

Pearls of the Home Region

Pirkan Helmi Strategy for the period 2014 - 2020



1. The focus area of the strategy

The Pirkan Helmi Strategy applies to the areas of Akaa, Pälkäne, Urjala and Valkeakoski as a whole. At the end of 2012 there were a total of 50,318 inhabitants in the area:

| | |
|-------------|--------------------|
| Akaa | 17,134 inhabitants |
| Pälkäne | 6,838 inhabitants |
| Urjala | 5,174 inhabitants |
| Valkeakoski | 21,172 inhabitants |

In addition to permanent residents, there are also a large number of leisure-time residents in the area. The majority of them come from outside the Pirkan Helmi area, and therefore the population base for the strategy is much greater than the above-mentioned 50,318 inhabitants. In addition to the 23,552 permanent household dwellings, there are 7,820 holiday homes in our area. Therefore, holiday homes constitute approximately one quarter of the entire housing stock in the area. A particularly large number of holiday homes (4,082 units) and holiday residents are found in Pälkäne, where the total number of holiday homes and their proportion of the municipality's housing stock is considered large even in national terms.

During the 2007–2013 programme period, Akaa, Urjala and Valkeakoski were engaged in the activities of Pirkan Helmi and Pälkäne was engaged in the activities of Pomoottori. Pälkäne has been a positive addition to the Pirkan Helmi area, although the area was already functioning well prior to that. The contribution of Pälkäne means that the significance of, for example, culture, tourism, specialized farming and the further processing of food will gain in importance in our development work, thereby diversifying our activities. A further noteworthy factor is the innovative and open-minded institutional culture that prevails in the former municipality of Luopioinen, which is now part of Pälkäne.

2. Analysis of the area

A number of nationally important transport routes pass through our area, such as highways 3, 9 and 12, as well as the main railway line and the Tampere-Turku railway link. Tampere-Pirkkala Airport is also nearby. In this sense, our location is excellent. Public transport connections leading out of the area (for example to Tampere or Helsinki) are good or satisfactory, depending on which part of the area is in question. However, the public transport for moving around within the area is largely poor. In this respect, the situation does not reflect the objective, as defined in the regional plan for 2040 for Pirkanmaa, of providing basic service level public transport between the municipal and regional centres. The importance of this issue will become even more pronounced if the concentration of services means that service points move further away from their users.

Population growth has been moderate in our area in the 2000s. Of the individual municipalities, all but Urjala have seen growth. When you look at the years 2000-2011 individually, you will find that demographic change in Akaa and in Urjala has occurred at a fairly steady pace, as described in Table 1: the population has increased in Akaa and decreased in Urjala. On the other hand, in Pälkäne and Valkeakoski population changes have been clearer over this period. Population growth in Pälkäne has halted and turned into a population decline over the last two years, and in Valkeakoski the slight decline in population has turned into positive population growth during the last four years of the period. When it comes to Valkeakoski, attention is drawn to the fact that during the years of these positive population changes, the reduction in jobs there has been considerably greater than in the other municipalities in the area. Explanatory factors for the positive population developments include at least the active, wide-ranging housing measures carried out by the city of Valkeakoski and the Housing Fair held in Valkeakoski in 2009. Valkeakoski has

therefore shown in practice that it is possible to influence population trends through measures of your own.

According to the current information, when you look at the population projections for 2030, the population trends in Akaa and Urjala would seem to continue in the same direction as during the previous decade, although at a somewhat slower pace. The projections for Pälkäne show once again a small change towards population growth. The positive population change in Valkeakoski would seem to be stabilizing into a moderate population growth.

Table 1. Populations of municipalities in 2001 and 2011 including forecast for 2030

| | Population 31.12.2001 | Population 31.12.2011 | Change % | Forecast yr 2030 | Change compared to yr 2011 % |
|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| Akaa | 16,022 | 17,091 | + 6.7 | 18,565 | +8.6 |
| Pälkäne | 6,652 | 6,882 | + 3.5 | 7,035 | +2.2 |
| Urjala | 5,612 | 5,246 | - 6.5 | 4,700 | -10.4 |
| Valkeakoski | 20,424 | 21,022 | + 2.9 | 23,316 | + 10.9 |

When examining self-sufficiency calculations, i.e. what the population development by year 2030 would be without migration, we can see that migration plays a major role in population changes. Akaa would be the only municipality there the population would increase without migration; in all of the others, the population would decline.

Looking at the dependency ratio (the ratio of children and seniors compared to the working age population), all of the municipalities in our area fall below the national average, as seen in Table 2. Looking at the forecasts for 2030, we can see that the ratio for Akaa and Valkeakoski is increasing at a considerably slower speed than in the nation as a whole, and therefore the ratio will be close to the national average. In Pälkäne and Urjala, the population dependency ratio will change unfavourably faster than the national average.

Table 2. Population self-sufficiency (the ratio of children and seniors compared to the working age population)

| | Population self-sufficiency yr 2011 | Population self- sufficiency yr 2030, forecast | Change yrs 2011-2030 |
|-------------|---|--|-------------------------|
| National | 52.9% | 71.2% | + 34.6% |
| Akaa | 58.7% | 74.0% | + 26.1% |
| Pälkäne | 68.1% | 93.3% | + 37.0% |
| Urjala | 66.0% | 91.3% | + 38.3% |
| Valkeakoski | 59.7% | 73.0% | + 22.3% |

In Table 3 we see the employment offerings in different municipalities by sector and the self-sufficiency ratio of each municipality. During the past decades, the number of manufacturing jobs has decreased considerably, due to the shutting down or decrease in operations of large companies in Akaa (especially in Viiala and Kymäkoski) and Valkeakoski. During the last year, Urjala has suffered a similar fate. The lost manufacturing jobs are mainly in industries with predominantly male employees, so the change in the economic structure is different according to gender. In Pälkäne, the significance of manufacturing has always been smaller than in other municipalities. Specialized farming – favoured by the local microclimate – and small-scale food processing are Pälkäne's specialties. Laitikkalan Makukylä, a prime example of the area's specialty, is a co-operation between small suppliers in food processing.

