

# REGIONAL COUNCILS

- / In Finnish mainland there are 18 regions, which all have regional councils.
- / Regional councils are statutory joint municipal authorities and part of regional administration.
- / Regional councils promote the interests of their regions

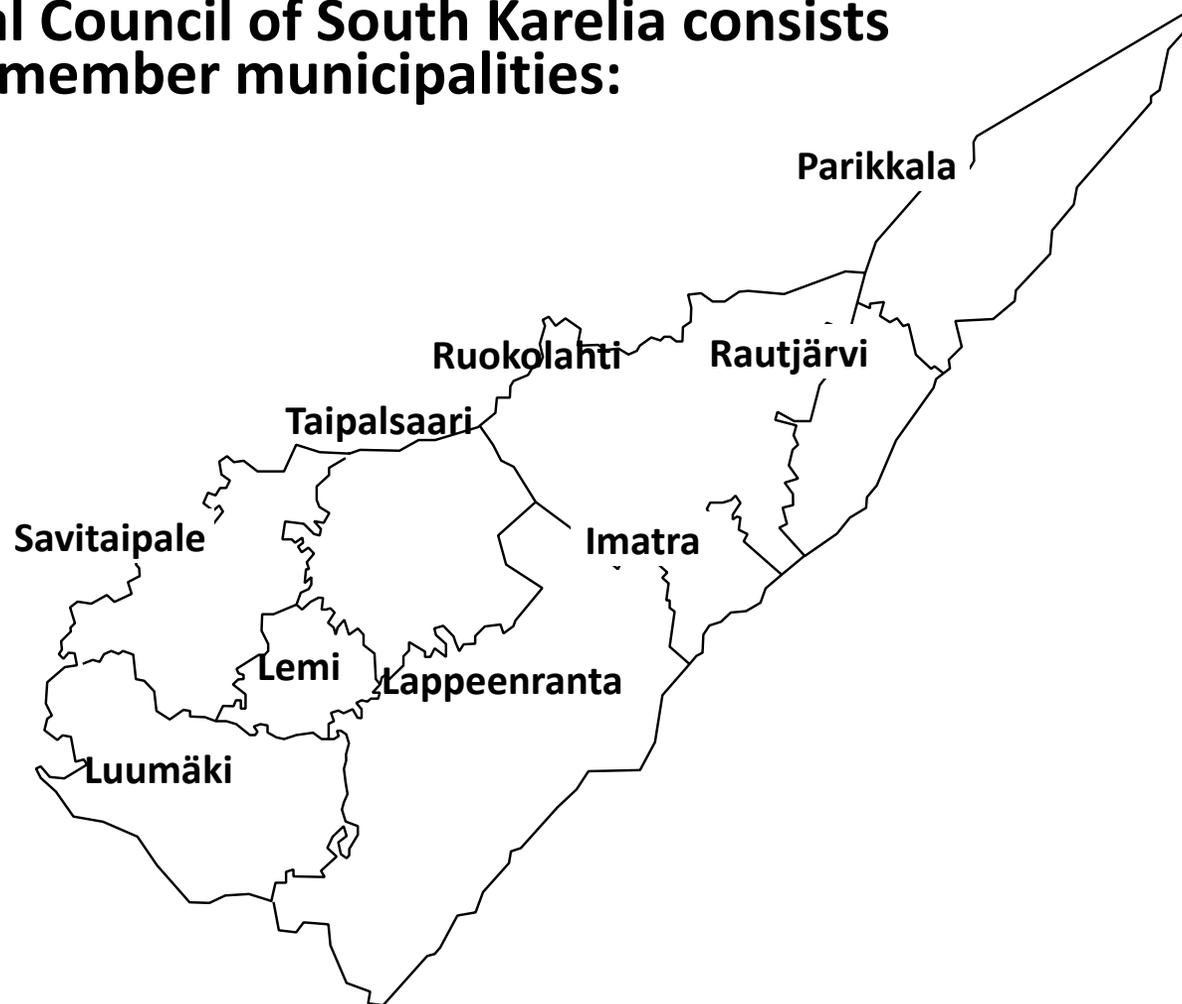




# REGIONAL COUNCIL OF SOUTH KARELIA



Regional Council of South Karelia consists of nine member municipalities:



Regional Council of South Karelia cooperates to promote interests of the region.

It works for development of sustainable growth and competitiveness, well-being and quality of living.

# REGIONAL COUNCIL OF SOUTH KARELIA



REGIONAL  
COUNCIL  
OF SOUTH  
KARELIA



~ 24  
employees

## Regional development

Regional programme, regional plan, vision of the region, foresight...

