

**WASA DAILY**

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# WASA DAILY



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## Retired, do you want to start a new career?

Retirement no longer means the end of active life. Nowadays, many people can wait 20 to 30 healthy years as retirees – enough time to start a new career. You can choose a different career based on your own interests without the pressure of previous years of work.

A second career brings meaning and structure to life. It prevents isolation and supports mental well-being. New challenges, social interaction and intellectual stimulation contribute to both cognitive health and quality of life.

Around the world, other careers are already part of everyday life. In the United States, for example, people change careers in their sixties: managers become teachers, engineers become artists and entrepreneurs. Experience is valued and builds new things on it.

Finland should make better use of this potential. One way would be to reserve five per cent of the university places for seniors. It's not about charity, it's about the wisdom that experienced students bring to the classroom: implied knowledge, the ability to see connections, and a deeper understanding of practical meanings.

Young learners would benefit from this intergenerational interaction. Older students contribute with motivation and life experience that enriches learning. They

do not study out of duty, but out of desire – and that is what inspires them.

The economic benefits are also obvious. A second career can involve part-time work, consulting or entrepreneurship. Leveraging experiences makes society more productive and sustainable.

Instead of seeing retirement as an end point, we must see it as a new beginning. The question is not whether you are too old for another career, but whether you are ready to take advantage of the opportunities that your experience and freedom can create.

Hans Björknäs  
Specialist in Internal  
Medicine  
and journalism student,  
Vaasa

### MIELIPIDE

#### Eläkeläinen, aloittaisitko uuden uran?

**E**läkkeelle jääminen 60- tai 65-vuotiaana ei enää tarkoita tuottavien vuosien loppua – se voi olla kokonaan uuden luvun alku. Terveystieteen edistymisen ja pidentyneen elinajanodotteen myötä nykyikäisen eläkeläiset voivat odottaa työuransa jälkeen 20–30 vuotta aktiivista ja tervettä elämää.

Se on enemmän kuin tarpeeksi aikaa aloittaa täysin erilainen urapolku, joka voi osoittautua jopa tyydyttävämmäksi kuin ensimmäinen.

Toisen uran käsite on vallankumouksellinen. Toisin kuin ensimmäinen urasi, jonka valitsit usein välttämättömyydestä tai rajallisista vaihtoehtoista, toinen ura edustaa todellista valinnanvapautta. Olet jo todistanut itsesi ammattilaisena, rakentanut taloudellista valausta ja hankkineet vuosikymmenten korvaamattoman kokemuksen.

Nyt voit omistautua sille, mikä sinua todella kiinnostaa, olipa kyse sitten opettamisesta, konsultoinnista, oman yrityksen perustamisesta tai sukeltamisesta alueelle, josta olet aina ollut utelias, mutta jota sinulla ei ole koskaan ollut mahdollisuutta tutkia. Toinen ura tarjoaa rakennetta, sosiaalista vuorovaikutusta ja henkistä stimulaatiota – kaikki elementtejä, jotka edistävät sekä kognitiivista terveyttä että emotionaalista tyytyväisyyttä.

Eriyksen lupaava lähestymistapa olisi ottaa käyttöön viiden prosentin kiintiö senioreille yliopistoissa ja ammattikorkeakouluissa.

Ajattele, mitä sellaista 60-vuotias voi tuoda luokkahuoneeseen, mitä 20-vuotias ei yksinkertaisesti pysty tuomaan: vuosikymmenten hiljaista tietoa. Tämä on sellaista viisautta, jota ei löydy oppikirjoista – ymmärrys siitä, miten teoriat toimivat käytännössä, kyky nähdä malleja ja yhteyksiä, joka tulee vain kokemuksen myötä, ja näkökulmia, jotka auttavat erottamaan sen, mikä on todella tärkeää ja mikä on vain trendikästä.

Nuoret opiskelijat hyötyisivät valtavasti tistä sukupolvien välisestä oppimisympäristöstä. He saisivat mentoreita, roolimalleja ja laajemman näkökulman elämään ja uramahdollisuuksiin. Vanhemmat opiskelijat eivät ole siellä, koska heidän on oltava – he ovat siellä, koska he päättävät olla. Se innostus on tarttuvaa.

Sen sijaan, että näkisimme eläkkeelle jäämistä päätöspisteenä, meidän pitää nähdä se uutena alkuna. Kysymys ei ole siitä, oletko liian vanha toiselle uralle, vaan siitä, oletko valmis omaksumaan mahdollisuudet, joita kokemuksesi ja vapautesi voivat luoda.

Hans Björknäs  
sisäntautien erikoislääkäri ja  
journalistikan opiskelija, Vaasa

Heisingin Sanomat 6.7.2025

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# NEWS

## FLIXBUS

# Two years ago, Vaasa got a bus connection to Warsaw



## Now Flixbus is expanding routes and ridership in Finland – though FlixTrain is unlikely to arrive

Two years ago, the idea of boarding a direct international bus from Vaasa to Warsaw may have seemed far-fetched. Today, it's reality — and growing fast. Since Flixbus, the German travel-tech giant, first extended its long-distance coach network to the west coast of Finland, the green buses have become a familiar sight on Vaasa's streets.

This summer, Flixbus runs one daily departure from Vaasa to destinations across Finland and into continental Europe. But come autumn, that number will grow significantly. According to the company, up to five departures per day are planned, marking a rapid increase in service for the coastal city.

"Demand has grown steadily, and Vaasa has proven to be a valuable node in our Nordic network," said a Flixbus spokesperson. "We see a lot of po-

tential here."

## Vaasa was a remote outpost

When the Vaasa–Warsaw line was introduced in 2023, Vaasa was a curiosity in the Flixbus system — a single distant endpoint on the map. But today, it's part of a broader northern strategy. Flixbus now runs routes from other key Finnish cities, including Rovaniemi, Joensuu, and Kuopio, helping knit together both domestic and cross-border travel.

For local residents, the service offers a cost-effective way to travel not only across Finland but into central Europe. Routes typically pass through Turku and Helsinki, then cross by ferry to Tallinn or Stockholm before continuing south — all under a single ticket.

With international train travel often fragmented and expensive, especially in countries like Finland without a dense cross-border rail network, buses have stepped into the gap.

## But no trains for Finland – yet

While Flixbus is ramping up service on wheels in Vaasa, its rail-based sibling, FlixTrain, is unlikely to make an appearance anytime soon.

This spring, FlixTrain announced a massive €2.4 billion investment in 65 new high-speed trains for European markets, with production by Spanish manufacturer Talgo and locomotives from Siemens. The expansion is part of Flix's long-term strategy to dominate affordable rail travel across Germany and beyond.

"The goal is to start a new era of train travel in Europe," said CEO André Schwämmlein in a press release. "We want to bring more people to sustainable travel by train."

However, due to Finland's isolated rail network and differences in rail gauge, FlixTrain currently has no plans to enter the Finnish market — meaning Vaasa's train station will remain served only by Finnish VR tra-

ins for the foreseeable future.

## Green travel, growing market

Flix's expansion isn't just about business — it's also part of the company's sustainability mission. In 2024 alone, Flix passengers worldwide helped avoid an estimated 1.5 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> by choosing bus or train over cars and planes. Coaches, says Schwämmlein, are the "most powerful tool" for democratizing green travel.

For Vaasa residents, that mission translates into more affordable travel options with a lighter climate footprint — and potentially new routes in the future. With five daily departures on the horizon and a steadily expanding network, the green buses that roll down Asemakatu may be just the beginning of a broader transformation in how people travel to, from, and through the north.

# NEWS

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## ALKO

### Alko: Sales of non-alcoholic beverages are increasing

Alko's sales decreased by 10 per cent in June compared to June of the previous year. Sales of wine fell by 12.5 per cent, sales of brewery products decreased by 2.6 percent and sales of spirits by 8.1 percent. Worth noting, however, is the explosive growth of 29.1 percent in sales of non-alcoholic beverages.

"In summer, white wine is a popular choice, but this year the relatively cool weather has increased the sales of red wines," says Jari Hiekkataipale, Service Manager at Alko. He also emphasizes the popularity of non-alcoholic beverages. "Customers

have also been happy to find us as a place to buy them."

According to Alko, beer sales have remained good and the company has invested in a wide and competitive beer range. The amendment to the Alcohol Act on 10 June has affected sales, but the figures for July give a better picture of the situation, as the Act has been in force for the whole month. The limited opening hours of Alko's stores and the smaller number compared to grocery stores affect sales.

Alko's sales are lively in the summer cottage towns. The number of customers will even triple in the summer in some places, such as Nagu. Puumalas Alko's sales accounted for almost half of the year's sales in June-August. According to Alko, the range varies according to the seasons and customers' wishes. Around 2500 new



products are added to the range every year.

This summer's trendy drinks

are spritz and portonic.



# NEWS

## CITY ORCHESTRA

### Vaasa City Orchestra to Offer Two Free Summer Concerts at Strömsö



**Music lovers in Vaasa can enjoy two free concerts this summer as the Vaasa City Orchestra brings classical and popular tunes to the scenic surroundings of Strömsö. The concerts will take place on Tuesday, July 15 at 3:00 PM and Thursday, July 17 at 6:00 PM, featuring a variety of chamber music ensembles.**

Although the orchestra's autumn season program has already been published and tickets are available for purchase, there's no need to wait until September to enjoy live music. These summer concerts offer the perfect opportunity to experience high-quality performances in a relaxed, natural setting by the sea — completely free of charge.

**Two unique concerts with diverse musical offerings**

The first concert on Tuesday, July 15 at 3:00 PM features the following musicians: Ilari Pälli and Mari Pakarinen (trumpet), Liisa Makkonen and Solveig Parikka (violin), Nana Raitaluoto (viola), Vladimir Reshetko (cello), and Eero Marttila (double bass).

**The program includes:**

As Time Goes By by Herman Hupfeld  
Por una cabeza by Carlos Gardel  
Moon River by Henry Mancini  
Hungarian Dance No. 5 by Johannes Brahms  
Meditation from Thaïs by Jules Massenet  
Satumaa Tango by Unto Mononen  
Romance by Nils-Eric Fougstedt  
Myrskyluodon Maija by Lasse Mårtenson  
La Vie en Rose by Louiguy

The second concert on Thursday, July 17 at 6:00 PM brings a different ensemble to the

stage: Stella Michael (flute), Eneko Iriarte Velasco and Hugo Olsson (clarinet), Harri Ala-Aho (French horn), Laura Martin (cello), and Pontus Grans (double bass).

**The evening's music will feature:**

Gopak by Modest Mussorgsky  
Scarf Dance by Cécile Chaminade  
The Girl with the Flaxen Hair by Claude Debussy  
Koivisto Polska (traditional folk tune)  
The Cascades and Maple Leaf Rag by Scott Joplin  
Valse lente by Oskar Merikanto  
On hetki by Rauno Lehtinen  
Soi maininki hiljainen by Fridrich Bruk  
Tango Jalousie by Jacob Gade  
Hey Jude and All My Loving by The Beatles  
Music in the open air by the sea

Both concerts will be held on the veranda of Strömsö, inviting the public to bring blankets

or chairs and enjoy the music in a peaceful, seaside atmosphere.

— “Can you imagine a lovelier summer day than sitting on the veranda of Strömsö and listening to Satumaa or classic Beatles tunes?” says communications representative Johan Hagström. “Next week, it becomes a reality.”

**Summer season pass offer still valid**

The orchestra also reminds the public that its summer campaign for season tickets runs through the end of August. Season passes provide a discounted way to enjoy the orchestra's full autumn program and are available at StudioTicket and NetTicket.fi.

More details about the summer concerts can be found on the Vaasa City Orchestra's website. The city warmly welcomes everyone to these entertaining and relaxed outdoor concerts — a perfect blend of culture and nature.



# NEWS

**VAASA**

## Traffic Lights Coming to Busy Vaasa Intersection



One of Vaasa's busiest intersections, the crossing of Koulukatu and Korsholmanpuistikko, will get new traffic lights. The installation work is set to begin in August 2025. The goal is to improve traffic safety and make it easier for buses to stay on schedule.

The intersection is already very busy, and its traffic load is expected to increase further next year when a new daycare center opens in the area. According to Jukka Talvi, Director of Municipal Engineering, approximately 9,000 vehicles travel on Skolhusgatan daily, which is more than on most other streets in the city center. For example, Handelsplanaden, despite having double the traffic capacity, sees about 1,000 fewer vehicles per day.

### **Smoother Public Transport and Safer Crossings**

One of the most significant reasons for the project is the challenges that public transport faces at the intersection. Buses turning left from Korsholmsplanaden have had dif-

ficulties getting through, especially during rush hour, which has caused schedule delays.

The new traffic lights will have a bus priority function. The system can detect if a bus is behind schedule and can then extend the green light or change it earlier. This ensures that buses can pass through the intersection smoothly.

At the same time, the safety of pedestrians and cyclists will be improved. Pedestrian crossings will be made shorter by narrowing the roadway of Korsholmsplanaden. This reduces the risk of accidents, which is an important measure given the many trips to and from schools and daycare centers in the area. The project's total cost is approximately 150,000 euros, and it is expected to be completed during the autumn. Temporary traffic arrangements will be put in place during construction, and the city asks for patience and cooperation from motorists and residents.

Source: Vaasa.fi





# NEWS

SFP

## “The Ministry of Finance’s mistake should not become Ostrobothnia’s burden,” says Ramieza Mahdi



### Region loses €4 million – SFP vice chair demands accountability from the state

A calculation error by the Finnish Ministry of Finance has serious consequences for the wellbeing services county of Ostrobothnia. Earlier this week, the Ministry announced that the region will receive €4 million less in state funding next year than originally promised. Ramieza Mahdi, vice chair of the Swedish People’s Party (SFP) and member of the county council, calls the situation unacceptable and deeply concerning.