As a geographical working area, the **Pirkan Helmi area may be considered as a part of Tampere's 'second ring road'**. The area is more dependent on self-sufficiency of jobs compared to Vesilahti and the neighbouring municipalities of Tampere. This can be seen in the higher self-sufficiency figures compared to the neighbouring municipalities of Tampere and also the share of people working in the city of Tampere. In the surrounding municipalities of Tampere, approximately 40% of the working population work in Tampere compared to between 7% (Urjala) and 21% (Akaa). In addition, many people living in Urjala work in Forssa.

Table 3. Employment by sector 31.12.2010 and employment self-sufficiency 31.12.2010

| | Manufacturing jobs | Processing jobs | Service sector jobs | Self-sufficiency |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Akaa | 4.1% | 35.5% | 58.8% | 68.7% |
| Pälkäne | 14.8% | 22.9% | 60.0% | 80.4% |
| Urjala | 14.6% | 33.8% | 49.3% | 83.7% |
| Valkeakoski | 1.8% | 41.2% | 55.9% | 93.3% |

When considering peoples' wishes about quality of living, our area has good possibilities for fulfilling them. However, this will not happen by itself but needs active measures. In many surveys such wishes are for a single family house living in spacious and rural settings, a feeling of being part of a community and the **possibility to influence one's own surroundings. These factors should** be taken into consideration when trying to attract more inhabitants to the area, but they are also important for people already living here.

The future of service development is challenging. The need for services increases when the population ages. At the same time, the method of providing services is changing; for example, digitalization is widening and the network of service points is getting being scaled down. These changes call for various measures. Municipalities are the most important service providers, so the increased demand will prove difficult in the coming economic situation. In addition, the changing ways of offering services will be challenging in areas where there is an insufficient broadband Internet service or public transport.

According to the analysis of the Pirkan Helmi area, the internal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable living within commuting distance of Tampere • International Valkeakoski Campus in co-operation with other colleges • Plenty of cultural activities and operators • Strong third sector • Good quality educational opportunities and their established co-operation with associations • Excellent location and good connections to cities and larger communities | <p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependency ratio and ageing population are challenges especially in Pälkäne and Urjala • Notable drop in manufacturing jobs • No growth industry in the area • Weak economic situation of the municipalities • Broadband network is not sufficient for the use of digitalized services, business needs or remote working in all areas • Internal public transport is poor |
| <p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living may become the driving force of the area's development • Location, transport links and the growth of the Tampere economic area can further the development of new business | <p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population will decrease without positive migration • As a result of centralization, service points will become fewer and their use more difficult due to the poor public |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>ventures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong manufacturing legacy and know-how offer the groundwork for new businesses • Varied natural environment, vast lakes and lively cultural activities offer a good framework for developing nature, lake and cultural travel industry • Holiday homes creating diverse development • Development of speciality farming and food processing and farmhouse-direct sales utilizing the 'local food' trend | <p>transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing jobs continue to decrease and there will be no new jobs to replace them |
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3. Strategy and the indicators for its implementation

3.1. Strategy

In development work, a strong strategy alone is not enough; what it also needs is solid anticipation. In development work, the aspiration is always towards a better tomorrow, and so what is essential, alongside the manner of progress, is to identify the direction. Therefore, the future is of foremost importance with respect to the strategy.

In development work, **why** is the most important of all the questions. In connection with every financing measure, we must be able to answer the question: Why should this measure be funded from the perspective of the implementation of the strategy?

Ten themes have been raised during the strategy process, and it is from these that the strategy is 'woven'. These themes are, in alphabetical order: community, culture, co-operation, environment, entrepreneurship, experimentation, internationalism, services, tourism and youth. These themes have not been raised as different points of focus, because they are interlinked in many ways and also take diverse forms. For example, culture creates a sense of community and identity, tourism, and (for some) business, etc. The themes which have arisen are in part more like perspectives or development goals than actual points of focus for development. In particular, internationalism and experimentation are such themes. Therefore, the 'weaving' into points of focus has been done as a more extensive grouping based on an analysis of the region. In most of these points of focus, development work is carried out by means of both projects for the public good and supported by business subsidies.

The strategy implements the Rural Development Programme's Priorities 1 (Promotion of knowledge transfer and innovations in agriculture, forestry and rural areas) and 6 (Promotion of social inclusion, poverty reduction, and economic development in rural areas).

The strategy has four priorities which we in Pirkan Helmi call **pearls**:

- ❖ The Inhabitants' Pearl
- ❖ The Communities' and Identity Pearl
- ❖ The **Enterprises' Pearl**
- ❖ **The Life Experiences' Pearl**

❖ **The Inhabitants' Pearl**

The region's positive population trend presupposes a migration surplus. This can be realized by the area presenting itself as an attractive alternative region to live in. People particularly likely to move to live in this region include those who already have a significant bond with our region. These groups include young people originating from here, and who currently live elsewhere due to their studies or the early stages of their careers, people with second homes (holiday homes) in the

region, and those who commute between their current home (outside the region) and their place of work (within our region).

In addition to attractiveness, our region needs to be able to offer a high-quality setting for living. **Our offering must include a variety of housing options that take into account people's needs and services necessary for living.** Since these needs vary, the production of services must take into account matters such as the different life stages of people and the needs of people with disabilities and other special groups. Everyday security is another matter to be noted in the living environment, because it is the most basic of our needs.

The work done to promote the growth of the regional population is characterized most of all by its long-term objectives. The example set by Valkeakoski speaks of the effectiveness of this work.