## Statutory joint municipal authority

### Main tasks:

- / Regional development
- / Regional programme (incl. environmental assessment)
- / Smart specialisation strategy (innovation strategy)
- / Regional planning
- / Lobbying and cooperation
- / Traffic system
- / Foresight
- / Culture
- / Nature and environment

## Networking

Continuous dialogue with ministries, Finnish Parliament, EU-stakeholders, decision makers

~ 3,0 M€  
annual budget (2025)

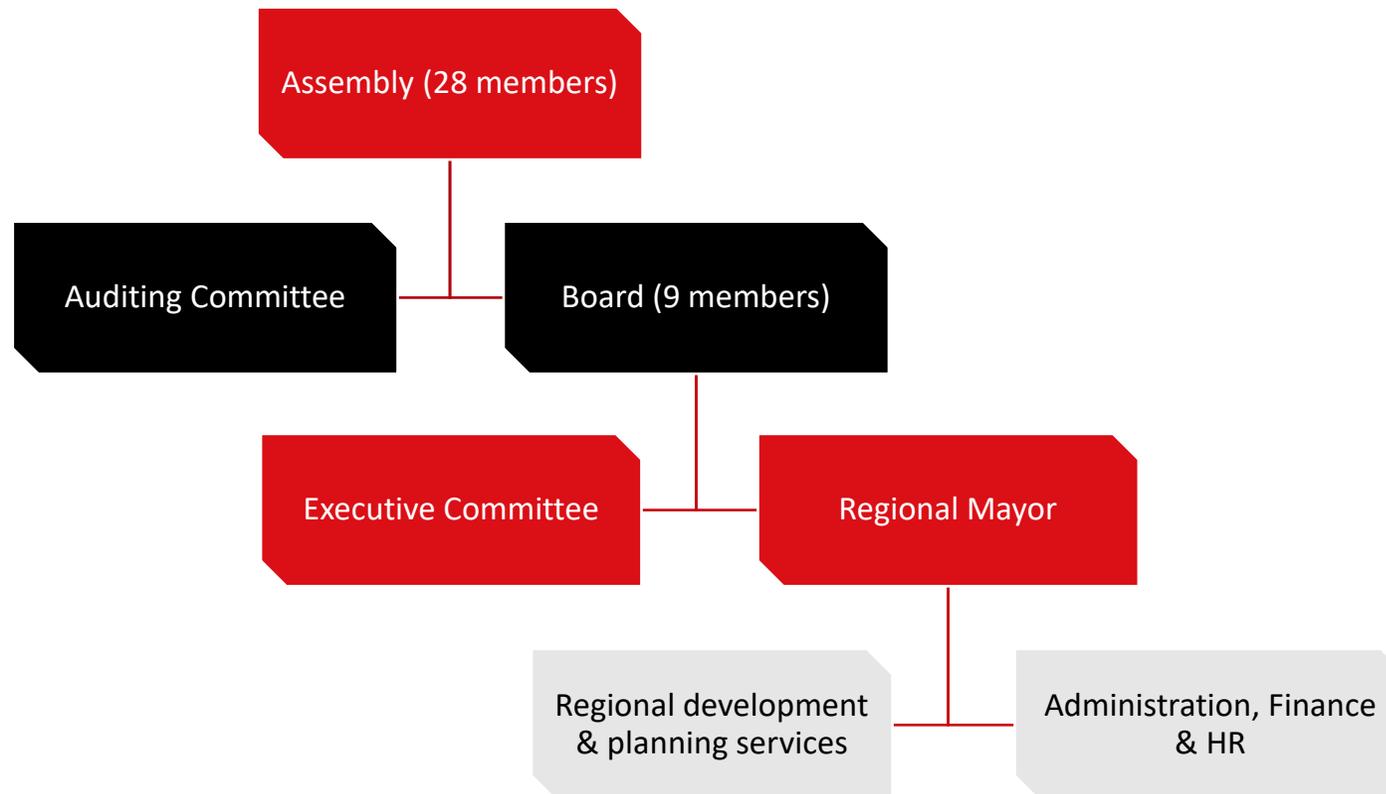


## Lobbying

Statements, information releases, expert articles, conference presentations ...