“It is simply unreasonable that a wellbeing services county has to recalculate its entire budget in July. Four million euros less for Ostrobothnia next year is not a minor adjustment – it’s a direct blow to a system that’s supposed to ensure equal access to care across the country,”

Mahdi says.

The error occurred in calculations made by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) and the Ministry of Finance, but it’s the wellbeing services counties – like Ostrobothnia – that are now being forced to pay the price. Mahdi sees this as a sign of deeper systemic flaws.

“What we’re really talking about here is the state handing an unexpected deficit to a region that has already made tough sacrifices. This is a structural failure that exposes something serious. We are making decisions about elder care, staffing, and preventative services – all without knowing what resources we actually have,” Mahdi explains.

Region already made painful cuts – and now punished? The wellbeing services county of Ostrobothnia has already implemented some of the most

stringent cuts in Finland, affecting nearly all sectors. Mahdi emphasizes that local residents have done their part and do not deserve new cutbacks – especially not because of mistakes made in Helsinki.

“Our residents have taken on a lot of responsibility. They don’t deserve more austerity – and certainly not because of an error in a funding model over which we have no local control,” she stresses.

According to Mahdi, Ostrobothnia has acted responsibly and made difficult decisions in order to stay within budget. Yet now the region is being penalized for its diligence.

“What kind of message does this send to the people? Does it matter at all how well a region manages its duties, if in the end it is still punished?”

Ministry must take responsibility  
Mahdi calls on the Ministry of

Finance to take full responsibility for the error and restore the €4 million that Ostrobothnia now stands to lose.

“The least we can expect is that the state takes responsibility for its own mistakes. Wellbeing services counties should not be forced to carry retroactive financial burdens due to flaws in national systems. The Ministry caused this problem – it’s their job to fix it.”

The Ministry has yet to comment on any possible compensatory measures. Meanwhile, concerns are rising in other regions that may also be affected by similar funding discrepancies.

“It raises the question: is the entire system fair? If even careful financial management isn’t enough to ensure stability, then what is?” Mahdi asks.

Source; SFP

# NEWS

## CLIMATE CHANGE

# Earth's Rotation and Day Length: The Climate Change Connection



**The Earth's rotation has been gradually slowing down throughout its history, but recent scientific evidence suggests that climate change is introducing new complexities to this ancient process.**

Understanding how our planet's spin affects day length, and how human activities are now influencing this fundamental astronomical phenomenon, reveals an unexpected intersection between climate science and celestial mechanics.

### The Fundamentals of Earth's Rotation

Earth completes one full rotation on its axis approximately every 24 hours, defining our standard day. However, this rotation is not perfectly constant. The planet's rotational speed is influenced by the conservation of angular momentum, meaning

that any redistribution of mass or changes in the Earth's shape can affect how quickly it spins. Throughout geological history, the dominant factor slowing Earth's rotation has been tidal friction caused by the Moon's gravitational pull, which gradually transfers angular momentum from Earth to the Moon, causing our days to lengthen by about 1.7 milliseconds per century.

### Climate Change as a Modern Influence

Climate change is now introducing measurable effects on Earth's rotation through several interconnected mechanisms. The most significant impact comes from the redistribution of water mass across the planet. As global temperatures rise, massive ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica are melting at unprecedented rates, causing water to flow from polar regions toward the equator. This redistribution of mass affects the planet's moment of inertia, similar to how a

figure skater extends their arms to slow their spin.

The melting of polar ice represents a transfer of mass from higher latitudes to lower latitudes, effectively moving mass closer to Earth's rotational axis. According to the laws of physics, this should cause the planet to spin faster, shortening the length of days. However, the situation is more complex than this simple analogy suggests, as the elastic rebound of land masses previously compressed by ice sheets also plays a role in the overall rotational dynamics.

### Atmospheric and Ocean Circulation Changes

Climate change also affects Earth's rotation through alterations in atmospheric and oceanic circulation patterns. The atmosphere and oceans are coupled to the solid Earth through friction, and changes in wind patterns and ocean currents can influence rotational speed. Stronger or more persistent jet streams, altered monsoon patterns, and changes in ocean circulation can all contribute to variations in day length on seasonal and annual timescales.

Research has shown that El Niño and La Niña events, which are becoming more intense due to climate change, can cause detectable changes in Earth's rotation. During El Niño events, changes in atmospheric circulation can slow Earth's rotation by up to 0.5 milliseconds, while La Niña events can have the opposite effect.

### Measuring the Unmeasurable

Modern technology allows scientists to measure these minute changes in Earth's rotation with extraordinary precision.

The International Earth Rotation and Reference Systems Service uses a combination of Very Long Baseline Interferometry, Global Positioning System measurements, and satellite laser ranging to monitor Earth's orientation in space. These measurements can detect changes in day length at the level of microseconds, revealing the subtle influences of climate change on our planet's rotation.

As climate change accelerates, its effects on Earth's rotation are expected to become more pronounced. Continued ice sheet melting could lead to measurable changes in day length over the coming decades. While these changes will remain imperceptible to human senses, they represent a profound example of how human activities are influencing even the most fundamental aspects of our planet's behavior.

The study of Earth's rotation in the context of climate change demonstrates the interconnected nature of Earth's systems and highlights how human activities are leaving their mark on processes that have remained relatively stable for millions of years. This research not only advances our understanding of planetary dynamics but also provides another tool for monitoring and understanding the full scope of climate change impacts on our planet.

Image: NASA images by Reto Stöckli, based on data from NASA and NOAA. Instrument: Terra – MODIS Public domain



# NEWS

**WÄRTSILÄ**

## Wärtsilä Delivers 204 MW Power Solution to Major Mining Project in Pakistan



**Finnish technology group Wärtsilä from Vaasa has signed a contract to supply a 204-megawatt power plant to the Reko Diq copper-gold mining project in Balochistan, Pakistan.**

The order, placed by Reko Diq Mining Company (RDMC), was recorded in Wärtsilä's second-quarter order book and marks a major step in sup-

porting one of the world's most significant untapped mining sites.

The plant, which will operate with twelve Wärtsilä 50 engines and auxiliaries, will provide reliable and economical electricity for the mining operations in a remote region of western Pakistan. Delivery of the equipment is scheduled to begin in late 2026.

"Wärtsilä's technical expertise and strong local presence in

Pakistan are highly valued. We're pleased to have them as a reliable partner in this major undertaking," said Tim Cribb, Project Director at RDMC.

The deal is structured as an engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) contract, and includes advanced heat recovery systems and infrastructure for future renewable energy integration. The engines are also designed to be converted for use with alternative, more sustainable fuels — align-

ing with Wärtsilä's broader strategy to accelerate the global energy transition.

According to Alexandre Eykerman, Director of Wärtsilä Energy, the mining sector holds "some of the largest growth potential for Pakistan's economy," and projects like Reko Diq are essential to unlocking that potential.

"Pakistan has vast, underutilized reserves of copper, gold, lithium, and rare earth elements — all vital for the global green transition and technological development," Eykerman said.

The Reko Diq initiative is expected to generate significant local economic benefits, including job creation and community development investments.

**Wärtsilä – Leading the Energy Transition**

Headquartered in Helsinki and listed on Nasdaq Helsinki, Wärtsilä is a global leader in energy and marine technology solutions. In 2024, the company's net sales reached EUR 6.4 billion. With 18,300 employees across 77 countries, Wärtsilä focuses on innovation in sustainable energy and lifecycle services. Its energy segment alone has delivered 79 GW of power plant capacity and over 130 energy storage systems to 180 countries.

Image: Wärtsilä will provide a 204 MW power plant to the Reko Diq copper-gold mining project in Pakistan. © Reko Diq Mining Company

# NEWS

## RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY

# Kabul On Course To Be World's First Capital To Run Out Of Water



By Farangis Najibullah  
**Kabul could become the world's first capital to run out of water completely, experts say, blaming the crisis on rapid population growth, climate change, and mismanagement.**

The Afghan capital's groundwater levels have plummeted by up to 30 meters in the past decade, while almost half of the city's boreholes -- the main source of drinking water for the residents -- have dried out, according to a recent study by the Mercy Corps NGO.

Demand for groundwater in the city is disproportionately

high: each year, 44 million cubic meters more water is extracted than can naturally be replenished -- nearly double the sustainable rate.

*Kabul's population has grown from about 2 million in 2000 to more than 6 million in 2025, putting immense pressure on its water supplies.*

The city's aquifers are also being drained by more than 100,000 unregulated borewells and hundreds of factories and greenhouses, according to Mercy Corps and Afghan water management experts who spoke to RFE/RL.

"Kabul has some 400 hectares of greenhouses that consume

about 4 million cubic meters of water annually," said Najibullah Sadid, a water resources and climate change researcher based in Germany. "There are also more than 500 beverage businesses operating in Kabul. Just one such company, Alokozay, the largest soft drink company in the city, uses about 1 million cubic meters of groundwater each year."

The United Nations has warned that without swift action, Kabul's groundwater could be depleted by 2030, posing an existential threat to residents and sparking a major wave of migration.

### 'Having To Choose Between Water And Food'

Many parts of Kabul have already run dry, and residents rely entirely on the limited amount of water they purchase from tankers.

One person who lives in the relatively affluent area of Taimani in northwestern Kabul says he spends a quarter of his salary on water.

"My monthly salary is 21,000 Afghani (\$300) and I spend at least 5,000 Afghani (\$70) on water for our family of 10 people," he told RFE/RL on June 26. "We use this water for tea, cooking, washing-up, laundry, and bathing."

"There are many families that can't afford to buy water, it's like having to choose between water and food," the Taimani resident said.

He also said that those who can't pay for water travel several kilometers to bring it from areas that have public water pumps. Even in sweltering sum-

mer weather, many apartment blocks in Kabul only get water once or twice a week.

Water contamination is another major challenge that has plagued Afghanistan, where nearly 80 percent of people have no access to safe drinking water, according to the United Nations.

Most of Kabul's groundwater is contaminated with sewage, toxins, and high levels of arsenic, experts say.

### Potential Solutions

The Western-backed former Afghan government, which collapsed in 2021, received more than \$4 billion from international donors to overhaul its water sector, according to the World Bank, but the sector remains largely underdeveloped both in the capital and the rest of the country.

Officials of the current Taliban-led government in Kabul did not respond to RFE/RL's request for comment. However, many local experts believe the Afghan capital could still resolve its water crisis relatively quickly if decisive steps are taken.

"This problem is not new. For over a decade, various proposals on how to tackle the problem have been presented to Afghan authorities, but it has never been a priority for them," Sadid told RFE/

Source: <https://www.rferl.org/a/kabul-water-crisis-running-out-of-water-afghanistan-2025/33461892.html>

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# NEWS

## CLIMATE CHANGE

### C3S: June was hot - but not in Finland



**The Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) has released its monthly climate bulletin revealing that June 2025 was the third-warmest June globally, but Nordic countries including Finland experienced notably different conditions compared to the scorching heat that gripped much of Europe.**

Global Heat Records Continue June 2025 was the third-warmest June globally, with an average ERA5 surface air temperature of 16.46°C, 0.47°C above the 1991-2020 average for June. While this represents a slight cooling from the record-breaking June 2024, global temperatures remained significantly elevated, standing 1.30°C above the estimated 1850-1900 average used to define the pre-industrial level. Europe's Tale of Two Climates The continent experienced dramatically contrasting conditions between its western and northern regions. Western Europe as a whole saw its warmest June on record, with an average temperature of 20.49°C, 2.81°C

above the 1991–2020 average. This narrowly surpassed the previous record set during the infamous heat of 2003. Two major heatwaves in mid- and late June 2025 affected large parts of western and southern Europe. Much of the region saw feels-like temperatures exceeding 38°C, corresponding to 'very strong heat stress'. Parts of Portugal saw feels-like temperatures reach around 48°C or 'extreme heat stress'.

#### **Finland and Fennoscandia Buck the Trend**

However, the Nordic region painted a different picture entirely. It was wetter than average in Iceland, Ireland, the northern UK, Denmark, much of Fennoscandia, the Baltic states, Belarus, and parts of Ukraine and Russia. This pattern meant that while much of Europe sweltered, Finland and its Nordic neighbors experienced cooler, more humid conditions. The contrast was particularly stark when considering precipitation patterns. While it was drier than average in western

and southern Europe, as well as much of the UK and regions of southern Scandinavia, Finland benefited from above-average rainfall that provided relief from the continental heat wave. Mediterranean Reaches Unprecedented Temperatures Adding to the intensity of the European heat wave, an exceptional marine heatwave developed in the western Mediterranean in June, leading to the highest daily SST ever recorded for the region as a whole in June (27.0°C), corresponding to the highest daily SST anomaly for any month (3.7°C above average).

#### **Climate Expert Warns of Future Trends**

Samantha Burgess, Strategic Lead for Climate at ECMWF, emphasized the significance of these patterns: "June 2025 saw an exceptional heatwave impact large parts of western Europe, with much of the region experiencing very strong heat stress. This heatwave was made more intense by record sea surface temperatures in the western Mediterranean. In a warming

world, heatwaves are likely to become more frequent, more intense and impact more people across Europe."

Global Climate Context The June 2025 data fits into a broader pattern of climate extremes. The 12-month period of July 2024 – June 2025 was 0.67°C above the 1991-2020 average, and 1.55°C above the pre-industrial level. Notably, June 2025 was only the third month in the last 24 with a global temperature less than 1.5°C above the pre-industrial level. The contrasting conditions between Finland and western Europe highlight the complex regional variations in climate change impacts, demonstrating that even as global temperatures rise, different regions can experience vastly different weather patterns within the same time period.