Success in the Inhabitants' Pearl segment is pursued in the following ways:

- Making sure that young people originating from this region have such a positive image of the region that, after studying and 'earning their spurs', this region is their first choice when considering a more permanent home. This requires, for example, that young people still living in the region feel that they are active and influential members of their own region. Development measures defined and implemented by the young people themselves are an example of such activity.
- Offering numerous housing options for people moving here, including options clearly more spacious than urban settings. These options are being created, for example, by means of self-reliant village land-use plans.
- Helping the inhabitants to feel their living environment to be pleasant and secure, and one that takes into account environmental values. All this is achieved through measures, which people apply to develop their living environments as well as matters related to everyday security; these include environment, landscape and lake management plans, and the implementation and development of the security of the living environment in various ways.
- Despite the changes taking place in society, the regions offering good basic and leisure services. When offering these services, it is necessary to take into account the needs of different user groups. In part, the production of services requires new methods of implementation. These are developed through experimental and development projects and business subsidies.
- Developing the broadband networks necessary for e-services to be used, and for business activity and teleworking, carried out by funding so-called village network investments.

❖ The Communities' and Identity Pearl

A sense of community can be seen both as something to be aspired to, as well as a tool to be used in bringing about development. A sense of community in itself has been shown in many studies to be associated with positive effects. A sense of community can be seen as a 'glue' that binds people to their own region and being active there. It is also a means of achieving measures that are broad in scope. Thus, for example, voluntary work can be viewed both as an indicator of community feeling and a concrete means of achieving large-scale measures.

This sense of community has changed compared to the past. In part, it has been eroded and in part it has changed its form. Acting together has changed, for example, into project-based actions on matters that are perceived as being of personal importance. A significant proportion of collective activities are now taking place in social networks. The role of the sense of community in its various meanings will continue to be significant, and so efforts must be directed at preserving and strengthening it.

The problem with associations and other local actors is usually their small size. When acting alone, their resources are not always sufficient to carry out the necessary development measures or to organise major events, for example. Due to the effectiveness of development work and the development of events as well as of other activities, it is necessary to contribute to the enhancement of co-operation between local actors. Alongside making joint use of the resources, taking care of the operational capability of local actors also requires taking continuity into consideration. Therefore, for this reason as well, it is necessary to implement development measures with young people playing active roles in their implementation.

A sense of community and identity are powerfully linked to one another. Kylmäkoski is a fine example of this. Kylmäkoski is no longer a separate municipality, but following the implementation of several projects and in part also as a result of other community development measures, Kylmäkoski is strong as a community and its identity is strong.

Co-operation and a sense of community are created together through doing, and so it is necessary to create situations in which people are made to and can act together. This also strengthens the realisation of inclusion and local democracy, the democracy-of-doing in its purest form.

Success in the **Communities' and Identity Pearl** segment is striven for in the following ways:

- Creating and developing facilities and situations in which people meet one another.
- Creating and developing communal recreational facilities and other such settings.
- Supporting measures to strengthen local identity and culture.
- Supporting measures to promote co-operation between various associations and other local actors.
- Strengthening measures reinforcing the active involvement of young people.

❖ **The Enterprises' Pearl**

Support for **enterprises should be examined from the perspective of this region's development. As** the regional analysis shows, the region is heavily dependent on the jobs located here. Thus, one of the **preconditions for the region's positive population trend is that new jobs are created in the region.** On the other hand, the region's strengths, such as specialized cultivation, cultural activities, and industrial heritage, provide opportunities for creativity. Enterprises will from now on have more important roles in providing the services essential from the perspective of living in the region; especially when taking into account the challenges brought about by our ageing population and the weakening dependency ratio.

If enterprise development is carried out exclusively through business subsidies, the result will remain very local. This matter needs to be seen in a wider scope, as a regional viability policy. Then the objects of development must include a very diverse set of issues that are important to enterprises; for example, when they compete for skilled labour. The diversity of the vitality policy means that it can be seen as a team activity, and thus it can be said that **"the ability and willingness to engage in co-operation strengthen the capacity to respond to changes in the operating environment and to make use of new opportunities."** This is an important aspect of the implementation of our strategy.

Jenni Airaksinen has examined the vitality policy and broken it down into three levels:

- * General vitality policy maintaining the general preconditions for development
- * Focused vitality policy utilizing the strengths peculiar to the region
- * Experimental vitality policy seeking new and surprising development trends and supporting people's self-reliant efforts

The Pirkan Helmi Strategy focuses on the latter two levels of the vitality policy. This is logical because, on the one hand, the Leader activity can be seen as development taking place in the form of finely tuned measures and, on the other hand, innovation is one of the special features of the Leader activity. Of course, our activity is tangential to some extent to the general vitality policy,

e.g. in connection with the regional development focusing on learning.

The region and its enterprises need each other. The enterprises produce a significant part of the **region's services. On the other hand, demand from within the region is of primary importance for a** large proportion of the enterprises located in the region. In addition to the demand for final products, one must take into account the production chain, because it often happens that one **enterprise's product or service is the starting point for another enterprise's products or services.** Therefore, we need to strive towards making better use of the region's services and products.

Success in the Enterprises' Pearl segment is pursued in the following ways:

- Financing enterprises of one or a few persons:
 - which are about to start their operation
 - which are developing their operations with finely tuned measures aimed at eliminating operational bottlenecks, enabling more efficient or wider use of existing resources or providing the enterprise with a new line of production, a new product or other such expansion of operation alongside the current operations.
- Applying business subsidies and other measures within the Pirkan Helmi region of operation to bring about positive effects such as:
 - Improvement of the employment situation
 - New services or services of higher quality for inhabitants, enterprises or other players within the region
 - Enterprise activity making use of local raw materials, know-how or other such resources
 - **The region's enterprise structure becoming stronger and more diverse**
 - Operations having similar positive regional economic impacts
- Through funding measures, improving **enterprises' operational circumstances (e.g. entrepreneurial co-operation, vitality policy matters or enterprise know-how)** and thereby their potential to develop.
- Financing measures promoting the use of local products and services.