~ 6,1 M€  
granted project funding (2025)

# HOW ARE WE ORGANISED?



Assembly uses the highest power in the Regional Council. It is responsible for **the strategic lines in regional development. It approves the annual operating plan, budget, operating report and financial statement.**

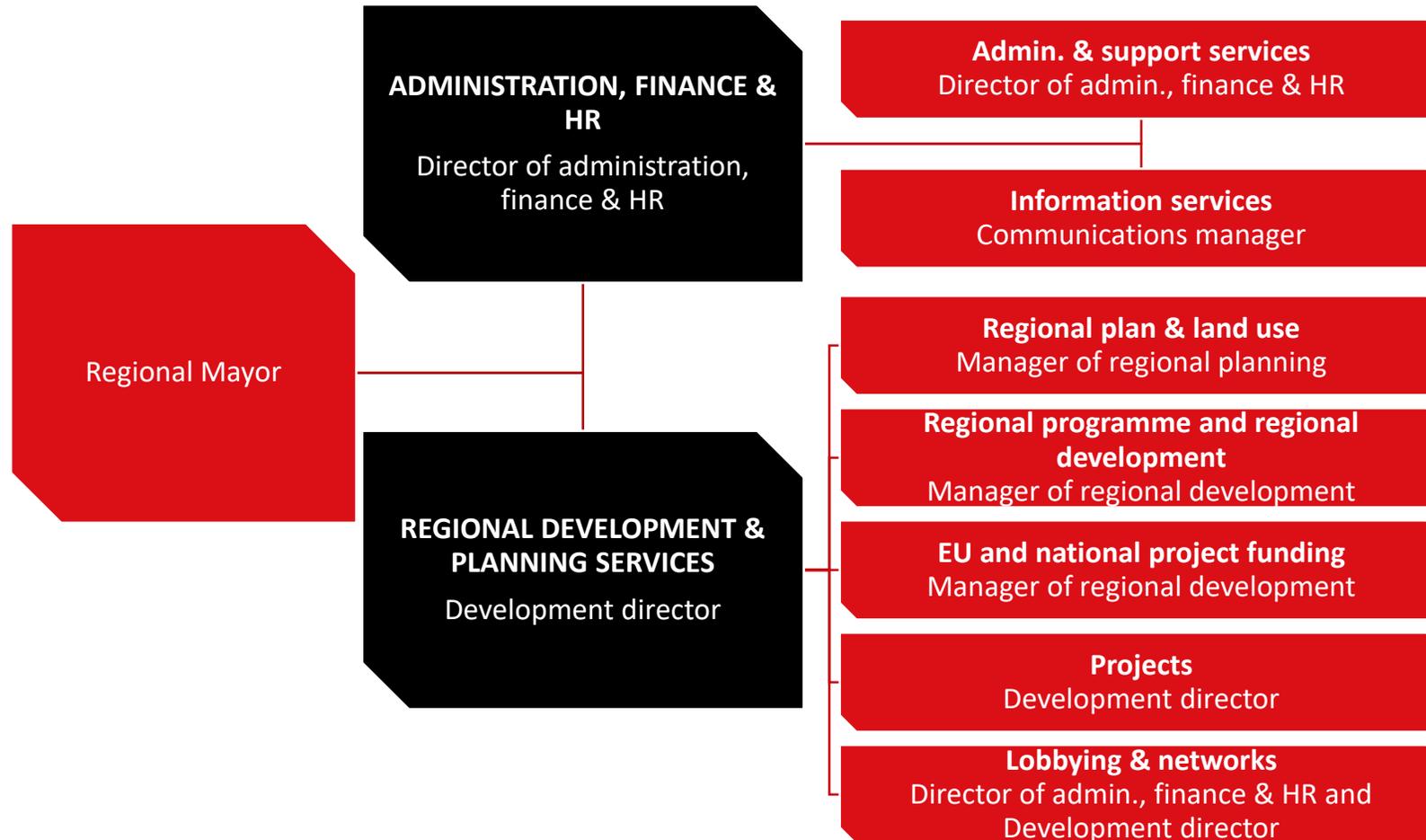
Regional Board is responsible for organising the operative management. Nine members of the board are nominated by the assembly.

The political representation is based on the result of municipal elections.

The Regional Mayor is responsible for the daily management.

The Regional Council is divided into two units: 1) Regional Development 2) Planning Services and Administration, Finance & HR.

