

# eKarelia is a smart forerunner

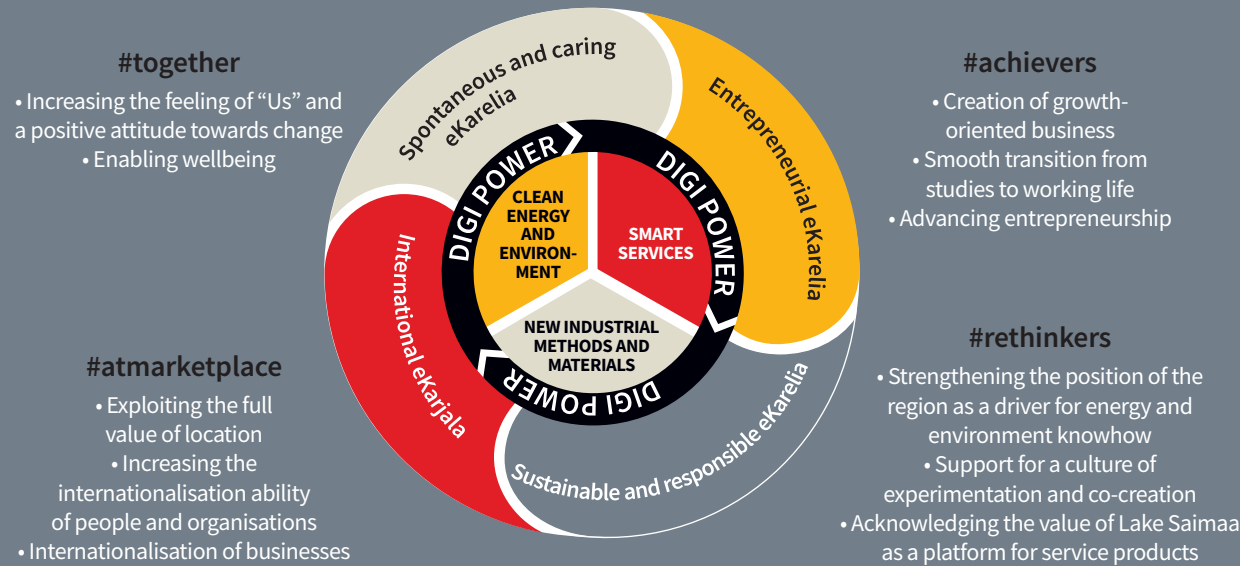
We in South Karelia have an attitude of doing. A spirit of cooperation and a shared strategic vision have materialised as being a forerunner, as an example in the organising of social and health services.

The regional development plan is based on cooperation and regional strengths. Solid industrial knowhow, the Russian border and Lake Saimaa are our cornerstones. Karelian culture is something we value and promote together.

The region needs people and people need work and a good quality of life. When working together, believing in our own strengths, even a small team – or region – can succeed.

The Regional Development Plan of South Karelia 2018–2021 is a plan for the entire region. We approach the year 2030 with the vision “eKarelia is a smart forerunner”. In 2030, eKarelia will smartly take advantage of new technological opportunities. The inhabitants are happy, the people have work and the demographic development is balanced.

The priorities of regional development for the period 2018–2021 have been summarised in four headlines of which each are accompanied by a specifying vision. These are **#together**, **#achievers**, **#rethinkers**, **#atmarketplace**.



*The Regional Council of South Karelia is a local developing authority that is responsible for the general development of the South Karelia region. It is a federation owned by the region’s nine municipalities, and promotes regional development, the wellbeing of the residents, industry and commerce, culture, and the environment.*

Cover picture: Mikko Nikkinen

Pictures: Regional Council of South Karelia (children), Mikko Nikkinen (fisherman) and goSaimaa.com/Mikko Nikkinen (winter)

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REGIONAL  
COUNCIL  
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KARELIA

## THE REGIONAL PLAN OF SOUTH KARELIA 2018–2021

*“eKarelia is a smart forerunner”*



## Spontaneous and caring eKarelia

### #together

Together we succeed and working together we create the best ideas and enable changes by which we can increase wellbeing. Strengthening the spirit of "Us" and a positive attitude to change contributes to wellbeing and the vitality of the region. We are proud of our home region, but meet tourists and new inhabitants with hospitality, respect and tolerance.