❖ **The Life Experiences' Pearl**

The region is home to numerous well-known events and travel destinations serving both the **region's inhabitants and tourists. They can be referred to as sources of life experiences, and they** include the following: Aitoon kirkastusjuhlat [a rock festival], Helkajuhla [a national heritage festival], Pentinkulman päivät [a literary festival], Valkeakosken työväen musiikkitapahtuma [Valkeakoski Workers' Music Festival], Sappeen laskettelukeskus [Sappee downhill skiing resort], Nuutajärven lasikylä [Nuutajärvi glassworks outlet], Mikkolan navetta [a cultural association with **exhibits and buildings**], **Visavuori [sculptor Emil Wikström's former home and atelier]**, **Rapolan Harju an [esker] within the Sääksmäki cultural environment, Pälkäneen rauniokirkko [church ruins] and Laipanmaan erämaa-alue [a wilderness area].**

All of the above events and travel destinations are based on nature or culture. These are among the strengths of the region. In addition to the staging of events, several of these destinations are accessible during only part of the year, and consequently the timewise expanding of activities is one of many issues to be addressed. In addition, the people behind the events and travel destinations are mostly few in number, and we also need to find 'broader shoulders' for them.

Alongside culture and nature, fitness activities and a variety of other forms of leisure activities are equally sources of life experiences. In their case, too, there is a wide range of development opportunities on offer, but 'narrowness of shoulders' needs to be taken into account when launching development efforts.

Success in the **Life Experiences' Pearl** segment is pursued in the following ways:

- Financing measures whereby the people in charge of the various life experience sources develop their activities, commercialize their services and increase their visibility.
- Financing measures whereby the people in charge of the various life experience sources increase their degree of co-operation.
- Crossing boundaries of various types when financing measures.
- Financing investments which are finely tuned measures (e.g. a missing piece of a service package).
- Creating new events and travel destinations within the region.

3.2. Connecting the strategy to other development activities

Pirkanmaa Region's regional plan was approved in 2009. Its vision for the year 2025 states that Pirkanmaa "functions in a human-centred, international, co-operation-seeking and environmentally responsible manner". These points of emphasis are also embodied in the Pirkan Helmi Strategy.

The goals of the Pirkanmaa Rural Development Plan 2014-2020 drawn up by the Pirkanmaa ELY Centre are similar to our goals, but as regards practical development work, we have implemented a clear division of tasks in content-related matter in addition to setting the sizes of the measures. The development work funded by the ELY Centre focuses more on the development of livelihoods than is the case in Pirkan Helmi, and measures related to communities and culture have a larger role.

Completed in the spring of 2014, the Pirkanmaa Cultural Plan highlights the tasks of culture in strengthening identity, education, diversity and creativity, as well as that of promoting prosperity. **This can be achieved by supporting people's active inclusion as cultural** participants, as recipients and as doers. Matters put forward in the Cultural Plan have also been taken into account in the Pirkan Helmi Strategy.

The Pearls of the Home Region Strategy is also in line with other local development work within the operating region. This strategy is also fully consistent with the Southern Pirkanmaa District Strategy, including localities such Akaa, Urjala, and Valkeakoski, and its regional vision and the vision set out in the strategy of the local district of Pälkäne. According to the District Strategy vision, the district is "one of growth, high-quality living and housing, innovative entrepreneurship, and characterized by a high level of expertise". In the strategy for the local district of Pälkäne 2013-2018, the Pälkäne vision defines it as "a vibrant rural local district where vibrant villages, a secure and clean living environment, human-centred services and diverse entrepreneurship all merge". The Pirkan Helmi Strategy, for its part, contributes to the realization of these visions.

3.3. Strategy indicators and their target levels

The implementation of the strategy will be monitored with the help of the fifteen indicators set out below. The indicators have been derived from the strategy's points of focus. This connection can be seen in the context of the definition accompanying each indicator ("Hereby we endeavour to achieve"). The target levels are stated in connection with the indicators for each specific target level. Unless otherwise stated in connection with the indicator, they relate exclusively to the activities implemented using EAFRD funds.

Indicators

- 1) Projects and business subsidies financed during the programme period, a total of 150 items.

Hereby we endeavour to achieve: A sufficiently large number of measures increases the effectiveness of the implementation of the strategy and the diversity of its content, as well as **connecting a sufficiently large group of actors to become involved in the region's** development work. With this number of measures, the average measure size remains at the current level.

- 2) At least 40% of the implementers of the projects and business subsidies have not previously received funding through Pirkan Helmi or Pomoottori.

Hereby we endeavour to achieve: New operators learn to become their own region's developers and business subsidies focus on new enterprises.

- 3) Projects involve working bees (aka volunteer work) amounting to a total of 20,000 hours (human or machine work). This includes working bee work (aka volunteer work) in excess of the amount required from the viewpoint of financing.

Hereby we endeavour to achieve: In addition to the priority targets of the projects, social capital and co-operation is produced, and the project's further use is provided with a stronger base.

- 4) In 35 cases the business subsidies focus on new enterprises.

Hereby we endeavour to achieve: Strengthening and diversification of the regional enterprise base.

- 5) Business subsidies contribute to the creation of 45 new full-time or part-time jobs and to securing 25 existing full-time or part-time jobs.

Hereby we endeavour to achieve: An improved regional employment situation.

- 6) 20% of the said jobs will go to persons less than 35 years of age. As many women as men will be employed in the new and retained jobs.

Hereby we endeavour to achieve: Improvement in youth employment and improved development as regards gender equality.

- 7) Among the measures to be financed there are 8 measures with a primary target group of persons with disabilities or persons belonging to some other group with special service needs or whose participation in different functions is more difficult than in the case of other groups (e.g. in using e-services).