# ORGANISATION 2026



We work as a team for **impactful and sustainable vitality.**

Regional Council of South Karelia is a **popular and attractive employer.**

Regional Council of South Karelia is a **respected expert, lobbyist and partner.**

# REGIONAL STAKEHOLDER GROUP (MYR)

## / **Tasks of Regional Stakeholder Group:**

- Synchronises regional plans, programmes and agreements
- Promotes preparation of large scale project entities
- Gives statements on EU-funded project applications

## / Secretariat of Regional Stakeholder Group (MYRS) prepares the agenda for MYR meetings

**Regional stakeholder group consists of relevant bodies dealing with regional development (eg. state and municipal bodies, representatives of business, education sector and civil society).**



# REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT



- / The Regional Council is legally responsible for the strategic entity of regional development and the general development of the region in its area.
- / The scope of work includes perspectives on livelihoods and skills, culture and inclusion, environmental sustainability and accessibility, and foresight.
- / Regional development is carried out in cooperation with various actors and networks. The work considers various subregional needs, such as rural development and archipelago areas.
- / The Regional Council is responsible for regional development planning and the smart specialisation process.
- / National legislation for regional development is synchronized with the EU financing periods.



# REGIONAL PROGRAMME



- / Main document guiding regional development
- / Renewed for every municipal election period
- / Coordinated by the Regional Council
- / Prepared in broad stakeholder cooperation
- / Undergoes environmental assessment by law

## **South Karelia Programme 2026–2029**

- Vision 2040 – long-term regional goals
- Strategic priorities 2026–2029 – regional programme
- Innovation Strategy 2026–2029 – smart specialisation



# REGIONAL PLANNING

## Drawing up the regional plan

- / Drawing of regional plan for South Karelia 2040 is actual. The plan determines area reservations to be considered in year 2040.
- / A steering group oversees the planning work.
- / Board of the Regional Council decides on the public presentation of the plan.
- / Regional plans steer municipal plans.

In addition, Regional Council gives statements on significant municipal plans under preparation.



# THE REGIONAL PLAN OF SOUTH KARELIA 2040



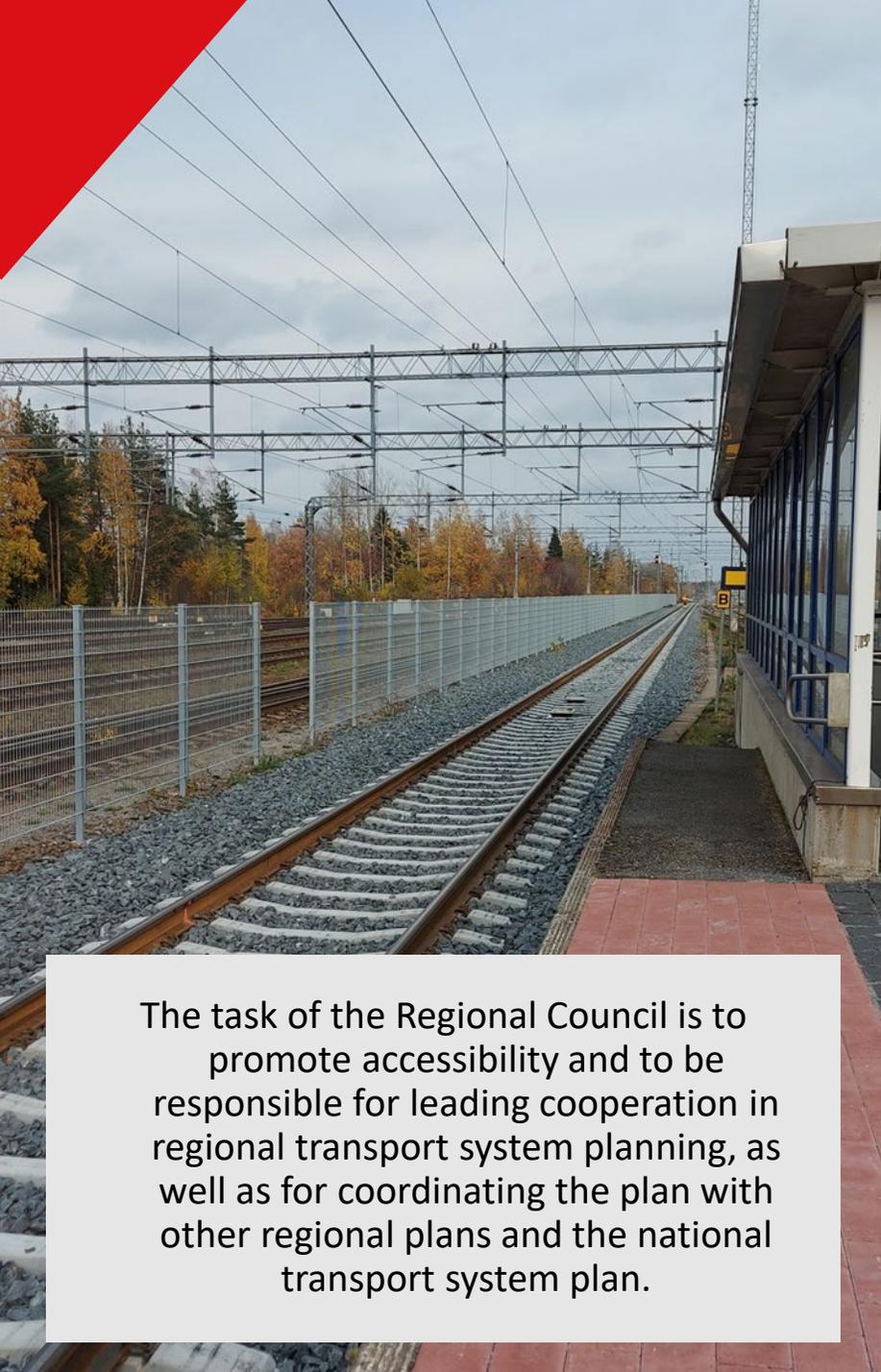
Information about public display will be published in newspapers and council's website.

