

# An Overview of the Hosting Region: East and North Finland

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European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund

Leverage from  
**the EU**  
2014–2020

East & North  
**FINLAND**  
Itä- & Pohjois-  
**SUOMI**



# Most of Finland

East and North Finland consists of seven vibrant regions, a significant coalition at our national level.

The seven regions have a shared smart specialisation strategy that highlights the opportunities, cooperation, strong expertise and productive development found within the region.



# East and North Finland as a cooperative region

1.27 million inhabitants \*

**23%**

of the Finnish population  
5.4 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>

Land area \*

**203 523 km<sup>2</sup>**

Surface water area

**32 927 km<sup>2</sup>**

235 450 km<sup>2</sup> \*

**60.2%**

of Finland's  
land area

\*\* The region accounts for

**19.3%**

of the nation's gross domestic product  
and

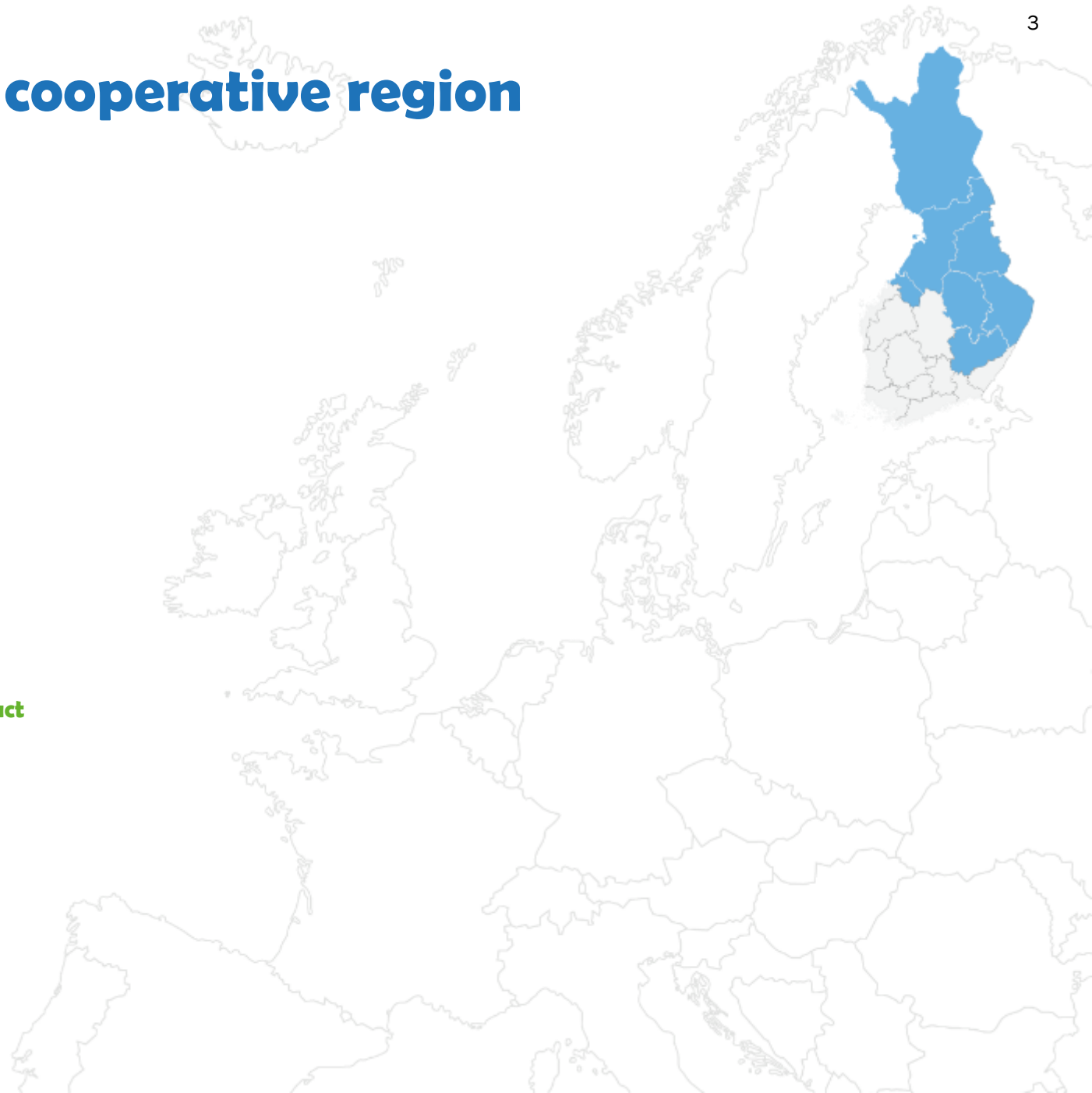
**16.58%**

of foreign trade of goods.