Hereby we endeavour to achieve: Equality between different groups of people.

- 8) 15 communal assembly or leisure-time facilities (indoor or outdoor spaces) will be built, renovated or equipped with appropriate equipment.

Hereby we endeavour to achieve: Improved ability to interact and to practice together, thereby strengthening social capital.

- 9) Establish 8 communal modes of operation, which will be new within the financed project's target area.

Hereby we endeavour to achieve: Strengthening of social capital, while also taking into account the fact that the communality has changed in form.

- 10) We shall draw up 8 waterway rehabilitation plans, landscape plans or other plans related to the environment and implement 8 corresponding concrete rehabilitation measures.

Hereby we endeavour to achieve: A more pleasant, healthier and more secure living environment.

- 11) We shall draw up a self-reliant land-use plan or equivalent plan to promote the emergence of new settlement activity for 4 villages.

Hereby we endeavour to achieve: New inhabitants having the additional choice of rural housing options.

- 12) During the programme period, some 350 stories in the local press informing about measures financed via Pirkan Helmi.

Hereby we endeavour to achieve: Increased visibility and recognition of the Pirkan Helmi and Leader activity.

- 13) Of the measures financed, 40 include something (result, co-operation model, method of implementation, etc.) that is totally new within the target area or within our region.

Hereby we endeavour to achieve: Testing new solutions in the development of the region, aiming to make further use of these new solutions in other development situations.

- 14) A total of 40 events or other activities planned and implemented by young people themselves will be implemented within the region.

Hereby we endeavour to achieve: Events, activities and facilities serving young people as well getting young people to experience inclusion in their own living environment and becoming activated as its developers.

- 15) 6 international projects implemented with Leader funding and 2 international projects with other funding. At least half of the above projects will be other than Pirkan Helmi implementations.

Hereby we endeavour to achieve: Regional internationalism.

4. Description of the strategy process

4.1. Learning from experience

On reaching the end of the current programme period, Pirkan Helmi already had experience in projects for a period of one programme cycle, but lacked experience in business aid. This difference has been reflected in the implementation of the Helmenkalastus development programme. Unlike for the projects, the development programme has provided inadequate amounts of resources for the selection of business aid, because when creating the programme, the experiences from which to build the framework for the programme were missing. Therefore, especially at the beginning of the programme, the board had to carry out, on several occasions, more general discussions in connection with the management of individual business aid applications. This has been necessary to define a perspective for granting business aid, which also aims for the development of the area. Taking this matter in to account in terms of business aid, particular attention has been paid to the definition of the objectives of activities when preparing this strategy.

In creating this strategy, the role of learning from experience is greater than when creating previous development programmes, because now there is also experience available to draw from about business aid. Information on development needs has also been obtained as a by-product of the implementation. Therefore, the role of field rounds in strategy-making has been reduced compared to previous programme processes, and accordingly, the analysis of experience and information that has been accumulated in various ways has a greater role than before. However, at Pälkäne, as a new area in our activities, information necessary for strategy-making has been collected slightly more than for the rest of the area, because there was no prior experience created by acting together.

In regard to the projects, a working method similar to the coordination project is necessary, which offers an opportunity for a relatively low first stage developer. In addition to the popularity of our coordination project, this need is also visible in the fact that among associations implementing their own projects, there is a surprising number of entirely new associations or associations for which the relevant project is a major effort in relation to their previous operations. Therefore, it can be

assumed that alongside the associations that have already been encouraged by the project activities, there is a lot of latent project potential whose emergence should be facilitated. Studies have shown that the bottom-up concept will not deliver development evenly by itself, but without these support measures, these opportunities can become, above all, available to those, who have the prerequisites to utilise these opportunities, and therefore the differences in development can even increase with development activities.

Along with those who are beginning their path as a developer, young people are another group that needs special attention in development activities. Flexible development tools and working methods that operate on a fast cycle are needed for them, so that the strategy is carried out with regard to them.

A good strategy must provide both guidance and flexibility at the same time. It must clearly state where we are aiming, but it must also provide an opportunity to review this objective along the way towards progressing to concrete implementation when the need arises. The Leader operational administrative framework, in accordance with classical strategic planning, is based on the idea that the creation and implementation of a development programme are stages which differ from each other, even in such a way that once a development programme has been created, it is implemented unchanged for the duration of its implementation period. However, as an operating method, with partnership and a bottom-up method, Leader is a communicative process, which involves **"diversity as well as co-operation opportunities and conflicts emerging from it"** (Sotarauta). Thus, there is a clear contradiction between the Leader approach and its administrative framework. In the implementation phase, this contradiction must be able to be resolved more easily. Therefore, it is necessary to create more forms of action in the implementation of the strategy which can be directed, as the implementation progresses, to better serve the implementation of the strategy's objectives.

4.2. Preparing the strategy document

The strategy process was started in 2012. The first strategy draft (10/2012) was made with Pomoottori, because at that point the idea was that, for the 2014-2020 programme period, we would work in one way or another with Pomoottori. In December 2012, Pirkan Helmi and Pomoottori carried out surveys in their own areas of operation, whose subjects included the previously mentioned merging of operating groups or co-operation, as well as the upcoming programme period's strategy priorities. Since instead of the unification of the operating groups, Pomoottori decided that its operations as the Leader group should end and its operating area's municipalities should carry out their decisions independently in terms of the Leader operations, Pirkan Helmi continued the preparation of a new strategy without Pomoottori from the beginning of 2013, in close co-operation with its key stakeholder groups and the area's residents.

The willingness of Pälkäne's residents and business operators to join Pirkan Helmi's activities was already clear at a very early stage. Officially, negotiations on Pälkäne joining Pirkan Helmi's area were undertaken with leading officials of the municipality in February 2013, and in March the municipal council officially decided on the matter. On 20.03.2013, we participated in a briefing that was held in connection with Pomoottori's annual meeting, which concerned Leader activities during the new programme period in Pomoottori's current area of operations. Pomoottori's Pälkäne members and project and business aid implementing parties were informed about correspondence with Pomoottori, for example by a memo in January 2014.