During public display, officers, companies, organisations and region's people can tell their opinion on the content of the plan.

Based on feedback given on plan draft, a plan suggestion will be made.

# TRAFFIC SYSTEM

- / Accessibility and the functioning of the transport system are key prerequisites for regional development.
- / The aim is a functional, safe and sustainable transport system that improves the region's accessibility, enables smooth mobility for people, and takes into account the transport needs of businesses.
- / The goal is also to reduce the environmental and climate impacts of transport, promote traffic safety, and ensure equal mobility opportunities for different population groups.

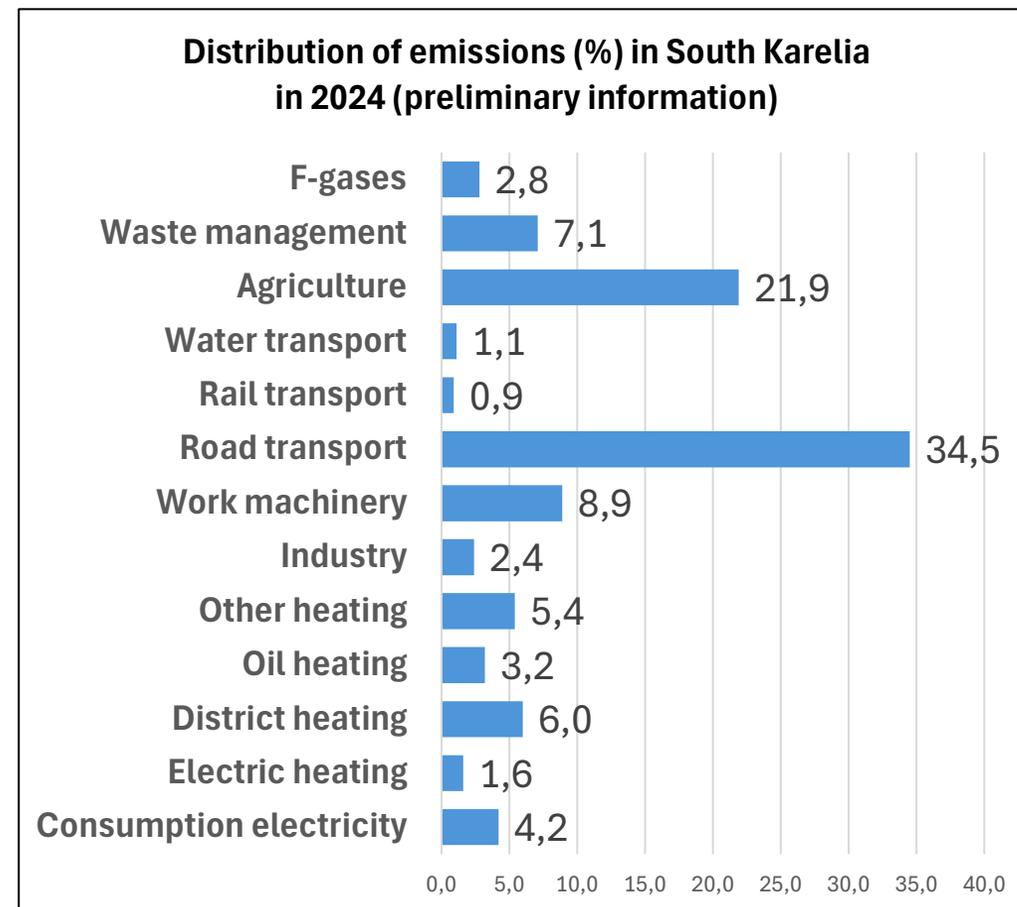


The task of the Regional Council is to promote accessibility and to be responsible for leading cooperation in regional transport system planning, as well as for coordinating the plan with other regional plans and the national transport system plan.

