

# Recognition of supranational environmental goals in subnational land use planning by Finnish and Estonian planners

Key findings from a study (unpublished)

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# Aim and outputs of study

- An operational list of environmental goals relevant for land use planning (sources: European Green Deal, previous empirical and theoretical addresses)
- Overview of opinions of Estonian and Finnish local level land use planners on which environmental goals are accounted for more and which less in land use planning (quantitative survey, N=83)
- Insight into the factors that support or hinder accounting for environmental goals in land use planning (incl. the EU dimension; sources: previous addresses)

# Environmental goals included in the study, relevant for land use planning (higher ranking = reported to be accounted for more)

- Fully utilising existing infrastructure
- Ensuring connectivity between natural areas
- Strengthening the integrity of settlement structure
- Promoting cycling and walking
- Preserving ground and surface water
- Preserving natural processes that support the functioning of ecosystems and societies (e.g., natural infiltration of excess water infiltration vs rainwater sewage, vegetation to provide for habitat preservation, etc.)
- Reducing noise levels in human settlements and natural environments
- Promoting brownfield instead of greenfield development
- Preserving and restoring biodiversity
- Reducing the need for motorised transport (e.g., mixed land use, availability of services)
- Promoting multimodal transport (combining various means of transport)
- Adaptation to climate change
- Preserving agricultural land
- Promoting low-carbon modes of transport (e.g., rail, electric)
- Finding ways to produce renewable energy
- Reducing air pollution
- Reducing energy consumption of new buildings
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Promoting restoration of damaged ecosystems
- Reducing soil cover
- Making agriculture more sustainable
- Increasing the quality and quantity of forested area
- Furthering circular economy (reducing use of and reusing materials before recycling)
- Reducing energy consumption of existing buildings

# Patterns (that proved statistically significant\*)

- Environmental goals reported to be accounted for more often by planners in:
  - Finland *vs* Estonia (11/24 environmental goals included in the survey)
  - Urban *vs* rural municipalities (20,000 inhabitants (- recoded groups); 5/24)
  - Larger *vs* smaller municipalities (10/24)
  - Comprehensive *vs* detail planning (12/24)

\* differences significant on 0.05 level between means of corresponding groups. Note sample size limitations.

# Which factors do planners consider to support accounting for environmental goals?

(higher ranking = reported to support more)

- Functioning networking, benchmarking and best practices sharing possibilities with other municipalities or land use planners.
- More clearly set environmental goals and targets on the municipality level
- More financial resources to find out how specific local level land use decisions are linked with environmental goals (analyses, assessments)
- Easily available good examples of plans where environmental goals have been taken into account
- Guidance (guidelines, written instructions) on how to account for environmental goals and targets in land use plans
- More precisely defined national regulative requirements to account for environmental goals and targets in land use plans
- Additional training on how to account for environmental goals and targets in land use plans
- More clearly set environmental goals and targets on the national level
- More pronounced local municipality level political commitment to environmental goals and targets
- Precise criteria in sectoral policy documents on how environmental goals should be accounted for in land use planning
- European Union regulations and strategies defining the role of local municipality land use planning in reaching environmental goals and targets
- More pronounced national level political commitment to environmental goals and targets
- The general public requiring environmental goals and targets to be accounted for more in land use plans
- Land use planning related national or European court decisions requiring to account for environmental goals and targets in land use plans

# Some reflections

- Added value of study: combining various environmental goals, quantifying reasons behind attitudes
- Strikingly distinctive patterns: **Finland** *vs* Estonia, **urban** *vs* rural & **larger** *vs* smaller municipalities, in **comprehensive** *vs* detail planning reporting to consider environmental goals more in their land use planning decisions
- Commitment and support on **municipality level** a strong supporter. Higher level commitment to environmental goals reported to be of surprisingly minor importance
- Enlightening inputs also from open comments, especially related to land use planning as such
- ??A dichotomy between the goal of the GD – **all hands on board!** – and nature of land use planning: **no predefined goals** (pragmatist paradigm), **consider/balance needs of all needs??**
- Policy takeaways (for whom)?

Thank you for your attention!

Thesis and full results available at <http://hdl.handle.net/2077/69030>,  
preparations for publication in progress.

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