*The Copernicus Climate Change Service provides monthly climate bulletins using data from billions of measurements from satellites, ships, aircraft and weather stations around the world.*

# NEWS

## BILINGUALISM

### Being Bilingual Is Good for Your Brain

THE ABILITY to speak more than one language has long been associated with cognitive, social, and professional advantages. However, recent neuroscientific research has revealed that bilingualism also confers significant neurological benefits, enhancing brain function, delaying cognitive decline, and even protecting against neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's (Bialystok 2011, 229).

This article examines the cognitive advantages of bilingualism, drawing on empirical studies in psychology, neuroscience, and linguistics to demonstrate how speaking multiple languages reshapes the brain and improves mental resilience.

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#### Cognitive Benefits of Bilingualism

##### 1. Enhanced Executive Function

Bilingual individuals constantly switch between languages, a process that engages the brain's executive control system. This mental exercise strengthens cognitive flexibility, attention regulation, and problem-solving skills. According to a study by Costa et al. (2008, 280), "Bilinguals outperform monolinguals in tasks requiring inhibition of irrelevant information and task-switching, suggesting that bilingualism enhances executive control mechanisms."

Neuroimaging studies support these findings, showing that bilinguals exhibit increased gray matter density in the prefrontal cortex—the brain

region responsible for decision-making and self-regulation (Abutalebi et al. 2012, 1056).

##### 2. Delayed Cognitive Decline and Dementia

One of the most striking benefits of bilingualism is its protective effect against age-related cognitive decline. Research by Bialystok et al. (2007, 459) found that bilingual individuals developed symptoms of Alzheimer's disease four to five years later than monolinguals, despite having similar levels of brain pathology.

A longitudinal study by Craik et al. (2010, 1378) corroborated these findings, concluding that "the constant mental juggling required by bilingualism builds cognitive reserve, effectively shielding the brain from neurodegeneration."

##### 3. Improved Memory

#### and Learning Abilities

Bilingualism enhances working memory—the ability to hold and manipulate information in the mind—which is crucial for learning and comprehension (Morales et al. 2013, 225). Children raised in bilingual environments often exhibit superior metalinguistic awareness, allowing them to better understand grammar rules and language structures (Kovács & Mehler 2009, 6556).

#### Neurological Adaptations in Bilingual Brains

1. Structural Brain Changes Bilingual individuals show increased connectivity in the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) and left inferior frontal gyrus, areas linked to language control and conflict resolution (García-Pentón et al. 2016, 118). Diffusion tensor imaging (DTI) studies reveal that bilinguals have





more robust white matter integrity, indicating faster neural communication (Luk et al. 2011, 3942).

## 2. Enhanced Neuroplasticity

Learning and using multiple languages promote neuroplasticity—the brain’s ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections. A study by Li et al. (2014, 8) found that bilingual seniors maintained better cognitive function than monolinguals, suggesting that bilingualism helps preserve brain plasticity well into old age.

## Social and Psychological Benefits

Beyond cognitive advantages, bilingualism fosters greater empathy and cultural adaptability. Research by Fan et al. (2015, 120) indicates that bilingual children are better at perspective-taking, as they must constantly navigate different linguistic and cultural contexts. Additionally, bilingualism has been linked to hig-

her academic achievement and career opportunities, as multilingual individuals often possess superior problem-solving skills and adaptability (Dewaele & Wei 2013, 231).

The scientific consensus is clear: bilingualism enhances brain function, delays cognitive decline, and improves mental flexibility. From structural brain changes to improved executive control, the benefits of speaking multiple languages extend far beyond mere communication. As societies become increasingly multilingual, fostering bilingual education could be a powerful tool for cognitive health and lifelong learning.

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# ART EXPERIENCE OF THE WEEK



**Albert Edelfelt**

21.7.1854, Kiialan kartano, Porvoon mlk

18.8.1905, Haikko, Porvoon mlk

**Porträtt av kommerserådinnan Anna Sinebrychoff, 1885**



# EVENTS

## UMEÅ WOMEN'S HISTORY MUSEUM

### IN THE SECRET SERVICE OF THE KINGDOM

4.5 - 20.8.2025

Meet the women in the Swedish intelligence service during World War II. Hotel cleaners, cleaners and secretaries are recruited to the Swedish intelligence service. They secretly act as informants, couriers, or infiltrators. Others are employees of the Postal Service, the Telephone Control, or the Defense Staff's cryptography department to write, decipher, translate, and search through letters and calls about suspicious things."

<https://www.kvinnohistoriskt.se/>

## EVENING MUSIC

In Vaasa Church – enjoy the atmosphere of a classic summer evening

Feel the atmosphere of summer evenings with high-quality music in Vaasa Church. The Evangelical Lutheran parishes are once again offering free classical music concerts, which have already established themselves as the pearls of the city's summer programme over the years.

Classical evening music on Wednesdays from 4.6.25 at 19.30

9.7. Loviisa Tuomisto ja Valtteri Tuomisto, urut, piano ja laulu.

16.7. Jenny Sandelin, sopraano ja Anton Ylikallio, piano. tiistai 22.7. kello 18.30 Pétur Sakari, urut. Yhteistyössä Korsholman Musiikkijuhlien kanssa.

6.8. Inka Pärssinen, trumpet ja Hanna Koljonen, urut.

13.8. Noora Karhuluoma, sopraano ja Marco Bonacci, sem-balo.

## LOHTAJA CHURCH MUSIC FESTIVAL

22-27.7.25

Church music from thousand-year-old traditions

[www.kirkkomusiikkijuhlat.fi](http://www.kirkkomusiikkijuhlat.fi)

## NÄRPES THEATRE

"Maskinisterna (The Machi-

nists)", a Swedish-language play about the Wickström Brothers and their engine factory, with a script and direction by Erik Kiviniemi.

World premiere 28.6.25 klo 19  
Other events:

7.7. at 7 pm

8.7. klo 19

10.7 at 7 pm

13.7. at 5 pm

15.7. at 19

16.7. at 19

17.7. at 19

19.7. at 19

## KORSHOLM MUSIC FESTIVAL

23.7.–30.7.2025

"Korsholm Music Festival 2024 and Tove Teuvalla Opera are over and autumn is approaching. Now we are already working on the Summer 2025 Music Festival. However, we want to return to the warm days and festival atmosphere of July and August."



A greeting from festival director Viktor Nygård: "I am very much looking forward to working with the Korsholm Music Festival and I have many exciting ideas for how we can continue to develop the festival. I can already promise that next year it will be a fantastic festival with something for everyone."

## RITZ

25.7.25 at 7 pm

MARI PALO – TANGO

One of Finland's most sought-after sopranos dives into the world of tang.

Korsholm Music Festival

## VAAJA CITY HALL

27.7.25

CONCERT ROYAL

Amélie goes to Belgrade with

her friends

Korsholm Music Festival

## VAAJA FESTIVAL 2025

31.7.-2.8.2025

Music, food and wine

In Vaasa's inner harbour

<https://vaasafestival.fi/>

## WASA FUTURE FESTIVAL

11-16.8.2025

The Wasa Future Festival 2026 is set to take place from 11th to 16th August.

This event gathers knowledgeable and motivated individuals from the business world, universities, regional decision-making bodies.

and ministerial corps to focus on solving issues in Vaasa and across Finland. The event can be followed on Wasa Future Festival YouTube channel.

Wasa Innovation Center

Gerbyntie 18

65230 Vaasa

<https://wasafuturefestival.fi/>

## NIGHT OF THE ARTS

14.8.2025

"Toivottavasti näemme taas ensi vuoden Taiteiden yössä"

<https://www.vaasa.fi/koe-ja-nae/kulttuuria-vaasassa-ja-seudulla/taiteiden-yo/>

## KOKKOLA SKI CHAMBER – KOKKOLA AUTUMN CHAMBER

August 2025 & 2026

[www.kokkolansyyskamari.com](http://www.kokkolansyyskamari.com)

## VAAJA CITY THEATRE

### PIAF

Premiere 11.9.2025 AT 6 PM  
Romeo Hall

"In September 2025, the musical play Piaf – I Don't Regret Anything will premiere on the Romeo stage of the Vaasa City Theatre, which tells the unique and multi-stage life story of Édith Piaf, who rose to world fame from the streets of Paris."

The role of Piaf is interpreted by theatre actress Sonja Halla-aho.

<https://www.netticket.fi/piaf-vaasa>

## Jorma Panula - Conductor Course Concert

19.9.2025 at 6 pm

Vaasa City Hall

In cooperation with Panula Academy.

Vaasa City Orchestra

cond. Students of the conducting course

"Over the decades, Jorma Panula's courses in Vaasa have seen both future world stars in the world of conducting and pedagogues doing important basic work. Maestro Panula, who has an enormous amount of experience, finds the essence in music, and the popularity of the courses shows that he also knows how to pass it on to his students. In the final concert of the conducting course, we will put the lessons learned during the week to full use!"

## Las Vegas

2.10.2025 at 6 pm

## Vaasa City Orchestra

cond. Antti Rissanen

sol. Juki Välipakka & Chiara Orlandi

Come Fly With Me, Fly Me to the Moon, My Way, I want to be Loved by You.... <https://www.vaasa.fi/koe-ja-nae/kulttuuria-vaasassa-ja-seudulla/vaasan-kaupunginorkesteri/las-vegas/>

## VAAJA CITY THEATRE

UNNECESSARY PEOPLE

Premiere 23.10.2025 AT 7 PM  
Juliet Hall

One of the most influential dramas in Finnish playwriting. <https://www.netticket.fi/tarpeettomia-ihmisia-vaasa>

## VAAJA CITY THEATRE

FOREVER YOUNG

Premiere 31.10.2025 AT 7 PM  
Romeo Hall

"Forever Young is a joyful musical comedy full of vibrant joy. As we get older, do we get old? Or are we always forever young?"

<https://www.netticket.fi/ikui-sesti-nuori-vaasa>

## VAAJA LITTFEST 2025

13.-15.11.2025.

Vaasa LittFest is a bilingual literary festival that has been held in Vaasa since 2001. The festival offers in-depth discussions that open up important themes and ideas. This year's theme is Border(s), in-depth

## SHORT STORY

### STRÖMSÖ

## Not everything goes like in Strömsö



Matti had watched every single episode of Strömsö for the past fifteen years. He knew exactly how to prune roses in March, could recite the perfect rye bread recipe from memory, and had memorized the precise angle for hanging Christmas lights that would make his neighbors weep with envy. So when he decided to renovate his own summer cottage on the Ostrobothnian coast, he figured it would be a breeze.

"How hard can it be?" he muttered, adjusting his brand-new checkered shirt that looked suspiciously like the ones worn by the TV hosts. "I've practically got a PhD in cottage renovation from the University of Strömsö."

The first sign of trouble came when Matti tried to install what the show called "charming vintage shutters." In the program, this task took exactly three minutes and resulted in perfect symmetry and rustic charm. In reality, Matti spent four hours with a crooked drill, three bent nails, and shutters that made his cottage look like it was permanently winking at passersby.

Next came the garden makeover. On Strömsö, wildflowers bloomed in perfect disorder, creating that effortless "natural" look that screamed sophisticated design. Matti's wildflower seeds, however, seemed to have attended a different design school. Half refused to grow entirely, while the other half grew with such enthusiasm

that his cottage disappeared behind a wall of aggressive lupins that towered over the windows.

The *pièce de résistance* was supposed to be a cozy outdoor sauna renovation. The TV version featured smooth-talking carpenters who made it look like adult Legos. Matti's version featured a lot of colorful Finnish swearing and a sauna door that opened inward, trapping him inside for twenty minutes until his neighbor heard the muffled cries for help.

By midsummer, Matti's cottage looked less like a Strömsö showcase and more like a cautionary tale about the dangers of DIY enthusiasm. But as he sat on his wonky deck, watching the sunset through his crooked shutters while his jungle of lupins swayed in the coastal breeze, he realized something: his imperfect cottage had more character than any TV renovation ever could.

"Well," he chuckled, raising his coffee mug to toast his wonderfully flawed creation, "at least the coffee still tastes perfect. Some things you just can't mess up."

The mug promptly slipped from his hand and shattered on the deck.

Even the coffee, apparently, doesn't always go like in Strömsö.

IMAGE: Reality is not all here in the world.



# SHOPS

## SUNDOM

### New Fish Shop Opens in Sundom – Kvarkens Fisk Draws Crowds on Opening Day



**On Monday, the new gourmet food store Kvarkens Fisk opened its doors in Sundom, located at the intersection of Kronviksvägen and Sundomvägen.**

Despite the warm summer weather, many curious visitors flocked to the shop to explore its wide selection of fish and delicacies.

#### **A Long-Planned Project**

The shop is the brainchild of Thomas Sund and Stefan Smedman, who spent a full year planning the venture.

The location is strategic, as the area is developing into a shopping hub. Nearby businesses include S-Market, an egg shop, and a café, making Kvarkens Fisk a perfect addition for food enthusiasts.

#### **Experienced Staff and Diverse Selection**

Seven employees will work at the store, including Nina Holmsten, Heidi Mattsson, and Tom Mäntysaari. One of the key figures is the highly experienced chef Märten Berg, who brings his culinary expertise to the team.

Kvarkens Fisk offers a broad range of fish products, including the local favorite Sundom böckling, as well as other seafood and meat delicacies. The shop caters not only to Sundom residents but also to visitors heading out to the archipelago who want to pick up fresh fish for their trips.