# TRAFFIC SYSTEM

South Karelia is a Hinku region (i.e. a carbon-neutral region) that's committed, together with the region's Hinku municipalities, to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 80% from the 2007 level by 2030.

More than one third of the region's emissions originate from road transport. The combined share of rail and water transport accounts for only 2% of total emissions. For this reason, transport system development measures aim to reduce road transport emissions by enabling a shift of traffic to railways and waterways.



# TRAFFIC SYSTEM

In order to reach HINKU goal, the Regional Council of South Karelia promotes:



## Development of Karelia railway

- Building a double track between Luumäki–Joutseno
- Improving track between Imatra–Joensuu
- Increasing freight and long-distance transport services
- Ensuring traffic between Parikkala–Savonlinna



## Development of the inland waterway transport of Saimaa

- Improvement of deep water route and ports
- Improving operational conditions for freight traffic



## Development of telephone and data communication connections

- Broadband connections also for border and sparsely populated areas
- Ensuring the functionality of telephone connections



# FOCUS OF INTEREST

- / Progressing of the **Luumäki–Joutseno double track railway** and Joensuu–Imatra
- / Progressing of a **special economic zone pilot experiment** in Imatra region
- / Strengthening the operating conditions for a high-quality, attractive and diverse **higher education and upper secondary vocational education** in the region
- / Construction of the **hydrogen valley** and investments in green energy, bioeconomy and circular economy
- / Developing the capacity of the **electricity transmission network** to match the production potential of renewable energy



# FOCUS OF INTEREST

- / **EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028-2034**
  - Equal funding category for all the eastern border regions of Finland
  - Equal support rates for corporate investments in all eastern border regions of Finland
  - New Interreg programme
- / **Development of high-speed telecommunications connections**
- / **Securing Lappeenranta Airport's operations**
- / **Planning, investment funding and implementation of the Imatra Museum of Wilderness and Nature Culture**

# NATURE



## Regional planning

Ecological network, representative landscape areas and cultural environments, healthy waterways, and sustainable use of natural resources are examples of regional planning objectives.



## Regional programme 2026–2029

We create well-being from and for nature and aim to stop nature loss by 2030.



## Collaboration networks

Regional and national working groups promote the implementation of conservation programmes, projects and planning aimed at increasing and preserving natural values in South Karelia.



## Projects

The projects promote the nature and climate work and co-operation of the South Karelia region. A provincial strategy will be developed in 2026 to promote the combating of invasive alien species.

# CLIMATE



## Climate plans

The Regional Council of South Karelia supports municipalities in implementing Climate Plans and applies for projects or participates in their implementation as needed.



## Regional and national co-operation

Co-operation in climate and circular economy work supports municipalities and other actors and promotes the adoption of best practices. Regional roadmaps and targets accelerate the work.



## Carbon emissions

South Karelia aims to reduce carbon emissions by 80 percent from 2007 levels by 2030. The emission reduction target is taken into account in decision-making, projects and in the regional planning.



## Climate change adaptation

The Regional Council of South Karelia aims to promote municipalities' preparedness and solutions for adapting to climate change.

# EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND (ERDF)



At least  
**35%**  
of the ERDF activities  
must support climate  
objectives.



Funded by  
the European Union

- / Focuses on the growth and internationalisation of SMEs and on business-oriented research, development and innovation activities
- / Supports sustainable urban development, which is implemented by 'Innocities' according to the Government's agreements with urban areas
- / Priority areas: Innovative Finland (1) and Carbon neutral Finland (2)

# JUST TRANSITION FUND (JTF)

**Responds to the socioeconomic and environmental impact caused by halving the use of peat as energy**

The goal is to:

- / diversify business
- / adapt the sector's workforce
- / restore adverse environmental impacts.

## **Just Transition in Finland**

- / Special objective: Just transition for discontinuing the use of peat in regions
- / Implementation through regional transition plans

**JTF = Just Transition Fund**



Funded by  
the European Union

# TRANSITION FROM CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION WITH RUSSIA TO BALTIC SEA REGION COOPERATION

- / 24 M€ was transferred from South-East Finland – Russia CBC-Programme to **Interreg Central Baltic Programme**.
- / Instead of Russia, international cooperation of organisations is redirected to the Baltic Sea region.
- / Disrupted security situation has brought attention to the EU's external border areas. There is a need to secure sufficient funding to compensate regional crisis and support vitality of border regions.