In relation to the preparation of the strategy, in March 2013, a survey was carried out among all Pirkan Helmi's projects that had been implemented and already completed, and business aid measures during the 2007-2013 programme period. With regard to Pälkäne, the project and business aid experiences were surveyed in a meeting held with Pomoottori in February 2013.

In connection with Pirkan Helmi's annual meeting, which was held on 25.04.2013, a brainstorming event was held on the basis of the current strategy draft. On 29.4.2013, a similar public event was held in Pälkäne related to creating a new strategy. The draft strategy has also been on Pirkan Helmi's website and open for comments since its very first version was completed. In February

2014, an electronic survey was implemented among stakeholders, those that had submitted a funding application to Pirkan Helmi during the 2007-2013 programme period and all the members of the association, which collected comments and improvement suggestions on the draft strategy. The survey was delivered to more than 500 recipients.

There have been meetings concerning the planning of the strategy's contents and implementation with e.g. the area's municipalities, Pirkanmaa's other Leader groups, Mikkolan Navetta's operators, Valkeakosken Seudun Kehitys Oy, Pirkanmaa Union and the Pirkanmaa ELY Centre.

This strategy has been prepared on the basis of the previously mentioned public events, meetings and surveys as well as experience gained from activities during the 2007-2013 programme period.

The Pirkanmaa Leader groups and Pirkanmaa's ELY Centre have concluded an agreement on the division of labour in projects and business aid. This agreement can be found as Annex 2 of the strategy. In addition to the size of measures, this division of labour is also reflected in a slightly different content emphasis.

5. Implementation of the strategy

5.1. Learning plan for the area operators

Learning as a phenomenon is associated with, for example, areas and organizations. Because the area is an entity formed by a large group of operators, the area's learning can be thought of as primarily the learning of the area operators. Learning takes place through activities. It is, therefore, a matter of both development as well as their own development as developers.

New matters are one essential element of learning. In the same way as a juggler increases the number of balls thrown into the air, as developers, we must try new, and to some extent risky matters alongside familiar and predictable ones in order to learn. If we do not do so, learning only takes place on a limited basis, and the result of the development work will also remain mediocre.

Measures related to learning in the area are used to build networks among the area's operators and outside the area, so that development materializes "**through internal local networks and regional connections**" (Alarinta). The utilization of the development potential of the area requires both of these. Learning cannot take place in a vacuum.

Area learning occurs in many ways:

- * as residents' learning and the development of local communities
- * as the creation of innovations and innovation in companies and other operators of the area
- * as the production of information in research institutes and similar organizations.

The role of networks, both the area's internal ones and those directed outwards, is very significant in the learning of the area's operators. Therefore, the learning of the area's operators is implemented by utilizing and building networks. In addition to networks, the learning of the area's operators in our activities is defined by its strong orientation towards the development of their own areas.

Through its strategy, Pirkan Helmi can influence the area's learning in the first two previously specified manifestations of area learning. With the strategy, the learning of inhabitants is promoted as a collective activity. Learning takes place as part of the development of the local community, so in addition to the development of their own local community, development is also sought as its developer. In the implementation of the strategy, the success of the objective requires facilitated arrangements such as the coordination project for taking the first steps as a developer, a stronger role of Pirkan Helmi's employees as the implementing parties' sparring partners, and peer group meetings of the implementing parties in the hope of finding partners.

Pirkan Helmi can influence the emergence of innovations and innovativeness with its own development measures and by emphasising that the quest for the new and experimentation is considered to be a benefit when selecting funding measures. Innovation is primarily observed from

the perspective of a local operator or local community, as a novelty in the operator's or area's activities in question.

Regional connections, and contact with two universities in Tampere (TaY, TTY) and three universities of applied sciences in Pirkanmaa (HAMK, Polamk, TPU) are strengthened. So far, co-operation with them has mainly been in connection with a few individual projects.

Pirkan Helmi is actively developing its own operations. This is done, for example, by means of its own assessment, actively comparing experiences and by exchanging good practices with other Leader groups, as well as by encouraging employees to develop their professional skills.

5.2. Inter-regional and international co-operation

Pirkanmaa Leader groups have traditionally co-operated, for example, in the form of the Kyläkapula magazine that is published together with Pirkanmaa's village ombudsman. During the 2014-2020 programme period, co-operation has been planned to be developed qualitatively and to be extended to cover new subject areas where we have identified the need for more emphasis. Particular attention will be paid to joint communication activities between provinces, as well as local operators' activation measures related to international activities.

In addition to the Pirkanmaa groups, Pirkan Helmi has undertaken active co-operation with Kalakukko ry, which operates in the Kuopio region, related to a joint international project to develop villages, as well as with a completely new co-operation partner, LounaPlusa in the Forssa region, with whom we have already undertaken some co-operation in relation to personnel. We intend to continue and further develop co-operation with both groups.

Pirkan Helmi's international activities have been developed with determination and in a goal-orientated manner during the 2007-2013 programme period. At the beginning of 2008, a special internationalisation plan was drawn up at Pirkan Helmi, which defined the objectives and focal points of international activities divided into two-year periods throughout the entire term of the programme. This systematic approach was felt to be necessary because Pirkan Helmi did not have any prior international experience and thus, did not have any existing co-operation relationships. Some objectives of activities in the globalization strategy were defined as surveying the working environment's current international activities, finding international co-operation partners with a similar working environment to Pirkan Helmi, developing of personal skills and communications in regard to international activities, implementing the international Leader project and developing the region's operators' international co-operation capacities. The plan was realized above expectations in other respects, but the self-initiated local operators' international Leader project was not established until the 2014-2020 programme period. Pirkan Helmi's systematic approach towards internationalization was met with some outside attention, and we have had the pleasure of introducing our way of working, at both a national rural network unit training event and international seminars in Belgium, the Czech Republic and Estonia.