South Karelia is being developed into a region of participating, committed and physically active people. The inhabitants are involved in the developing of villages, neighbourhoods and suburbs. The activity of business, NGO's, and citizens

increases local vitality. The role of the public sector is to act as an enabler and a shoulder to lean on for those in need.

Vitality is increased while improving the employment opportunities of youth and those in a fragile position in their working life. Education supports employment, maintaining working ability, and reorientating one's career. For those outside of the working life, increasing working ability and ability to function enhances employment, health and quality of life. In South Karelia, we want to offer everyone the ingredients of a good life, regardless of age and ability to function.

## Sustainable and responsible eKarelia

### #rethinkers

In South Karelia, we are rethinkers. Our hearts beat for innovation. We are looking for new approaches to seize business opportunities and to take brave development leaps. Industry-independent innovation focus areas produce added value and become increasingly business-driven. The focus areas of the South Karelian innovation strategy are:

- > **Clean energy and environment**
- > **New industrial methods and materials**
- > **Smart services**

Digital key technologies and solutions act as trailblazers of development. They create conditions for deeper interactivity and efficiency without forgetting the human user of the systems. Governing principles in the local innovation ecosystem are solution orientation, learning and brave experiments.

South Karelian development work relies on a sustainable utilisation of natural and other resources. South Karelia desires to be a carbon neutral modern region of sustainable energy. We want to be known as a region with an R&D&I concentration of new energy technology.

In tourism development, we have moved from constructing infrastructure to developing service concepts and holistic offerings for sports, wellbeing, health and culture tourism. Lake Saimaa, with its endangered ringed seals, is a significant brand element for South Karelia. Lake Saimaa is the foundation of the eKarelian identity and also a mobility and action platform on which we build the South Karelian quality of life and tourism development.

## Entrepreneurial eKarelia

### #achievers

South Karelia is a living environment for achievers. The success potential of the region lies in sustainable growth, the ability to react fast, and competent people. South Karelia is developed in a result oriented way, nurturing a culture of experimentation, cross-cutting organisations and industries. This supports the birth of techno-economic and societal innovations.

Entrepreneurial activity and attitude accompanied by renewal ability of business are crucial for the prosperity of South Karelia. South Karelia needs knowledge based work places for the renewing industry, ICT and other businesses in order to diversify the industrial base and increase the number of growing and internationalising companies.

The supply of competent work force is secured through close cooperation between the education and business sectors. Through well-thought out partnerships, the higher education institutions of the region support entrepreneurship and the growth of the existing businesses. Working life is currently undergoing change that enables the multi-location work and combing of various working methods.

We work together to provide a place to work and life for an increasing number of students in the region. Youth, international students and immigrants have capabilities that can contribute significantly to regional growth when the working life adapts itself better to diversity.

## International eKarelia

### #atmarketplace

Located on the border of the European Union and Russia, South Karelia features an equal distance to Helsinki and St Petersburg, and worldwide partnerships. South Karelia is located at a market place. In the region, there are border crossing opportunities by road, rail and water. The Baltic Sea is accessible via Saimaa Canal, and Lappeenranta International Airport has significant growth potential. South Karelian higher education institutes (Lappeenranta University of Technology, LUT, and Saimaa University of Applied Sciences) are the most international of Finnish universities. About five percent of inhabitants of the region have an immigrant background.

The majority of transport, 80 percent, between Finland and Russia utilise border crossing stations located in Southeastern Finland. Smooth border traffic and well-functioning border operations

support positive development for the South Karelian business, strengthen the competitive position of the region, and improve traffic safety. For the future of the region, it is important to secure a frictionless movement of people and goods, and logistic access to South Karelia.

South Karelia is internationalising in all directions, even though development of Russian relations has a strong history and continues to be an important area of international relations of the region. The proximity of Russia is especially evident in the field of tourism. China and, in a wider context, Asia provide interesting new opportunities. The Saimaa Region has a capacity and enables wider tourism development. South Karelia is a part of the Northern Growth Zone (Oslo–Stockholm–Helsinki–St Petersburg), which has been selected as one of key areas of business development. Within innovation ecosystem development, we are actively looking for likeminded partners among EU regions.