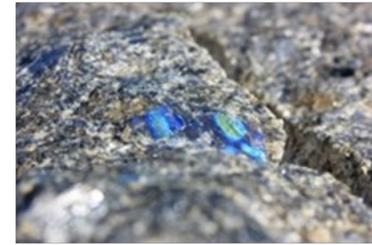
# REGION'S SYMBOLS

**Saimaa**  
Region's lake

Largest lake in Finland 1 377 km<sup>2</sup>  
Average depth 10,8 m  
Deepest part 86 m



**Nightingale**  
Region's bird



**Spectrolite**  
Region's rock



**Spring  
pasqueflower**  
Region's flower



**Land-locked  
atlantic salm**  
Region's fish



**Saimaa seal**  
Region's animal



REGIONAL  
COUNCIL  
OF SOUTH  
KARELIA



Regional  
pennant

# SOUTH KARELIA

**Lappeenranta**  
Region's center city

**124 365**  
Population (12/202)  
Goal 127 000  
(12/2024 125 083)

## South Karelia has

- / internationally recognised LUT University, Lappeenranta – Lahti
- / a major region in forest bioeconomy
- / over 250 years of travelling tradition – The Imatra Rapids, Valtionhotelli (State's hotel)
- / 3 hotels
- / Saimaa Canal (+ Kutila Canal is coming)
- / Saimaa's largest deep water route port, Mustola, Lappeenranta
- / Plans of Imatra Museum of Wilderness and Nature Culture
- / Finland's last original and completely wild Land-locked atlantic salmons, Hiitolanjoki, Rautjärvi
- / Kotkaniemi forum, Luumäki
- / Parikkala's statuepark – Finland's best known collection of ITE art works
- / Imatra's castle hotel – elected the most beautiful building in Finland