#### **A Welcome Addition**

The fish selection in Sundom's existing grocery stores (K-Market and S-Market) has been limited, making this new shop a highly anticipated addition.

#### **Flexible Opening Hours**

Opening hours may be adjusted based on demand, but initially, the store is open:

Tuesday–Thursday: 10 AM–5 PM

Friday: 10 AM–6 PM

Saturday: 10 AM–3 PM

With its wide selection, experienced staff, and convenient location, Kvarkens Fisk is sure to become a favorite spot for fish lovers. And as a final reminder—**fish is healthy!**



# TRAFFIC

## SUNDOM

### The Sundom cycle path is ready



**The residents of Sundom and Kronvik can finally enjoy safer and smoother travel: a new cycle path along Kronvikintie has been completed.**

The 2.6 km long combined pavement and cycle path offers an improved connection, especially for school commuters, between Kronvik and Sundom.

This is a joint project of the City of Vaasa and the South Ostrobothnia Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, the aim of which has been to improve traffic safety in the area. The new route runs between Sundomintie and Vanha Kronvikintie, crossing a beautiful countryside with forest on the left and fields on the right.

This is an important project, especially for school-

children. Now both pedestrians and cyclists can travel safely and on their own route.

The bicycle path has been in use with a crushed stone surface since last autumn, but in May 2025 it received an asphalt coating that improves comfort and durability. The finishing touches have now been made to tidy up the roadside ditches and the general appearance, and the project is complete in its entirety.

#### **Making school journeys safer**

The cycle path will especially serve the area's schoolchildren, who travel between Sundom Primary School and Kronvik School. Previously, school trips had to be partly on the side of a busy road, which caused concerns about safety.

The new separate bus will provide a solution to this problem. Now children and young people can move on their own route without fear of cycling or

walking in traffic.

This is a clear improvement on the previous one. We can be really pleased that safety is now at a much better level.

#### **Good parking for bicycles**

New bicycle parking shelters have also been built to support cycling. A total of 14 covered bicycle spaces have been placed at the ends of Stråkantie and Vanha Kronvikintie. This way, the bike can be left in a sheltered place for onward connections or the school day.

The canopies also increase the attractiveness of the route for those who want to combine cycling with bus connections or walking, for example.

#### **Cooperation ensures continuous maintenance**

The project has been the result of cooperation between the city and the ELY Centre. The City of Vaasa's street construction unit has been responsible for the implementation, but now that the

construction site has been completed, the bicycle path will be officially transferred to the management of the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment.

This means that in the future, the ELY Centre will be responsible for the maintenance of the route – for example, winter maintenance and necessary repairs. In the future, feedback and development proposals related to the use of the bicycle path can also be directed directly to the ELY Centre.

#### **An investment that makes everyday life easier**

The new cycle path in Kronvik is an example of how an infrastructure project that seems small can have a significant impact on everyday safety, smoothness and sustainable mobility. At the same time, it is an investment in the future – an encouragement to move around by bike and on foot in safe conditions.

Source: Vaasa.fi



# FOOD

## SUNDOM

### Sundom's Smoked Herring ("Böckling") and Sundom Smoked Fish Seek Protected Designation of Origin Status



**Two of Ostrobothnia's most traditional fish products – Sundom's smoked herring ("böckling") and Sundom smoked fish – are now one step closer to official recognition.**

The Finnish Food Authority has begun processing applications for Protected Geographical Indication (PGI). If successful, these valued fish products will achieve the same status as French champagne – a designation guaranteeing only products made in a specific region using traditional methods can bear the prestigious name.

#### **Preserving a Sustainable Fishing Tradition**

At the initiative of Sundom Fiskargille (Sundom Fishermen's Guild), the Ostrobothnian Fisheries Association spent 2024 preparing the PGI applications for Sundom smoked herring and Sundom

smoked fish. Submitted to the Finnish Food Authority at year's end, the applications are now under official review.

"Our goal is to ensure these traditions endure for future generations. The PGI protects both product quality and origin, preventing misuse of Sundom fish's good reputation," explains Marina Nyqvist, Executive Director of the Ostrobothnian Fisheries Association.

The PGI requires production in a defined region (here, Sundom village), though the fish itself may come from other waters. What matters most is maintaining traditional smoking methods that create the products' unique flavor and appearance.

#### **A Century of Unchanged Technique: Birch Wood and Eyeless Herring**

Fish smoking in Sundom dates to the 1700s, but the

modern method developed between 1900-1920 with the construction of special smoke ovens still used today.

"Sundom böckling is known for its golden color and soft, smoky taste. A key characteristic is being sold without eyes – traditionally, herring are skewered through the eyes before smoking," describes Tom Blom, Chairman of Sundom Fiskargille.

Exclusive use of birch wood gives the fish its distinctive aroma. The same method produces other Sundom smoked fish like whitefish, perch, salmon, and even shrimp.

#### **A Lengthy Process With Historic Potential**

The PGI approval process is slow – authorities may request application supplements, and final EU approval could take years. But local fishermen and smokehouses already recognize the project's significance.

"This is our chance to bring Sundom fish to the world. A PGI would boost our regional brand while supporting local livelihoods," says Blom.

Funding comes from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund via Ostrobothnia's fisheries development program.

#### **What PGI Means for Consumers**

If approved, consumers can trust Sundom smoked products are made authentically in their region of origin. The designation may also increase market value and demand.

"This matters not just for Sundom but all Ostrobothnia. We're proud of our fishing heritage and want to preserve it genuinely," Nyqvist concludes.

As decisions await from Finnish and EU authorities, Sundom villagers believe their golden smoking tradition may soon earn its rightful recognition.

# CULTURE

## VAASA LITTFEST

# Vaasa LittFest in November – A Cultural Festival to Look Forward To



Pajtim Statovci. Foto: Ano Kurki / Otava

**As November's darkness settles over the city, Vasa will once again light up—through literature, culture, and engaging dialogue. Vasa LittFest, taking place from November 13 to 15, 2025, brings together literature enthusiasts, renowned authors, and timely themes for a unique and thought-provoking festival weekend.**

The theme of the 2025 festival is *Border(s)*, inviting reflection on physical, cultural, linguistic, and mental boundaries—and the ways literature helps us cross them. Literature, by its nature, constantly moves beyond borders, opening windows into other realities.

Among the first confirmed

guests are a number of celebrated Finnish and Nordic authors. *Pajtim Statovci*, twice awarded the Finlandia Prize, will present his latest novel *Lehmä synnyttää yöllä* (2024), which has become an international literary sensation. Translation rights have already been sold to publishers in the U.S., Germany, Italy, and beyond. Statovci's previous works, including *My Cat Yugoslavia* and *Bolla*, have earned critical acclaim at home and abroad.

From Sweden, *Mikael Niemi* will join the festival. He is best known for his August Prize-winning novel *Popular Music from Vittula* (2000). Niemi's storytelling explores life in Tornedalen, where three cultures intersect. His latest novel, *Sten i siden* (2025), is a multigeneratio-

nal family saga set in the far north.

The festival will also feature multi-talented artist *Laura Malmivaara*, who performs with the Vaasa City Orchestra and composer-percussionist Arttu Takalo. Together, they will present excerpts from Malmivaara's recent novel *Iltatähti* through a unique combination of literature and live music—a rare treat for festival audiences.

Among the featured Finnish authors is folklorist and novelist Mikko Kamula, known for his popular *Metsän kansa* series. Kamula delves into the historical borders of Finland through richly detailed novels rooted in 15th-century Finnish folk beliefs.

Science journalist and author *Marcus Rosenlund* will explore the planet's natural boundaries. His works traverse the realms of meteorology, outer space, and microorganisms. His latest book takes a closer look at the underground world—the life and systems that exist beneath our feet.

But the tone isn't all serious. Beloved dialect poet and author *Heli Laaksonen* will bring laughter and warmth to the stage at Vaasa City Theatre. Known for her witty and nature-themed verse, Laaksonen rose to fame with her debut *Pulu uis* (2000) and has since written both

poetry and nonfiction about the Finnish landscape and environment.

One of the festival's most unique events is a late-night session that explores folklore and true crime. Author duo *Tiina and Marko Hautala* will host an evening with religious studies scholar Tuomas Äystö, whose new book *Paholaisen perilliset* (2025) dives into the history of Satanic Panic. The evening will also feature a panel on mythology and magic, with folklorist and author *Jenna Kostet*, Finland's most famous modern witch Kuparikettu, and writer-crafter Riina Peltonen, who has studied magical sites in Ostrobothnia.

— The festival program offers a chance to explore identity, politics, history, and society from both personal and global perspectives. We aim to inspire dialogue not only about literature but also about contemporary issues, says cultural producer Ilkka Nyqvist.

Vasa LittFest is more than just a literary event—it is a space for encounters that transcend generations, languages, and borders.

**Vasa LittFest 2025 – a festival that crosses borders and connects people through the power of stories.**



# VAASA UNIVERSITY

## VAASA UNIVERSITY AND VAMK

### University of Vaasa and VAMK - Stronger and More Competitive Together



**The University of Vaasa and Vaasa University of Applied Sciences (VAMK) have taken a significant step toward a shared future - a new higher education consortium has now been officially established.**

This historic merger is strengthened by the university's 70% ownership stake in VAMK, while the City of Vaasa retains 30%. Both institutions will keep their

names, but the consortium's new name will be announced this fall.

This strategic initiative creates a strong, internationally competitive higher education community in Ostrobothnia that addresses workforce skill gaps and enhances research impact. The collaboration isn't new - the institutions have long worked closely together, particularly in engineering education through Technobothnia's laboratories and the Tritonia Academic Library.

"Our goal is to create an internationally significant higher education unit that offers students flexible study paths and high-quality learning environments all the way up to doctoral education," says Minna Martikainen, Rector of the University of Vaasa.

The new consortium aims for regional, national and international influence. Resources will be used more efficiently, research groups will be strengthened, and cooperation with businesses will intensify. "We're developing research infrastructure, which will also strengthen Finland's export potential," empha-

sizes Hannu Vahtera, Managing Director of VAMK.

This merger isn't just an administrative change - it's a strategic investment in a future where education, research and working life interact even more effectively. The combined strengths of these institutions will create new opportunities for students, researchers and businesses throughout the region and beyond.

*Image: Vaasa University. The image can be freely used.*

# WASA FUTURE FESTIVAL

## The University of Vaasa participates in Wasa Future Festival 11–16.8.2025

**The Wasa Future Festival, which will be held in August, will be bigger and more international than ever before.**

The University of Vaasa is once again strongly involved in the festival's programme throughout the week from 11 to 16 August 2025. The event offers a wealth of content for those interested in science, energy, technology, art and social issues.

The main themes of the festival in 2025 are the environment, innovations and energy. The diverse programme consists of lectures, panel discussions, exhibitions, seminars and workshops. The event will be held at the Wasa Innovation Center (Gerbyntie 16), but the program will also be held elsewhere, such as the University of Vaasa and Tritonia.

### **Sustainable development, science and art meet**

The festival week will open on Monday 11 August with a discussion event that will focus on the culture of overconsumption, climate change and solutions to biodiversity loss. In the evening, the spectacular Butterfly exhibition will also open, which combines art, science and technology. The exhibition examines global interactions between humanity, technology and the environment.

Tuesday 12.8. The University of Vaasa will have a strong presence in the morning when Rector Minna Martikainen, Chair of the Board Mari Kiviniemi and Vice Rectors Mika Grundström, Martin Meyer and Tanja Risikko open the day. Energy experts Jan Segerstam and Kimmo Kauhanen will also participate in the discussions. On the same day, a multidisciplinary Butterfly



Symposium will be held on sustainability in digitalisation, energy and business. Speakers include architects Juhani Risku and Anne Stenros.

Other themes on Tuesday include artificial intelligence, regional energy systems, greenhouse gas emissions and the resilience of society. The day will culminate in an international Thought Leaders Roundtable discussion on the energy transition and an interesting panel on the appeal and leadership of populism, which will include Professor Esa Hyyryläinen, Mari Kiviniemi and journalist Olli Seuri, among others.

### **Space, youth and lightless experiences**

On Wednesday 13 August, the theme of the festival is energy and technology. The day will begin with the Space Day event, organised by the European Space Agency Business Incubation Centre and ESA PhiLab. The Butterfly Immersive Learning

Experience for young people offers an experiential way to explore future phenomena under the guidance of Rebekah Rousi. In the evening, there will be an atmospheric Lights-off experience, where works of art and performances are experienced without electric light.

### **Towards northern innovation**

On Thursday 14 August, we will focus on the opportunities for the Nordic countries to attract investments. The panel organised by the University of Vaasa and Borenus will discuss how to make Finland a leading international investment destination. The panellists include Minister Joakim Strand, Casper Herler and Minna Martikainen.

On the same evening, the Butterfly exhibition will be open longer than usual as part of the Vaasa Night of the Arts. In addition, an art exhibition by Australian artist Katey O'Sullivan will be opened at Tritonia.

Culture and well-being

On Friday 15 August, the festival continues with a new Nordic culture and well-being. The programme includes virtual reality-based well-being at work games and classes. The weekend's program will be confirmed later.

### **The University is building a more sustainable future**

The goal of Wasa Future Festival is to bring together experts from different fields and find solutions to society's major challenges. The participation of the University of Vaasa reflects its strategic goal to be an active player in regional development and global change.

