grant environmental loans to small and medium-sized enterprises to support voluntary environmental investments. Such projects should use best available techniques and result in significant environmental benefits. For more information see <[www.finnvera.fi](http://www.finnvera.fi)>.

Environmental cross-border co-operation may also be funded through the European Territorial Co-operation Objective programmes and the cross-border co-operation component of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI CBC). For more information see the website of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy ([www.tem.fi](http://www.tem.fi)).



## CO-FUNDERS

Finnvera Plc  
[www.finnvera.fi](http://www.finnvera.fi)

Regional Environment Centres  
[www.environment.fi](http://www.environment.fi)

State Provincial offices  
[www.laanhallitus.fi](http://www.laanhallitus.fi)

Ministry of Transport and Communications  
[www.lvm.fi](http://www.lvm.fi)

Regional Councils  
[www.reg.fi](http://www.reg.fi)

Ministry of Education  
[www.minedu.fi](http://www.minedu.fi)

Finnish National Board of Education  
[www.oph.fi](http://www.oph.fi)

Ministry of the Interior  
[www.intermin.fi](http://www.intermin.fi)

Road Districts  
[www.tiehallinto.fi](http://www.tiehallinto.fi)

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health  
[www.stm.fi](http://www.stm.fi)

Finnish Funding Agency for  
Technology and Innovation Tekes  
[www.tekes.fi](http://www.tekes.fi)

Ministry of Employment and the Economy  
[www.tem.fi](http://www.tem.fi)

Employment and Economic  
Development Centres  
[www.te-keskus.fi](http://www.te-keskus.fi)

Ministry of the Environment  
[www.environment.fi](http://www.environment.fi)

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