**9**

**Municipalities**

**6 870 km<sup>2</sup>**  
Area  
77,5% land  
22,5% water

**491 484**  
Overnight stays  
2024

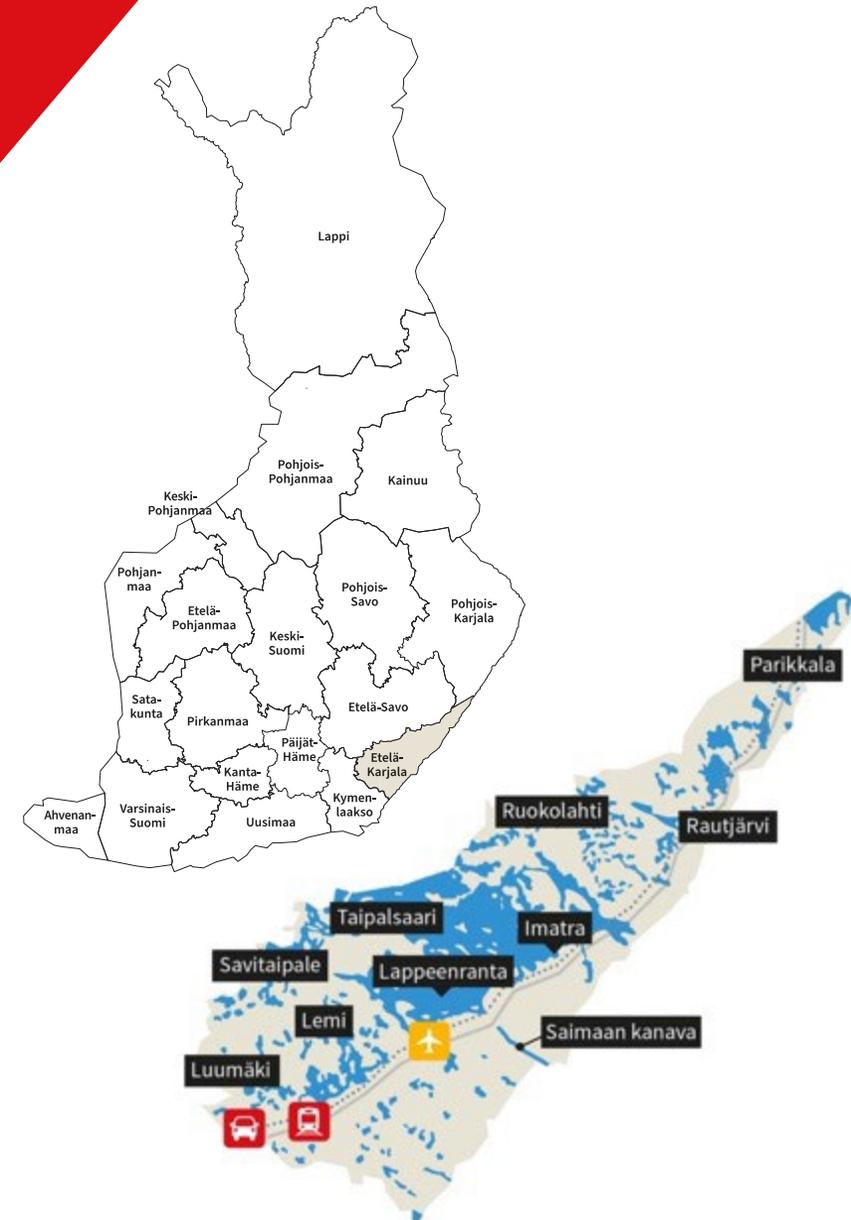
**147,1 M€**  
R&D expenses  
2024

**200 km**  
To Helsinki  
By car 2 h 50 min  
By train 2 h

**69%**  
Employment rate  
20–64-year-olds  
(9/2025)

**210 km**  
Border with Russia

**37 688 €**  
GDP/person  
2023



# SOUTH KARELIA COMPARED TO OTHER FINNISH REGIONS

## ranking in 2020, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026 out of 18 regions



REGIONAL  
COUNCIL  
OF SOUTH  
KARELIA

- ..... Ranking 2020
- Ranking 2022
- Ranking 2023
- Ranking 2024
- Ranking 2025
- Ranking 2026





# GROWTH IN STUDENT POPULATION

- / **LUT Universities, Lappeenranta campus**
  - about 8 500 students
  - over 100 different nationalities
  - in international university ranking-lists one of the best universities in the world
- / **LAB University of Applied Sciences, Lappeenranta campus,** has about 3 400 students
- / **Vocational school Sampo** has over 5 000 students.  
Campuses: Lappeenranta, Imatra and Ruokolahti
- / **Joutseno Institute** has about 100 students + short courses
- / **Army Academy, Lappeenranta,** has hundreds of students in Finland's defence force's training
- / **Border and Coast Guard Academy, Imatra,** has hundreds of students in Border Guard's staff's, cooperative officer's and conscript's training



# THE HEART OF BIOECONOMY

- / Forest bioeconomy's portion measured on different indicators is multiple times higher than the regional average.
- / Forest bioeconomy's portion in South Karelia in the year 2018 was 81,4% (in Finland 39,6% in average)
  - progeny 32% (in FI average 6,6%)
  - value added tax 21,2% (in FI average 4,7%)
  - Investments 14,9% (in FI average 2,6%)
  - employment 7,7% (in FI average 2,7%)
- / Five of the seven largest industrial employers in the region are from the forest industry (Stora Enso, UPM Kymmene, UPM Communication Papers, Metsä Board, Metsä Fibre)

# FORERUNNER IN CLEAN ENERGY

**Solar energy investments are being planned in nearly every municipality of the region.**

**(about 900 M€, 1300 MWp).**

**The region has ongoing renewable energy investment projects worth at least €1.5 billion, scheduled for implementation by 2030.**

- / Thanks to LUT University's initiatives, South Karelia has established a center of energy and electrical expertise, attracting international growth-driven companies.
- / LUT University has the national leadership role in innovation related to green electrification, within the framework of the ecosystem agreements between the government and cities.
- / LUT University's expertise in nuclear power has led to a plan for Finland's first research-use microreactor to be built in Lappeenranta.
- / There are significant opportunities related to carbon capture and the hydrogen economy in South Karelia.
- / The wind farm planned for Luumäki is the only one in South Karelia that can currently be integrated with the Defence Forces' radar surveillance.

# HUGE SAIMAA

- / The Regional Council of South Karelia promotes the development of Saimaa tourism through regional development funding, lobbying for investment financing in projects significant to the region, and fostering strategic cooperation both within the region and between regions.
- / Large tourism-supporting investments are planned, including the Imatra Wilderness and Nature Culture Museum, Kutila Canal, development of Ruokolahti harbour, and the enlargement of the boat passage on Patotie.
- / Improving routes and events has a lot of potential in a travelling view point.
- / Tourism in South Karelia and South Savo shares common development goals and values: hospitality, sustainability, and cooperation.



**The region's heart is a Finnish national treasure, Saimaa, one of the world's most beautiful lakes, which is a part of 3 best known travelling areas in Finland.**



**REGIONAL  
COUNCIL  
OF SOUTH  
KARELIA**

**Dare to act. Great things happen.**