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Welcome speech

Cities have always been a combination of opportunities and problems. On the one hand, cities are vibrant places, filled with interesting education and job opportunities and various leisure time possibilities. On the other hand, cities are also filled with social inequality, poverty, inadequate housing conditions, traffic jams and pollutants. This combination of opportunities and problems confronts cities with challenges that can only be handled inclusive ways.

Cities are administrative organizations, but also platforms of open information and co-creation coordinators between citizen, companies and third sector. By mobilizing citizens and various groups of stakeholders, cities will find integrated and better approaches to combat problems and provide economic opportunities.

When it comes to building inclusive cities, higher level of government is only as effective as the local institutions it supports. It is important to ensure that local governments have the political backing and necessary tools and resources to make urban inclusion a reality.

In Finland Ministry of Finance have published its 4th National Open government Action plan. This action plan features commitments related to public participation in decision-making and trust building between individuals and civil society organizations. The Action plan has been compiled together with cities and municipalities and has actions for all levels of governance including local governance.

Open government Action plan does not act on its own. Openness and inclusiveness requires constant and determined work. We promote transparency in government activities, access to government information and services, and receptiveness of government to new ideas, requirements and needs. We also promote opportunities for individuals and civil society organizations to get involved in social development and improving the way society operates.

The Finnish Government have also started to plan the next National City strategy together with cities.

Examples on how cities put inclusion into practice in Finland (if needed to include)

Turku's pledge to the European Pillar of Social Rights

The City of Turku has stated that promoting participation and involving people is many times more a question of will than skills. City of Turku have invest efforts in making city a good place to live and succeed together.

From 2019 onward Turku has decided as a strategic objective to focus on promoting equal opportunities of young people, vulnerable groups and neighborhoods facing many social problems. To change the unequal situation Turku have started three main approaches: communication, cooperation and interaction between citizens, city officials and decision-makers. The city officials are provided tools, training and means of motivation to take people as part of the planning and decision-making. The city will find and test new operating models for narrowing the welfare gap and preventing social exclusion.

Carbon-neutral Helsinki 2035 action plan

Many cities want to be pioneers in openness and participatory practices. The Carbon Neutral Helsinki 2035 action plan could have been drafted as traditional strategy process. But Helsinki chose a different way to build it. The action plan was written from start to finish on a joint writing platform, which was accessible online. All the results were registered in an open web document and worked into actions plan in same document. Almost 300 people participated in the work.

More than half the world's population lives in cities, and this proportion will reach 70% by 2050. The concept of city has transformed and will transform even more in the coming decades. We have to ensure that tomorrow's cities provide opportunities for all.