Source:

\* National Land Survey of Finland 2023

\*\* Statistics Finland and Finnish Customs 2021



The shared smart specialisation strategy of East and North Finland enables transnational cooperation and, when applicable, collaborative preparation and application of funding for joint projects.



PHOTO: JUHA KAUPPINEN

# Areas of focus in the smart specialisation strategy for East and North Finland

1. Clean solutions
2. Leveraging digitalisation
3. Sustainable service production



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# Priority 1: Clean solutions

- The objective:
  - to have sustainable solutions in the energy economy and sustainable use of natural resources and raw materials,
  - aiming at products with a higher degree of processing and efficient utilisation of bio and circular economy solutions.
- The ENF regions are able to utilise natural resources in sustainable ways:
  - the area has developed specialised competence and environmental business operations,
  - offering tailored expertise and technology solutions for environmental challenges,
  - energy demands and the sustainable use of natural resources.
- Clean, low-carbon solutions are crosscutting themes in business operations.
- Sustainable use of natural resources and conditions.
- The development of wastewater engineering methods supports the implementation of the circular economy.

## Priority 1: Clean solutions

- ENF have solid traditions and expertise in bioeconomy.
- Entrepreneurship and RDI organisations are strong, especially in relation to forests, wood and various natural products.
- In addition to the mechanical and chemical forest industry, there is specialist expertise, e.g. in the utilisation of side streams, timber construction and the upgrading of natural products.
- The challenge is to build even closer value networks between bioeconomy operators, enabling the research, development and testing of products with a higher degree of processing.
- The energy transition is a crosscutting theme.

# Areas of competence in East and North Finland

## Bioeconomy based on sustainable use of natural resources

- Clean natural products and downstream products
- Timber construction
- Food products and food services
- Further processing of biomass

## Expertise in industrial **circular economy**

- Utilisation of side streams in the process industry
- Resource-efficient production
- Energy-efficient machine and equipment manufacture

## Smart solutions in the extraction and mineral sector

- Material efficiency and processing of minerals
- Circular economy expertise in the extraction industry
- Battery chemistry

Solutions in renewable energy production and energy efficiency

- **Bioenergy and biofuels**
- Wind and solar energy
- Hydrogen economy
- Energy efficiency, energy storage and new technical solutions

## Water expertise and solutions in water supply management

- Wastewater processing and water treatment technology
- Circular water economy



## Strong themes, examples

### Biogas projects

- studies and plans for biogas plants
- impact on agricultural side streams, energy solutions and climate emissions
- are often related to improving the profitability of agriculture

### Forest

- sustainable forest management
- mechanical and chemical forest industry
- timber industry

### Transition of peat energy use

- JTF funded projects
- transition has been very fast

# Clusters as engines of strategic cooperation

Cluster operators bring together growth companies, research, development and innovation actors (RDI), education, investors, public organisations and other agencies in a clearly defined cooperational network. It has a regional and/or thematic objective that serves all parties.

In cluster activities, organisations do not compete with each other, but engage in strategic cooperation that benefits all.

The development of their operations is based on European cluster work led by the European Commission through the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP). East and North Finland is known as a reliable and competent partner within the European cluster networks.

# East and North Finland in Vanguard Initiative

- A member of the Vanguard Initiative network since 2020:  
<https://www.s3vanguardinitiative.eu/members/east-and-north-finland>.
- A member of the Vanguard Initiative Board since 2023.
- ENF is involved in five Vanguard Initiative Pilots:
  - Bio-economy
  - Efficient and Sustainable Manufacturing (ESM)
  - High Performance Production through 3D-Printing
  - Smart Health
  - Hydrogen.
- Membership in VI can be divided into two parts:
  - 2020–2023 within a project framework
  - 2024– directly managed in cooperation by the regions and the EU Office.

## ENF in Vanguard Initiative: Overall Approach

- The VI membership is based on the cooperation of the seven regions.
- The longstanding tradition of cooperation between the regions means that the VI membership is not something separate, but a natural dimension of the existing cooperation.
- The membership links to the implementation of the ENF joint smart specialisation strategy and is built on a solid collaboration of 3 key actors: the Regional Councils, the East and North Finland EU Office, and the regional stakeholders.
- The East and North Finland VI Board team prepares the ENF positions and represents the whole region at the Board.
- The County Governors (7) monitor the ENF participation in VI.

# Thank you!



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