The up-to-date programme and further information can be found on the Wasa Future Festival website: [wasafuturefestival.fi](https://wasafuturefestival.fi)

PHOTO: Vaasa Futurefestival 2023

SOURCE: University of Vaasa



# ONLINE COURSES

## AI-COURSE

# VAMK and University of Vaasa Offer AI Course for Entrepreneurs and Professionals – Free Online Course Explores AI's Business Potential



**Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming businesses at an unprecedented pace, enabling automation, improved customer service, and even entirely new business models.**

But how can small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs harness AI in practice? Vaasa University of Applied Sciences (VAMK) and the University of Vaasa now offer a solution: a free online course to help identify AI opportunities in business.

### AI Isn't the Future—It's Here Now

The new AI2Business online course is designed for SMEs, entrepreneurs, and professionals who want to learn how AI can enhance business growth. The course provides practical knowledge without requiring deep technical expertise.

"Companies need concrete

guidance on AI implementation. Our goal is to accelerate AI competence building," says Sanna Peltonen, project manager of AI2Business at VAMK.

The self-paced course is available in English, making it ideal for busy professionals.

### How AI is Reshaping Business

While many see AI as just a tool for automation, its impact is far broader. "AI doesn't just streamline processes—it changes business logic," emphasizes Marko Kohtamäki, professor at the University of Vaasa.

The course covers AI from three perspectives:

Business – How can AI create competitive advantages?

Technology – What applications exist?

Design – How to develop user-friendly AI solutions?

"AI adoption isn't just about technology. If a solution doesn't serve users, it remains disconnected," Peltonen notes.

Real-World Examples: How Businesses Use AI Today

The course features three company-driven AI experiments demonstrating practical applications:

Document processing – Automated data extraction and report generation.

Price prediction – Dynamic pricing models based on market conditions.

Production quality control – Machine learning detects defects in real time.

"These experiments are based on real business needs, showing how AI can be applied across industries," says Jani Boutellier, assistant professor at the University of Vaasa.

How to Join the Free Course?  
Currently in pilot phase,

the course is free and ideal for SMEs, managers, and anyone interested in AI.

### Participation is simple:

Register on the AI2Business Moodle platform: <https://moodle.muovadigital.net/mod/page/view.php?id=680>

Study at your own pace – 24/7 access.

Receive a certificate upon completion.

As part of the EU-funded AI2Business project, participants are encouraged to join the project's monitoring system to help measure AI training impact in Finland.

"No need to worry about details—we guide you every step of the way," assures Peltonen.

### AI is the Future—Start Learning Now

AI offers vast potential for businesses, but leveraging it requires understanding how it fits into operations. This course helps companies take their first steps into AI without major investments.

Ready to future-proof your business? Enroll now!

**\*AI2Business is an EU-funded project promoting AI skills for SMEs. Learn more: VAMK website.\***

# HEALTHCARE

## SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE

# A family doctor and a personal nurse are the key to health care

**Health care professionals see the family doctor and family nurse model as a key solution for restoring citizens' trust in the shaky health care system.**

According to a recent report by the Sustainable Health Care Network, a permanent care relationship would enable a more individual encounter with the patient and improve the continuity of care.

Finns' trust in health care has plummeted alarmingly in recent years. According to the Healthy Finland report by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), in 2024 only about half of Finns trusted health services, while in 2020 the corresponding share was still 76 per cent.

A total of 580 healthcare professionals responded to the survey conducted by the healthcare research company NHG in May–June 2025. According to Research Director Riikka-Leena Leskelä, strengthening trust requires corrections at both the system and everyday level.

### **Permanent treatment relationship as a solution**

Many professional respondents considered a permanent treatment relationship to be the most important solution. The model in which the family doctor and nurse work as a pair was seen as a way to ensure the continuity and quality of care. The family doctor and nurse model was supported regardless of the respondents' background, and it was believed that it would better enable individual and unhurried encounters with patients.



The Finnish Medical Association has set an ambitious goal: by 2030, every Finn will be guaranteed a family doctor who is easy to contact and, if necessary, can be consulted within two weeks. Achieving this goal requires immediate implementation.

### **Long waiting times undermine trust**

According to the report, citizens' trust in health care is undermined especially by long waiting times, lack of resources and experiences of mistreatment. The respondents emphasised the need for faster appointments, access to treatment and continuity of care – the same issues that citizens were concerned about in the Healthy Finland report.

Treatment pathways should be clear, well-described, and proceed consistently. They should be communicated enough and they should be easy for anyone to find. Sufficient human

resources were seen as the key to managing the workload of professionals and coping.

### **Personal encounters must be preserved**

Although digital services offer many people effective channels for organising care, the respondents emphasised the need to maintain the opportunity for personal encounters – especially for the elderly or those in need of special support. Diverse service models were seen as a solution that can take into account different needs.

The professionals also saw room for improvement in the encounter with the patient. The responses emphasised the desire to encounter the patient as an individual, not just as a case, and they also wished for more time for encounters.

### **A universal system would strengthen trust**

Professor Heikki Hiilamo from

the University of Helsinki proposes a universal health care system that serves all Finns equally as a solution. By universal system, he means that tax money is used to pay for the same level of services for everyone, without unequal categories.

Public health care increases citizens' trust and is also the most financially sustainable way to organise services in the long term," Hiilamo summarises. In addition, the system needs incentives that reward the prevention of diseases, not just their treatment.

Liina-Kaisa Tynkkynen, Principal Researcher at the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, emphasises that the weakening of trust must be taken seriously. According to her, it is important to listen better to both citizens and health care professionals when considering the next steps in the reform of national and regional health care.



# ASTRONOMY

## ASTRONOMY

### 3I/ATLAS, an autumn guest from the outer space



**Astronomers have discovered a remarkable celestial visitor that has traveled billions of miles and possibly millions of years to reach our solar system. Comet 3I/ATLAS, first spotted on July 1, 2025, by the NASA-funded ATLAS telescope system in Chile, represents only the third known interstellar object ever observed.**

The term "interstellar" refers to the vast space between stars, where objects can drift for eons in the cold darkness before being captured by the gravitational influence of another star system. Unlike comets that originate within our solar system and follow predictable elliptical orbits around the Sun, 3I/ATLAS follows what astronomers call a hyperbolic trajectory—meaning it will pass through our solar system once and continue its journey into deep space, never to return.

"This comet clearly originates from outside our solar system,"

explained NASA scientists studying the object's orbital path. "When we trace its trajectory backward, it's evident that 3I/ATLAS has been traveling through interstellar space for an extraordinarily long time before arriving here."

The comet's discovery actually began weeks before its official identification. Archive observations from multiple ATLAS telescopes worldwide and the Zwicky Transient Facility at Palomar Observatory in California revealed the object had been visible as early as June 14, 2025. At the time of discovery, 3I/ATLAS was approximately 410 million miles from the Sun, within Jupiter's orbital region.

What makes this visitor particularly fascinating is its speed and origin. The interstellar comet is racing through space at approximately 137,000 miles per hour, a velocity that will increase as it approaches the Sun. Astronomers have determined that 3I/ATLAS approached our solar system from the direction of Sagittarius, the constellation that points toward the center of our Milky Way galaxy.

The comet's naming follows established astronomical con-

ventions. The "3" indicates it's the third known interstellar object, following 'Oumuamua (discovered in 2017) and 2I/Borisov (discovered in 2019). The "I" designation specifically marks it as interstellar, while "ATLAS" honors the survey telescope system that discovered it.

Unlike its predecessor 'Oumuamua, which appeared more asteroid-like, 3I/ATLAS exhibits clear comet characteristics. Astronomers can observe its active nucleus surrounded by a coma—a bright cloud of gas and dust that forms as the comet's icy surface begins to vaporize under increasing solar radiation. This activity confirms that 3I/ATLAS contains volatile materials that have survived its long journey through the frigid vacuum of interstellar space.

The comet poses no threat to Earth. Its closest approach to our planet will be approximately 1.8 astronomical units—about 170 million miles away. On October 30, 2025, 3I/ATLAS will reach its closest point to the Sun at roughly 1.4 astronomical units, just inside Mars' orbit, before beginning its exit from our solar system.

Astronomers worldwide are racing to study this cosmic time capsule while they can. The comet should remain visible to ground-based telescopes through September 2025, after which it will pass too close to the Sun for safe observation. It will reappear on the Sun's far side by early December 2025, providing a final opportunity for detailed study.

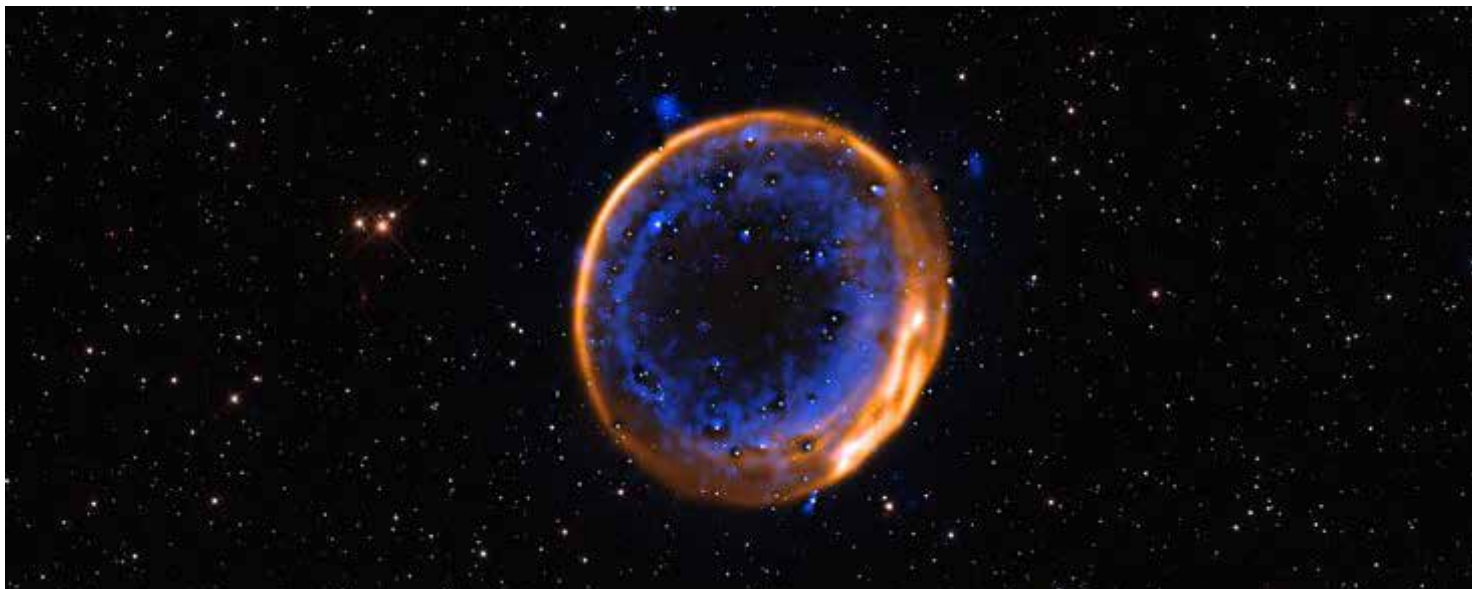
Scientists are particularly interested in analyzing the comet's composition, which could provide insights into the formation processes of other star systems. The chemical signature of 3I/ATLAS may reveal details about its original stellar neighborhood and the conditions that ejected it into interstellar space millions or billions of years ago.

As this autumn visitor continues its brief passage through our cosmic neighborhood, it serves as a reminder of the dynamic nature of our galaxy, where objects can traverse the vast distances between stars, occasionally offering us glimpses into the broader universe beyond our solar system's boundaries.

# ASTRONOMY

## ASTRONOMY

### COSMIC DOUBLE TAP: Astronomers Capture First Proof of Star Destroyed by Twin Explosions



**A stunning new image reveals the ghostly aftermath of a stellar catastrophe—a white dwarf star that detonated not once, but twice, in a violent cosmic spectacle.**

Using the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope (VLT), a team of astronomers has uncovered definitive evidence of a "double-detonation" supernova, a rare and long-theorized phenomenon where a dying star erupts in two successive blasts. The discovery, published today in *Nature Astronomy*, rewrites our understanding of some of the universe's most critical explosions—the very same ones that forged the iron in our blood and revealed the accelerating expansion of the cosmos.

#### **A Stellar Mystery Solved**

Most supernovae mark the explosive deaths of massive stars, but Type Ia supernovae—the kind that produced this remnant—are different. They originate from white dwarfs, the dense, Earth-sized embers of dead stars like our Sun. For decades, astronomers believed these ex-

plosions occurred when a white dwarf siphoned enough material from a companion star to reach a critical mass, triggering a single, cataclysmic detonation.

But now, the VLT's Multi Unit Spectroscopic Explorer (MUSE) has captured something unprecedented: the smoking-gun signature of a double explosion.

"This is the first time we've seen direct proof that a white dwarf can detonate twice," says Priyam Das, lead author of the study from the University of New South Wales Canberra. "It's like a cosmic Russian nesting doll—one blast sets off another, and the result is a supernova unlike anything we've fully understood before."

**The Fingerprint of a Twin Blast**  
The key evidence lies in SNR 0509-67.5, a supernova remnant lingering in space like an echo of destruction. By analyzing its structure, the team detected two distinct shells of calcium—a telltale sign of a double detonation.

#### **Here's how it happened:**

**First Detonation** – The white dwarf, cloaked in stolen helium from its companion, becomes unstable. The helium ignites, triggering a powerful surface explosion.

**Second Detonation** – The shock-wave races inward, compressing the star's core until it, too, erupts in a final, apocalyptic blast.

"The outer explosion squeezes the star like a vice, setting the stage for the second, far more violent detonation," explains Ivo Seitenzahl, who led the observations. "This proves white dwarfs don't need to reach critical mass to explode—they can self-destruct early, in a spectacular two-stage suicide."