During the 2007-2013 programme period, functional and confidential co-operation relationships were built with Leader Groups in Belgium (GAL Pays des Condruces), Slovakia (Verejno-súkromné partnerstvo Hontiansko-Dobronivske), the **Czech Republic (Sdružení Splav os)** and **Estonia (MTÜ Arenduskoda)**. This co-operation was followed by three international student exchange projects implemented with the support of Europe's youth activity programme, Youth in Action, as well as one international development project for villages with Leader funding. In addition, co-operation has included, among other things, a number of visits and seminar visits, two Pirkan Helmi administration study trips and a staff exchange period, during which a Pirkan Helmi employee worked at a Czech Leader group office for two weeks. Creating co-operation relationships has taken a great deal of effort and time, so established co-operation relations are nurtured and co-operation will continue to be developed during the 2014-2020 programme period. We have all learned to know each other and each other's areas of operations. Our regions are similar in many ways; they are built up from small communities, slightly secluded and located within the scope of long-term and significant industrial impact. The groundwork carried out in the past creates a strong foundation for concrete co-operation to be carried out during the new programme period. The intention is to continue co-operation in terms of earlier themes (youth, culture, village activities), as

well as extending it to socially focused subjects. For example, we are currently waiting for a funding decision from the Erasmus+ programme and Sdružení SPLAV and VSP HD for a two-year project which aims to develop the working methods of Leader groups to support young people's participation in Leader activities (as well as the implementation of projects and the funding selection process) as much as possible. In addition, we are preparing a three-year development project for rural entrepreneurs with MTÜ Arenduskoda.

The Valkeakoski Campus can be seen as a previously untapped opportunity in Pirkan Helmi's activities related to internationalization. As well as a co-operation entity of several educational **institutions, the campus is definitely Pirkan Helmi's area of operation's most international location**, because a considerable number of the students at HAMK are from outside Finland.

Pirkan Helmi will operate in a similar manner during the new programme period, after learning from the successful structured approach to operating during the 2007-2013 programme period. This time, however, the plan will be targeted more specifically to support the internationalization of operators in the region. In 2015, Pirkan Helmi will also organize a meeting for its international partners, where international co-operation procedures will be discussed and processed on an even larger scale.

5.3. Funding criteria

Pirkan Helmi's criteria for the funding of projects and business aid are as follows:

A. Common criteria for all measures

- The funded measures must be in accordance with the Kotiseudun Helmet [Native Locality Pearls] strategy, and promote the implementation of its objectives.
- The funded measures must be cost-effective from the perspective of profits produced as well as Kotiseudun Helmet strategy's objectives.
- The aid must be necessary for the implementation of the measures: to enable its implementation / speed up its implementation / enable its implementation on a wider scale than without the aid.
- Those implementing the measures must have the skills, financial and other resources to implement the intended measures.
- The funded measures either:
 - * create or develop matters in such a way that the development measures which have been carried out will have an impact which also persists after the funded measures, or
 - * experiment with operations that are new in the region.

B. Specific criteria for projects

- The project target group must be committed to its implementation.
- It is considered as a benefit for the project if its results can be utilised beyond the scope of the project.

C. Specific criteria for business aid

- Business aid is used to finance the establishment of small start-up companies and specific measures carried out by small companies that are already operating. Specific measures refer to reasonably sized measures which are used to remove a bottleneck in the company's skills or operating shortcomings, or for enabling the significantly wider scope and more efficient utilization of the company's current resources with the help of skills or emphasis made on operating frameworks. As a rule, a small company is considered as a company which employs up to 3 person-years of work input (baseline), with the exception of particularly labour-intensive sectors, in which this limit can be adjusted.
- It is considered a benefit for business aid if it will help create new jobs.
- It is considered a benefit for business aid if it can create more broadly positive local impact than just for the company.

These selection criteria are displayed on Pirkan Helmi's website as part of this strategy document. The use of selection criteria when making financing decisions is carefully documented in Pirkan Helmi's documents concerning the decision. This is to ensure the equal treatment of applicants for funding, as well as a transparent decision-making process.

5.4. Communication plan

The aim of communication is that those whose involvement will benefit both the implementation of **Pirkan Helmi's strategy and the implementation of such entities' own objectives will end up** participating in Pirkan Helmi's activities. In addition, we aim for Pirkan Helmi and its operations in the area to be better known at the end of the 2014-2020 programme period than it was at the beginning of the programme period. Besides the communication achieved by Pirkan Helmi itself, the achievement of the previously mentioned objectives of communication is also contributed to by Finland's Leader groups' common brand work.

The message of the Leader group reaches its diverse target group through a combination of several different channels, so communication must also be multi-channel. Because getting the message across in such activities depends vastly on the fact that the message is useful and timely for its recipients, these messages must be distributed often. When the previously mentioned issues and the limitations of funds available for communication are taken in to account, the implementation methods need to be considered very carefully.

Our communication framework is formed out of four channels which are used constantly:

- o Network communication: Pirkan Helmi's website (www.pirkanhelmi.fi) and Facebook. It is important to actively update the content, because of our communication channels, these are the ones distributing the most topical information. As a topicality indicator, there is something new on the website and Facebook every week.
- o Stakeholders' (region's municipalities and Vaske Oy's key persons), members of the Board of Directors' and employees' active communication about our field operations and the opportunities we offer. With this channel, it is important that everyone involved in the work is always aware of 'what's going on'.
- o A member and project information release is distributed to target groups 5-6 times a year, and this is also published on the website.
- o The area's local newspapers are utilised for informing about ongoing activities. The functioning of this channel requires active dialogue with the newspapers.

