



Rural-Urban Outlooks: Unlocking Synergies (ROBUST)

ROBUST receives funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 727988.*



November 2018
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Rural-Urban Governance Arrangements and Planning Instruments

MAL Agreement: regional cooperation on land use, housing and transport

Helsinki, Finland

1. Overview

The 14 municipalities in the Helsinki region cooperate strategically in the fields of land use, housing and transport. For example, they have established a joint advisory board in these areas.

On 9 June 2016, the municipalities in the Helsinki region and the State of Finland signed the MAL agreement on land use, housing and transport for 2016–2019. The MAL agreement describes the common intent to coordinate land use, housing and transport by the state and the 14 municipalities in the Helsinki region. It is based on the shared regional land use plan, housing strategy and development plan concerning the transport system. The plan sets out concrete actions to achieve the goals. These include regionally defined primary land use development zones, municipal-specific housing construction forecasts and town plan goals, as well as transport projects and measures to be launched before 2030.

Concrete measures are to: direct the growth of the region to the existing urban structure and to areas that are well served by public transport, build enough new apartments and ensure the quality of the living environment. Major investments are also made in rail transport and cycling, and road transport is developed with a focus on freight transport and public transport. Measures that reduce vehicle mileage (e.g. by road charges) and encourage vehicle fleet upgrades to more energy efficient and carbon neutral vehicles are important as well.

2. Main Challenges

What will traffic and housing be like in Helsinki in the future? How can two million residents and a million employers work together to promote optimal growth and the well-being of people? Plans for MAL 2019 are currently being prepared, and the new regional plan on land use, housing and transport is due for completion in 2019.

Helsinki region attracts increasingly more people and companies, which are in demand of apartments, services, business premises and transport. This all brings with it new living habitat. Land use, housing and transport are planned in cooperation in the Helsinki region. How should Helsinki Region be developed in the near future and in the longer term? The objective for the now ongoing MAL 2019 planning round is to make life in the region as functional, sustainable, safe and healthy as possible and to make the Helsinki region an even more fascinating, international metropolis.

3. Main Insights

3.1. Insights related to the broad area of “network governance”

The approval of MAL 2019 plan is being decided by elected officials in the Helsinki Region Cooperation Assembly, the Executive Board of HSL and the KUUMA board.

Land use, housing and transport are planned by experts of the municipality and in the Helsinki region, also the state. Helsinki region transport HSL is legally liable for the plan’s transport part. The municipalities participate in the transport system planning and are jointly responsible for land use and housing planning. The state participates in the planning, in particular through transport system planning and the MAL project group.

The MAL agreement will be prepared on the basis of the plan between the municipalities and the state. With the agreement in place it is possible to develop the region cooperatively.

3.2. Insights related to the role of (actual, potential) social, organizational, institutional innovations

The vision of MAL 2019 is that Helsinki Region is developed as an attractive metropolitan area functioning as an integrated whole. The coherent urban structure of the metropolitan area combines multiple functions and is eco-efficient. A network of district centers each with their distinctive characteristics and close-to-nature environment surrounds the dense core area. The growing region offers a wide range of housing options. The transport system based on sustainable modes of transport serves the accessibility of the region and the competitiveness of industry and commerce.

4. Effectiveness Indicators

MAL 2019 does not explicitly address fostering improved rural-urban interaction, but it aims to develop the regional structure of municipalities with rural areas.

An Impact Assessment is a statutory and important part of the MAL 2019 planning process. The plan can have significant impacts on the environment and society when implemented. The impact assessment highlights the impact of planning and supports the preparation and decision making of the arrangement. The impact assessment of MAL 2019 aims to increase the transparency of the planning process, motivating the use of information in decision-making and open discussion, also including residents.