**Why This Changes Everything**  
Type Ia supernovae are the cosmic yardsticks astronomers use to measure the universe. Their predictable brightness led to the Nobel Prize-winning discovery of dark energy in 2011. But if some of these explosions occur through a double-detonation mechanism, their consistency—and thus our cosmic

measurements—might need re-evaluation.

"This discovery forces us to rethink the physics behind these explosions," says Das. "If some supernovae detonate differently, we must account for that when using them to map the universe."

#### **A Celestial Spectacle**

Beyond the science, the remnant itself is a breathtaking sight—a glowing nebula sculpted by twin blasts, its calcium-rich layers (visible in blue in the VLT image) tracing the echoes of destruction.

"It's not just data—it's a work of art," Das reflects. "To see the aftermath of such a violent, beautiful event... it's humbling."

With this discovery, astronomers now have a new piece of the puzzle—one that may reshape our understanding of how stars die, how iron fills the cosmos, and even how the universe expands.

Image and Text Credit: ESO/VLT/MUSE



# DISEASES

## CELIAC DISEASE

# Revolutionary Blood Test Could Transform Celiac Disease Diagnosis for Patients Already on Gluten-Free Diets



**For millions of people worldwide living with celiac disease, getting an accurate diagnosis has always presented a frustrating catch-22.**

Traditional testing requires eating gluten to trigger the immune response that doctors can detect,

but many patients have already eliminated gluten from their diets to feel better. Now, groundbreaking research published in *Gastroenterology* offers hope for a solution that could revolutionize how celiac disease is diagnosed.

**The Current Diagnos-**

### **tic Dilemma**

Celiac disease affects approximately 1.4% of the global population, yet many cases remain undiagnosed or misdiagnosed. The condition occurs when the immune system mistakenly attacks the small intestine in response to gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley, and rye.

This autoimmune reaction damages the intestinal lining and can lead to serious complications if left untreated.

Currently, diagnosing celiac disease relies on detecting specific antibodies in the blood and confirming intestinal damage through biopsy. However, these tests only work accurately when patients are actively consuming gluten. For people who have already adopted a gluten-free diet—often after years of unexplained digestive symptoms—getting a definitive diagnosis requires a “gluten challenge”: deliberately reintroducing gluten into their diet for several weeks or months.

This process can be particularly difficult for patients who have experienced significant relief from their symptoms on a gluten-free diet. Many are understandably reluctant to make themselves sick again just to confirm a diagnosis, especially when the treatment remains the same: strict gluten avoidance.

### **A New Approach: Targeting T Cells**

The new research focuses on a different aspect of the immune response—T

cells, which are white blood cells that play a crucial role in the body's immune system. In celiac disease, specific T cells recognize gluten as a threat and orchestrate the inflammatory response that damages the intestine.

What makes this discovery particularly exciting is that these gluten-specific T cells appear to persist in the bloodstream even when patients are following a strict gluten-free diet. This persistence creates an opportunity for diagnosis that doesn't depend on active gluten consumption.

The researchers developed a blood test that measures IL-2 (interleukin-2) secretion when blood samples are stimulated with gluten in the laboratory. IL-2 is a protein that T cells release when they encounter their target antigen—in this case, gluten. The test showed remarkable accuracy in identifying patients with celiac disease, even those who had been gluten-free for extended periods.

### **Breaking Down the Science**

The study used two main approaches: whole blood assay IL-2 (WBAIL-2) testing and serum IL-2 measurement after gluten stimulation. Both methods demonstrated high sensitivity and specificity, meaning they accurately identified people with celiac disease while correctly ruling out those without the condition.

Unlike previous T-cell-



based diagnostic approaches that required complex laboratory techniques like tetramer assays, this new method is relatively simple and could be implemented in standard clinical laboratories. This practicality is crucial for widespread adoption.

### **Real-World Impact**

This breakthrough could transform the lives of countless individuals who suspect they have celiac disease but haven't been able to get a definitive diagnosis. It's particularly relevant for several groups:

Family members of celiac patients who may have adopted gluten-free diets as a precaution and now want to know their status without undergoing a gluten challenge.

People with ongoing symptoms despite following what they believe

is a gluten-free diet, who need to determine whether they truly have celiac disease or another condition.

Individuals diagnosed years ago without proper testing who want confirmation of their diagnosis for medical records and family planning purposes.

Children and adolescents for whom gluten challenges can be especially challenging and disruptive to growth and development.

### **Moving Forward**

While these results are promising, the research is still in the validation phase. The test needs to undergo further clinical trials before it becomes available to patients. Researchers also need to determine optimal protocols, such as how long patients need to be gluten-free before the test becomes reliable and whether it can distinguish between different stages of

celiac disease.

The development also opens doors for better monitoring of celiac patients. The test could potentially help doctors assess whether patients are successfully maintaining a gluten-free diet and whether their immune system is responding appropriately to treatment.

### **Hope on the Horizon**

For the celiac community, this research represents more than just a new diagnostic tool—it's a pathway to answers without the physical and emotional toll of gluten challenges. As the science continues to advance, we may soon see a future where celiac disease diagnosis is as simple as a routine blood test, regardless of what's on your dinner plate.

This breakthrough underscores the importance of continued research into autoimmune conditions and demonstrates how understanding the fundamental mechanisms of disease can lead to practical solutions that improve patients' lives

### **Reference:**

Moscattelli, Olivia G., Amy K. Russell, Lee M. Henneken, Linda Fothergill, Allan Motyer, Hugh Reid, Jamie Rosjohn, m.fl. 2025. "Blood-Based T-Cell Diagnosis of Celiac Disease". *Gastroenterology* 0 (0). <https://doi.org/10.1053/j.gastro.2025.05.022>.

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# HEALTHCARE

## HEALTHCARE

**Are you 65 or older? – See a private general practitioner at the price of a public one starting in September**



### **A new pilot study on freedom of choice in healthcare starts on 1 September 2025.**

During the pilot study, persons aged 65 or over can see a private general practitioner and only have to pay up to the price of the local user fee charged by public healthcare providers. This price applies if the doctor is participating in the pilot study. The pilot study will affect more than 20% of the total population in Finland.

Parliament has approved a temporary amendment to the Health Insurance Act. After the amendment enters into force, persons aged 65 or over can see a private general practitioner at a much lower cost than usual. This means that persons aged 65 or over will have more say in

whether they want to use public or private general practitioner services.

The amendment is part of a pilot study on freedom of choice in healthcare. Kela will implement the pilot study in cooperation with private healthcare service providers between 1 September 2025 and 31 December 2027.

#### **Clear prices, no unexpected costs**

During the pilot study, each appointment with a general practitioner will cost EUR 28.20 or less (in 2025). Customers do not have to pay any other fees for their appointments, such as administrative or service fees.

“The goal is for senior citizens to get the healthcare services they need, when they need them. By setting a deductible in

advance, we ensure that customers know how much they have to pay for each appointment. This benefits the customer,” says Auli Valli-Lintu, Director of Legislative Development at Kela.

Customers who qualify for the pilot study can book up to two appointments in 2025 and up to three appointments per calendar year in 2026 and 2027. The appointments can be in-person appointments or remote video or phone appointments. Kela will publish a list of participating service providers closer to the start of the pilot study.

“During the pilot study, customers can choose the right doctor for them and then go back to that same familiar professional for further treatment, which promotes continuity in their care,” notes Valli-Lintu.

During the pilot study, Kela will also provide reimbursement for some tests and examinations the doctor orders for you during the appointment, such as laboratory tests and imaging tests. You pay half (50%) of the price of each test and examination. Maximum prices will be set for the tests and examinations to ensure that you know approximately how much you will have to pay before you make an appointment and to keep the prices of the services reasonable.

Over 20% of the total population of Finland is aged 65 or over, which means that the pilot study affects approximately 1.3 million people.

SOURCE: KELA, press release

# LEISURE TIME

## VAASA

### Rowboats Now Available for Rent in Ukkokari and Vähäkyrö – Onkilahti's Boat Still Awaiting a Dock



**Residents of Vaasa had the chance to decide how participatory budgeting funds would be used this year, and their choice led to the city acquiring three new rowboats.**

These boats are now available for free rental in Ukkokari and Vähäkyrö, while the one in Onkilahti will be ready in July once a new dock is installed.

#### Three New Rowboats Available for Free Use

The City of Vaasa has purchased three rowboats along with life jackets for public use. The boats can be borrowed from three different locations:

Saaristoravintola Ukkokari  
(in Gerby)

Café Kanttorila (in Vähäkyrö)

Café Onkilahti (boat rental available starting Week 33)

By Midsummer, the boats in Ukkokari and Vähäkyrö were already available, but the Onkilahti rowboat is still waiting for a dock to be built. Construction is expected to be completed by Week 33 (mid-August), after which the boat can be rented from Café Onkilahti near the outdoor gym.

#### How to Rent a Boat?

The rowboats can be rented for a maximum of two hours at a time. The borrower must be an adult, and each boat can accommodate up to four people. The boats are locked at the shore, and keys as well as mandatory life jackets can be picked up from the rental locations.

Opening Hours for Rental Points:

Saaristoravintola Ukkokari – Check the restaurant's website for hours

Café Kanttorila (Vähäkyrö) – Open Tue-Sun, 12 PM–6 PM

Café Onkilahti – Boat rental available starting Week 33

Participatory Budgeting Brings Residents' Ideas to Life

The rowboat initiative is part of Vaasa's participatory budgeting program, where residents get to influence how public funds are spent in their community. This year, €15,000 was allocated to the project.

Previous participatory budgeting projects have included:

A cherry tree park

A wildflower meadow

A winter swimming spot

Additional benches and trash bins along waterfront trails

The new rowboats provide a great opportunity for relaxation and exercise in Vaasa's beautiful archipelago. Since they are free to use, they make for a perfect summer day trip.

#### Comment:

This is a great example of how small but meaningful improvements can be made in collaboration with residents. The rowboats enhance outdoor recreation and bring more life to Vaasa's shores. Once the Onkilahti dock is completed in August, even more people will have the chance to enjoy a rowing adventure.

If you haven't tried rowing yet, now's the perfect opportunity—free and easy!

CREDIT: vaasa.fi



# LEISURE TIME

## VACATION

### Finns Spending More on Summer Vacations – Domestic Travel and Safety in Focus



**Finns are ready to splurge more on their summer getaways this year. According to Nordea's latest survey, the average summer vacation budget has risen by nearly 15% compared to 2024, reaching €1,178 per household.**

Over half of Finns plan to vacation solely domestically, while safety concerns increasingly influence international travel choices.

#### **Bigger Budgets – Especially for Families**

Nordea's annual Summer Vacation Budget Survey reveals that Finns are opening their wallets wider this year. While 60% of households plan to spend no more than €1,000, the average budget has climbed to €1,178

(up from €1,032 in 2024). Families with children and Helsinki-region residents lead the spending: 20% of families budget over €2,000 for summer trips.

"Household finances have improved as inflation slows and interest rates drop. This growing purchasing power is already visible in vacation plans, and we expect the trend to strengthen," says Jani Eloranta, Head of Personal Banking at Nordea Finland.

#### **Safety First: Finns Choose Cautiously**

Domestic travel remains king—70% of Finns plan local trips, and 52% will stay entirely within Finland. Though slightly more Finns (27%) will travel abroad this summer versus 2024, safety concerns now heavily impact destination choices.

A striking 45% now avoid certain regions due to security risks (up from 38% in 2024), with military conflicts and political instability being key deterrents. Sustainability also weighs heavier: overtouristed spots are losing favor, while eco-friendly transport and human-rights-conscious destinations gain traction.

"Finns take responsibility seriously—it's refreshing to see climate and ethics playing bigger roles in travel planning," notes Eloranta.

#### **Cost Hikes? No Problem**

Despite rising prices, 76% say their vacation funds remain unaffected. Still, 55% acknowledge some impact, though this concern has declined for three straight years.

Salaries and savings cover most vacations. While credit card use

has edged up, personal loans play a minimal role. Savings remain pivotal, though their importance has dipped slightly since 2022's peak.

#### **Survey Snapshot**

Conducted by Kantar Finland (May 19–26, 2025; 1,005 respondents aged 18–79). Margin of error: ±1.4–3.1% at 95% confidence level.

#### **Key Takeaways:**

**Bigger budgets:** Average €1,178 (+15% YoY)

**Domestic dominance:** 52% staying in Finland

Nordea's findings confirm Finns prioritize safe, responsible travel—and are willing to pay for it. This summer, journeys lean domestic, but international trips are carefully curated for peace of mind.

Source: nordea.fi



# STATISTICS

## STATISTICS FINLAND

### Number of Foreign-Language Speakers Has Doubled in Ten Years



**Finland's population structure is changing rapidly. At the end of 2024, there were 610,148 people in Finland whose native language was something other than Finnish, Swedish, or Sámi.**

According to Statistics Finland, this marks an increase of over 50,000 people in just one year — and a doubling of the number compared to ten years ago.

Foreign-language speakers now make up 10.8% of the total population. This growth is driven by both immigration and shifting birth rate trends. While the number of foreign-language speakers increased, the number of Finnish-, Swedish-, and Sámi-speaking people decreased by nearly 20,000 over the same period.

**Russian Still the Largest Language Group**

Russian remains the largest foreign

language group, with 102,487 speakers. They are followed by Estonian speakers (49,563) and Arabic speakers (43,534). Notably, the number of Estonian speakers actually declined, unlike the other major language groups.