These four regularly used channels are complemented, if necessary, with campaign-type communications. Such communications were carried out, for example, at the beginning of the programme period that is now coming to an end and in the autumn of 2012, when it was discovered that interest in development work had temporarily slowed down in the area. Such campaign-like 'spot communications' complement the previously described regular communication extremely well.

5.5. Updating the strategy

In order to make the implementation of the strategy into an interactive process that better supports the Leader approach, the strategy is steered based on our annual monitoring and other observations.

6. Administration, monitoring and information

Pirkan Helmi has had an office in Kylväkoski, Akaa for the duration of its operations. In the same premises as Pirkan Helmi, there are also two ProAgria Southern Finland experts.

Pirkan Helmi has 249 members (24/05/2014), 83% of whom are individual members and 17% community members. All natural persons, registered organizations and associations, municipalities, joint municipal authorities and other legal entities interested in the association's operations may become Pirkan Helmi members.

Pirkan Helmi has a board, which according to the rules of association, consists of a chair and 6-12 other members. In practice the board has had a chair and 12 members. On 10.4.2014, the annual meeting approved Pirkan Helmi's rules to be amended so that when establishing the board, three deputy members are also elected, one for each parcel of the tripartite.

The structure of the Board of Directors is consistent with the tripartite. The chair and other board members and deputies are elected annually at the annual meeting of the association. According to Pirkan Helmi's rules, a member can operate as the chair or other member of the board or as a deputy member continuously for up to 6 years. At the annual meeting held on 10.4.2014, when forming the board of directors, the expansion of the area of operations to Pälkäne was also taken into account. In order to support and enhance the board's internal work, an intranet has been created, the utilization of which will be further developed.

Two employees are employed out of operating funds to activate and guide development work, as well as to run the administration necessary for this development work. The very limited amount of operating funds does not allow for both of the employees to carry out work related to the operating funds full-time, but instead they work on these activities on a part-time basis. If necessary, i.e. the assessment of own operations and other tasks related to the development of other activities are implemented using separate human resources in a project-like manner. We purchase accounting and payroll services from an accounting firm. Two professional auditors carry out Pirkan Helmi's auditing. Our operations are guided by a quality manual and charters.

The majority of business aid applications processed by Pirkan Helmi during the 2007-2013 programme period have come to us either via Valkeakosken Seudun Kehitys Oy or ProAgria Southern Finland, so the profitability calculations and similar documents necessary to be attached to the business aid application, as well as other expertise related to business activities, have been available to customers in this way, which in case of starting entrepreneurs is significantly complementary to our work and expertise. This co-operation will also continue during the 2014-2020 programme period. A similar arrangement will be set up for Pälkäne.

The implementation of the strategy is monitored in two ways. The implementation of indicators describing the implementation of the strategy, as described in Section 3, are monitored, depending on the objective, partly by Pirkan Helmi and partly in the form of actual data collected from the implementing parties of financed projects and business aid. The implementation of the strategy is also monitored every second year by means of a survey carried out among stakeholders, which procedure is consistent with current practice.

7. Financial plan of the strategy

The overall financing of the strategy for the 2014-2020 period amounts to EUR 5,720,000, of which EUR 5,418,861 is financed through EAFRD and EUR 301,139 through other financial instruments. In addition, Pirkan Helmi is operating actively so that a rural innovation group can be established on the basis of the co-operation network created by the Southern Pirkanmaa forest bio economics road map project, which we have financed and the Valkeakoski-Tohka Rotary club has implemented. This possible EIB Group does not appear in Pirkan Helmi's finances as a monetary item.

Table 4. Overall financing of the strategy for the 2014-2020 period

| | Whole period 2014-2020 EUR | Per year EUR | % |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|----|
| EU + government | 2,817,808 | 402,544 | 52 |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|---------|-----|
| Municipalities (2€/asukas/vuosi) | 704,452 | 100,636 | 13 |
| Private | 1,896,601 | 270,943 | 35 |
| Total funding | 5,418,861 | 774,123 | 100 |

Table 5. Funding being applied for rural business and development projects (not including operational funds)

| EU EUR | Government EUR | Municipality EUR | Public sector total EUR | Private funding EUR | Total funding EUR |
|--------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1,183,479.36 | 1,070,767.04 | 563,561.60 | 2,817,808 | 1,896,601 | 4,714,409 |

Table 6. Operational funds applied for

| | EU (42%) EUR | Government (38%) EUR | Municipality (20%) EUR | Public funding total EUR | Percentage of operational funds compared to public funding of business and development project funding % |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Operation costs-kustannukset | 59,173.97 | 5,538.35 | 28,178.08 | 140,890.40 | 5% |
| Activation and furthering of activities | 236,695.87 | 214,153.41 | 112,712.32 | 563,561.60 | 20% |
| Operational funds total | 295,869.84 € | 267,691.76 € | 140,890.40 € | 704,452 € | 25% |

On the basis of experiences from the 2007-2013 programme period, it is estimated that about 85% of private funding is accumulated in cash and about 15% in the form of volunteer work. Written co-operation agreements on municipal money have been concluded with the area's municipalities (Annex 1). Municipal money comes in as so-called lump sums, in relation to the number of residents in the municipalities, and no other agreements have been concluded about its targeting.

It is estimated that the funding of the strategy (not including operational funds) will be divided up as follows:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| The Inhabitants' Pearl | 15% |
| The Communities' and Identity Pearl | 35% |
| The Enterprises' Pearl | 25% |
| The Life Experiences' Pearl | 25% |

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Appendices:

1. Co-operation agreements with the municipalities of the area
2. Agreement between Pirkanmaa Leader groups and Pirkanmaa ELY Centre on the division of work in funding projects and business subsidies
3. Association registry information
4. Pirkan Helmi rules
5. Pirkan Helmi board members and their connections
6. Minutes of Pirkan Helmi board meeting where the strategy and Leader group application was approved