**Population Growth, Unevenly Distributed**

Finland's official population at the end of 2024 was 5,635,971. The population increased by 32,120 people — the second-largest annual increase in 60 years. One key factor was the rise in the number of Ukrainian citizens gaining residency: in 2024, over 13,000 Ukrainians received a municipality of residence in Finland.

However, this growth is not evenly spread. While 85 municipalities saw population growth, 223 experienced a decline. The largest gains were seen in Helsinki, Espoo, and Tampere, while Kouvola, Savonlinna, and Kotka had the biggest losses.

**Kainuu's Population Falls Below 70,000**

At the regional level, population growth was concentrated in Uusimaa (+22,763) and Pirkanmaa (+6,097). The largest losses occurred in Kymenlaakso (-1,216) and South Ostrobothnia (-610). In Kainuu, the population dropped below 70,000 for the first time.

In relative terms, the fastest growth occurred in small municipalities such as **Kaskinen (+2.7%)** and Kustavi (+2.2%), as well as in Espoo (+2.2%). The steepest declines were recorded in Soini (-3.9%), Virolahti (-3.3%), and Hyrynsalmi (-3.0%).

**Foreign-Born Population Concentrated in the South**

At the end of 2024, there were 623,949 people in Finland with a foreign background, accounting for 11.1% of the population. Nearly half of them live in the capital region. The highest shares of foreign-background residents were in Vantaa (29.2%), Espoo (25.1%), and Närpes (23.0%).

Regionally, the highest proportions of foreign-background residents

were found in Uusimaa (19.3%) and Åland (18.7%). In Åland, 40% of foreign-background residents have Swedish roots. The lowest share was in South Ostrobothnia (4.5%).

**1990 Cohort Now the Largest Age Group**

At the end of 2024, the largest single age cohort in Finland was those born in 1990 — now aged 34 — with 78,162 individuals. Of these, 62,129 were born in Finland and 16,033 abroad. The second-largest cohort was those born in 1992.

These figures show that earlier waves of migration continue to shape the population profile today.

The growing linguistic and cultural diversity in Finland is more than just a demographic trend — it's reshaping everyday life in schools, workplaces, and public services. As the number of foreign-language speakers rises, so too does the need for inclusive policies and sustainable planning for a changing society.



AI

# The AI Assistant Landscape in 2025: Which One is Right for You?



**The artificial intelligence landscape has become remarkably diverse, with multiple powerful AI assistants competing for users' attention.**

Each major player – ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, DeepSeek, and others – brings unique strengths and capabilities to the table. Understanding these differences can help you choose the right AI tool for your specific needs.

## The Major Players and Their Strengths

ChatGPT remains the most recognizable name in AI assistance, excelling particularly in accessibility and user-friendliness. Recent updates have made image generation available to all users through its GPT-4o model, with both free and paid tiers offering robust functionality. ChatGPT's strength lies in its balanced approach to various tasks, though it sometimes lacks the technical precision found in specialized alternatives.

Claude has established itself as the go-to choice for complex reasoning and creative tasks. Users consistently praise Claude's thoughtful, nuanced responses and its ability to handle sophisticated analysis. Claude is particularly strong in coding tasks and provides

what many consider the most "human-like" conversational experience. However, Claude currently doesn't offer native image generation capabilities. Google Gemini leverages Google's vast resources and integration with existing Google services. With the recent upgrade to Imagen 4, Gemini now offers impressive image generation capabilities, producing high-quality visuals up to 2K resolution. Gemini excels in multimodal tasks and benefits from Google's search integration, making it particularly useful for research-heavy activities.

DeepSeek has emerged as a compelling alternative, especially for users seeking powerful AI capabilities without payment requirements. It rivals GPT-4 and Claude in many technical tasks, particularly excelling in programming and Chinese language processing. The trade-off is fewer additional features – no image generation, web browsing, or plugin ecosystem.

## Image Generation Capabilities

Not all AI assistants create images equally well. ChatGPT offers image generation through both its integrated GPT-4o model and the classic DALL-E

system, making it accessible to both free and paid users. Gemini's recent Imagen 4 upgrade has significantly improved its visual creation capabilities, with users noting enhanced image quality and better text rendering within images. Claude, despite its many strengths, currently lacks native image generation. However, it excels at analyzing and describing images that users upload. DeepSeek also doesn't include image generation in its current feature set, focusing instead on text-based tasks and coding assistance.

## Best for Different Use Cases

For general public use, ChatGPT often emerges as the most practical choice due to its balance of features, accessibility, and widespread documentation. Its free tier provides substantial functionality, while paid upgrades offer advanced features for power users.

Technical professionals and developers frequently prefer Claude for its superior reasoning capabilities and coding assistance, or DeepSeek for its strong programming performance and cost-effectiveness. Gemini appeals particularly to users already embedded in Google's ecosystem and those who need robust research capabilities combined with image generation.

## Performance and Accessibility

Recent benchmark tests reveal interesting patterns in AI performance. DeepSeek consistently delivers high-quality technical outputs while remaining completely free to use. Claude maintains its reputation for thoughtful analysis and complex reasoning tasks. ChatGPT provides reliable, accessible performance across

diverse applications, while Gemini offers strong balanced performance with excellent Google service integration. The accessibility factor varies significantly among platforms. ChatGPT and Gemini offer robust free tiers, though with usage limitations. Claude provides some free access but encourages subscription for heavy use. DeepSeek stands out by offering powerful capabilities without requiring payment or even account registration.

## Looking Forward

The AI assistant landscape continues evolving rapidly, with each platform developing distinct personalities and capabilities. Rather than one clear winner, users increasingly benefit from understanding which tool works best for specific tasks. Many power users maintain access to multiple platforms, switching between them based on the task at hand.

For most general users, ChatGPT provides the best combination of capability, accessibility, and support resources. However, those with specific needs – whether advanced coding (Claude or DeepSeek), research with image creation (Gemini), or cost-conscious technical work (DeepSeek) – may find specialized alternatives better suited to their requirements.

The key is matching the AI assistant to your primary use case while remaining open to experimenting with alternatives as these platforms continue their rapid development. The competition among these systems ultimately benefits users, driving innovation and improving capabilities across the entire AI assistant ecosystem.

# PRESS FREEDOM

## GOVERNMENT

### Finland leads international coalition to promote media freedom



Vasemmalta oikealle: Viron ulkoministeri Margus Tsahkna, Saksan ulkoministeri Johann Wadephul sekä ulkoministeri Elina Valtonen. Kuva: EU

**Finland will play a significant role in the international media field when it takes over the Presidency in The Coalition for Press Freedom.**

The two-year work will be carried out together with Germany and will start in early July, when Estonia hands over the Presidency.

The Media Freedom Coalition is a country coalition founded in 2019 that brings together 51 countries from six continents. The coalition's goal is to promote media and freedom of expression, and to improve the safety of journalists worldwide. The initiative was launched under the leadership of the United Kingdom and Canada in re-

sponse to the growing threats to the media.

Minister for Foreign Affairs Elina Valtonen emphasised Finland's commitment to the task: "The focus of our joint Presidency is on protecting journalists, strengthening media literacy and more general issues related to global freedom of expression. It is a pleasure to work with Germany on these important issues."

The choice of Finland is no coincidence. The country ranked fifth in the latest World Press Freedom Index, demonstrating its strong commitment to media freedom. Finland considers media freedom to be a fundamental pillar of a democratic society and an important factor in creating comprehensive security.

The work of the coalition is

concrete and direct. It intervenes in cases where journalists, groups of journalists or media organisations are threatened. Influence is through public statements and direct diplomatic contacts with the authorities, either from the capitals or through the embassies of the coalition countries.

The work is not limited to crisis management. The coalition works in close cooperation with civil society, journalists and other media workers, as well as lawyers familiar with the theme. This wide-ranging approach ensures that actions are based on real needs and expertise.

Finland's Presidency is part of a broader commitment to media freedom. Issues related to media freedom will also be strongly on the agenda during Finland's Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2025, which shows a consistent

policy in international politics.

Strengthening media literacy is one of Finland's priorities. This is particularly topical at a time when disinformation and misinformation are spreading rapidly through social media. Media literacy is a key tool for citizens to distinguish between reliable and unreliable information.

The protection of journalists is another key theme. Around the world, journalists face threats, violence, and even life claims because of their work. International cooperation is essential to ensure the safety of journalists and their ability to carry out their work freely.

The co-presidency with Germany provides an opportunity to combine the countries' different strengths and experiences. Both countries have a long tradition of defending democracy and freedom of speech, which is expected to bring added value to the work of the coalition.



# ATTRACTION

## GOVERNMENT PALACE

# Historic Opportunity: The Government Palace Opens Its Doors to the Public – Explore the Heart of Finnish Governance Before Major Renovation



The Palace illuminated in blue and white in 2017, when Finland was 100 years old.  
Foto: Htm. Wikimedia Commons.  
Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0

**A rare chance awaits on Saturday, September 6, 2025, as the Government Palace (Valtioneuvoston linna) opens its doors to the public from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.**

This iconic building, which has served as the center of Finland's government for over 200 years, invites visitors to explore its historic halls before a major renovation begins.

### Engel's Architectural Masterpiece: A Living Piece of Finnish History

Designed by architect Carl Ludvig Engel and completed in 1822, the Government Palace has been the workplace of ministers and civil servants for nearly all of Finland's in-

dependent history. During the open house event, visitors will walk the same corridors where Finland's most pivotal political decisions have been made.

The tour includes the palace's grand staircase, a site of dramatic historical significance. It was on these steps in 1904 that student Eugen Schauman assassinated the Russian Governor-General Nikolai Bobrikov—an event that marked a turning point in Finland's struggle for autonomy.

"This building is like a living history book. Every room and hallway holds a story that belongs to all Finns,"

### Inside the Seat of Power

Visitors will have the unique opportunity to step inside the Cabinet Meeting Hall, where Finland's laws and policies are shaped, and the Presidential Reception Hall, where state guests are welcomed. These spaces, though elegant, reflect Finland's understated and functional approach to governance.

Many are surprised by how modest yet dignified these rooms are. There's no excessive grandeur—just a sense of purpose and history.

### Last Chance Before Renovation

This year's open house is particularly special, as it offers the last chance to see the palace before a multi-year renovation begins. While details of the project remain undisclosed, the work is expected to modernize infrastructure while preserving the building's historical character.

"The renovation is essential to ensure this landmark remains functional and intact for future generations," says a representative from the Government Secretariat.

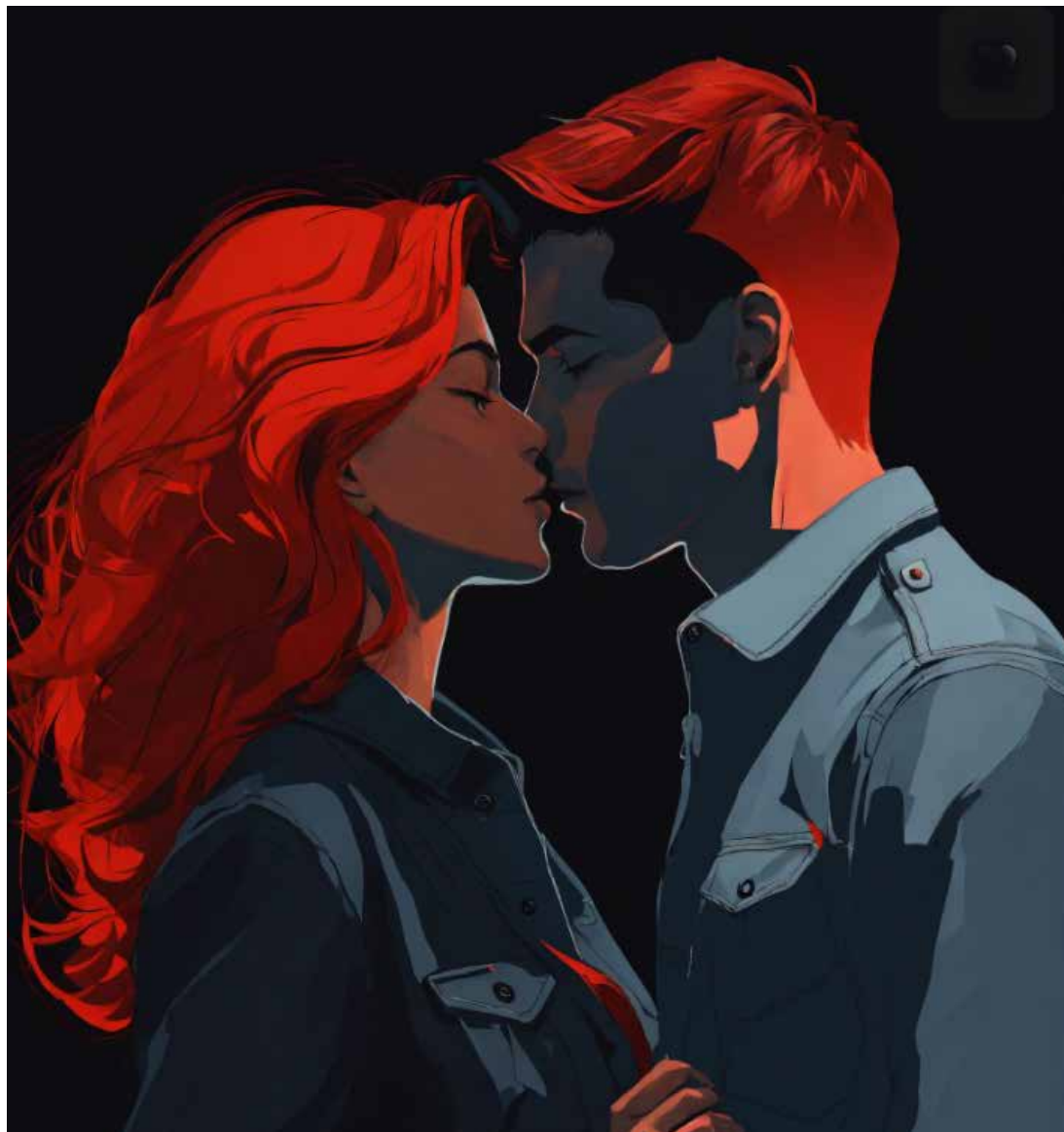
### Practical Information

- No pre-registration required—entry is free and open to all.
  - Guided tours will be available, with details announced in late August.
  - Expect crowds—the event typically draws thousands of visitors, so early arrival is recommended.
  - Location: The Government Palace sits at the edge of Helsinki's Senate Square, easily accessible by public transport.
- Don't miss this unique opportunity to step inside one of Finland's most important political landmarks!

# HEALTH

## COELIAC DISEASE

### A Relief for Everyone with Coeliac Disease - Kissing is Not Dangerous



**For years, people with coeliac disease have faced a dilemma more nerve-wracking than a gluten-filled buffet: To kiss or not to kiss?**

After all, what if your partner just devoured a pizza, a croissant, or—heaven forbid—a whole loaf of garlic bread? Would a romantic smooch turn into a gluten grenade?

Thankfully, science has

swooped in like a hero in a lab coat. A new study presented at Digestive Disease Week® 2025 confirms what hopeful romantics everywhere have been waiting for: Kissing is (mostly) safe. Even if your partner has just polished off a stack of saltine crackers, the gluten transfer is so minimal that it won't trigger your coeliac disease.

The study, led by Dr. Anne Lee at Columbia University, recruited 10 brave cou-

ples—each with one gluten-eating partner and one coeliac sufferer—to test the risks of post-snack kissing. The non-coeliac partners ate 10 crackers (because nothing says romance like dry, crumbly saltines) and then locked lips with their gluten-free sweethearts for 10 seconds.

In one scenario, they waited five minutes before kissing. In the other, they chugged a glass of water first—because nothing kills the mood like

“Hold on, honey, I need to hydrate for science.”

The results? Gluten levels in the coeliac partners' saliva were so low they wouldn't even register as a threat. In fact, the amounts were less than 20 parts per million—the same safety threshold used for gluten-free foods.

So, what does this mean for coeliac sufferers? Well, unless your partner is actively chewing a bagel mid-smooch, you're probably safe. But if you really want to be cautious, Dr. Lee suggests a simple solution: “Have them drink water first.” Because nothing says “I love you” like “Here's a glass of water—rinse out the gluten, please.”

The study is a game-changer for coeliac patients who've been stressing over every kiss. No more interrogating partners—“What did you eat today? Was it gluten? Show me your grocery receipts!” No more panic after a surprise peck. And most importantly, no more avoiding romantic moments just because your date had a beer.

So go forth, coeliac warriors, and pucker up without fear. Just maybe keep a water bottle handy—for safety and hydration. After all, love should be the only thing making your heart race, not gluten anxiety.



# HEALTH

## COELIAC DISEASE

### Should I consider getting a celiac disease test?

Receiving a new medical diagnosis is often a worrying event. The disease that is diagnosed can be difficult to treat, and even with treatment, many symptoms often persist. Regardless of efforts, many diseases tend to worsen and can lead to complications.

#### **Celiac disease is not such a disease!**

Receiving a celiac disease diagnosis is instead a very positive experience. After living with a variety of symptoms for most of your life, you now discover a disease that is easy to treat – without the need for medication. It is very likely possible to live a normal life and be symptom-free for the rest of your life.

#### **Therefore, it is important to consider getting tested for celiac disease.**

The good thing is that it is easy to confirm or rule out the possibility of celiac disease. A simple blood test is all that is required.

So when should you consider getting a celiac disease test? Consider the following factors that may be relevant to you:

#### **SYMPTOMS:**

- ☐ I have significantly more flatulence than anyone else I know
- ☐ I usually have diarrhea, not particularly severe but most every day
- ☐ I have severe constipation and no medication seems to help
- ☐ When I go to the toilet, my stool floats on the water
- ☐ My mother usually tells me that I was very “skinny” as a child and had difficulty gaining weight
- ☐ When I visited the dentist in my childhood, he said that I have “strange tooth enamel”
- ☐ When I was at school, the school nurse gave me a jar of iron tablets and said that I had “bad blood”
- ☐ Later, my doctor was also surprised that my hemoglobin was so low
- ☐ People tell me that they have a “foggy brain”, difficulty concentrating and sometimes difficulty finding words. I think I have that too.
- ☐ I have many more headaches and migraines than others
- ☐ I often have an itchy rash on the outside of my elbows and knees, sometimes with small blisters
- ☐ We have been trying to have children for a long time but have not been successful
- ☐ I have had several X-rays of my intestines over the years without ever finding anything wrong

#### **DISEASES OF YOUR RELATIVES:**

- ☐ My father/mother/sister/brother/child has celiac disease
- ☐ I have at least two more distant relatives who have celiac disease

#### **PAST DISEASES:**

- ☐ I have over/underfunction of the thyroid gland (hyper/hypothyroidism)
- ☐ I have patches of hairless skin on my scalp (alopecia areata)



- ☐ I have white pigment-free patches on my skin (vitiligo)
- ☐ I have been on sick leave for depression/burn out
- ☐ I am lactose intolerant
- ☐ I have insulin-treated diabetes diagnosed at a young age
- ☐ I have been diagnosed with osteoporosis even though I am not even 50 years old
- ☐ I have dry mouth and dry eyes and my doctor says it is Sjögren's syndrome
- ☐ I have numbness in my legs and my doctor calls it peripheral neuropathy

If you have ticked a box in any of these groups, ask your doctor to do a celiac disease screening with a simple blood test called S-KeliSeu during your next health check. If it is completely normal, you do not have celiac disease. But if the test shows that you have celiac disease, then congratulations! Because this is an important diagnosis that will make you feel much better than before for the rest of your life!

# HEALTH

## HEATH

### University of Jyväskylä: Waist obesity increases urinary incontinence



#### A recent study shows a clear link between waist fat and stress urinary incontinence in middle-aged women.

In particular, fat that accumulates around the internal organs and in the abdominal area increases the risk of pelvic floor dysfunction. An extensive study conducted at the University of Jyväskylä reveals a worrying link between women's body composition and pelvic floor dysfunction. The study, led by doctoral researcher Mari Kuutti, followed 376 healthy women in Jyväskylä for four years and shows that waist obesity significantly increases the risk of urinary incontinence.

#### More than half of women have pelvic floor problems

An alarming finding in the

study was that already at the beginning of the study, more than half of the participants had some kind of pelvic floor dysfunction. The most common of these was stress urinary incontinence, which manifests itself as involuntary urinary incontinence when coughing, sneezing or moving, for example. The study focused on women who were between 47 and 55 years old at the beginning of the study. "The connection between body composition and the symptoms of pelvic floor dysfunction has been studied mainly by using only body mass index and waist circumference," Mari Kuutti explains the background of the study.

#### Waist fat as a special risk factor

The study revealed that fat accumulates especially in the waist area and around the internal organs increases the risk

of stress urinary incontinence. Significant risk factors included a higher total fat content, waist circumference and body mass index. "The results showed that a higher total body fat content and a higher fat content in the abdomen, waist and torso area and around the internal organs were associated with the symptoms of stress urinary incontinence," Kuutti explains. The study used more accurate measurement methods, such as bioimpedance and dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry, which allowed for a detailed analysis of body composition.

#### Lifestyle affects pelvic floor health

Pelvic floor dysfunction naturally becomes more common as a woman approaches menopause. Oestrogen deficiency and the aging of connective tissue weaken the functioning of the pelvic floor structures. Pregnancy,

childbirth and other factors that increase the pressure in the abdominal cavity also affect the development of the problem. However, the study emphasizes that lifestyle matters. Eating behaviour and physical activity affect body composition, which in turn is linked to the development of pelvic floor dysfunction. "Body composition is partly shaped by lifestyle, so measuring it can help identify the risk of dysfunction," the researchers note.

#### Prevention is the key to managing the problem

The results of the study give hope that pelvic floor dysfunction can be prevented by lifestyle changes. Healthy eating and regular exercise, which help manage weight, and especially waist obesity, can reduce the risk of urinary incontinence.



# HEALTH

## A SHORT STORY

### "A New Era in Weight Loss "



Image: HFIF-bild

**He walked into the clinic like he'd walked into a hundred dangerous places before — head high, eyes scanning, shoulders relaxed but coiled like a spring. Nobody noticed him. That was the idea.**

But he noticed everything. The overweight man slumped in a plastic chair. The nurse tapping on a screen. The glossy ad on the wall: "A New Era in Weight Loss — Tirzepatide." He paused. Read it twice.

A miracle drug, they said. Better than anything before. Not some fake fat-burning pill. Not a starvation diet. Not the endless guilt of gym memberships and celery sticks. Tirzepatide worked.

And that made it dangerous.

He knew what people were saying. That this drug, this once-a-week shot, could melt away the pounds. That it was changing lives. That it could

end the obesity epidemic. People who had struggled for decades were now dropping fifty, even a hundred pounds. Fast.

But he also knew something else: when something sounds too good to be true, it usually is. Unless it comes with a price.

He sat in the waiting room and listened. The nurse called a name. A woman stood up — maybe late forties, carrying too much weight, but you could see hope in her eyes. She didn't walk. She floated. "Tirzepatide?" she asked.

The nurse nodded. "Weekly injection. You'll feel full faster. Eat less. Lose more. But we monitor closely. Nausea, constipation, even risk of pancreatitis. You need to check in weekly."

The woman didn't flinch. She'd heard it all before. What's a little nausea when you've been judged every day of your life?

He sat back and closed his eyes. Thought about what he'd read. Tirzepatide was

originally for type 2 diabetes. A GLP-1 and GIP receptor agonist. Complicated words. Simple result: it mimics the hormones your body releases after eating, so you feel full. But this drug went further. Clinical trials had shown people lost up to 22 percent of their body weight. Better than anything before it. Even better than semaglutide.

A game-changer. Which meant billions were on the table.

He opened his eyes. The woman was gone. A new poster caught his attention. "One shot. Once a week. Real results."

He stood up. Walked to the front desk. Asked for the brochure.

The receptionist looked up. "Thinking about trying it?"

He nodded slowly. "Just curious."

She smiled. "It's not just about looking better. It's about staying alive."

He didn't answer. He already knew. Obesity killed. Quietly. Heart disease, diabe-

#### FACTS;

*Tirzepatide (sold under names like Mounjaro) is an in Finland approved medication originally developed for type 2 diabetes. It has now shown significant effectiveness in weight loss and is revolutionizing obesity treatment — but it also raises complex questions about access, cost, and medical ethics.*

tes, joint failure. Tirzepatide was a weapon. A scalpel, not a hammer. And the world had been waiting.

But there were cracks in the miracle.

The cost — thousands per year. The supply — already strained. The ethics — still debated. Should healthy people use it to slim down? Should celebrities jump the line? And what happens when the weight comes back if they stop?

He walked out of the clinic and into the wind. Thought about the woman, and the hope in her eyes. About the millions waiting for salvation in a syringe. About the pharmaceutical execs who were already counting profits.

He thought about justice.

Then he turned up his collar and disappeared into the city.

Because something big was coming.

And he'd be ready.

# HEALTH

## TEEN HEALTH

### THL School Health Survey: Young People Are Doing Better Than Before



**Preliminary results from the 2025 School Health Survey show improved well-being among lower secondary school students. While girls report better health, anxiety and bullying remain key challenges.**

#### Youth Health Shows Improvement

According to the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), 78% of 8th–9th graders now rate their health as “fairly good” or “very good”—a 5 percentage point increase since 2023, according to a press release by THL.

However, a significant gender gap persists: 85% of boys report good health compared to 72% of girls.

“The trend is encouraging. After the pandemic years, these positive findings on youth well-being are welcome,” says Chief Physician Terhi Aalto-Setälä at THL.

Yet 22% of students still describe their health as mediocre or poor—28% of girls and 15% of boys.

“Many young people continue struggling with their health. Daily habits like sufficient sleep, exercise, regular meals, and balanced screen time form the foundation of well-being—areas families should focus on together,” Aalto-Setälä advises.

#### Anxiety Persists, Especially Among Girls

Anxiety levels—measured using the GAD-7 scale based on self-reported symptoms—remain elevated:

34% of girls experience moderate/severe anxiety

9% of boys report similar symptoms  
(No significant change from 2023)

“Youth-reported anxiety spiked during COVID and remains prevalent,” notes Research Manager Olli Kiviruusu. “While pandemic effects linger, increased mental health awa-

reness means more youths recognize and discuss emotional struggles. Not all distress requires treatment, but persistent/severe cases need professional assessment.”

#### Bullying: 8% Face Weekly Harassment

Tracking since 1996, the survey reveals:

7% of girls and 9% of boys experience weekly bullying

Rates remain within the historical 5–10% range

“Both chronic bullying and isolated aggressive acts cause harm,” emphasizes Development Manager Jenni Helenius. “Schools need sustained anti-bullying efforts, often requiring home-school collaboration and multi-professional support.”

#### Full Dataset Coming September 2025

270,000 respondents (grades 4–5, 8–9, and vocational/upper secondary students)

Complete statistical report launches 17 September at [thl.fi/schoolhealth-survey/results](https://thl.fi/schoolhealth-survey/results)

Findings will be discussed at THL’s Wellbeing Arena event (22–23 September)

#### Key Takeaways:

Health gains: 78% feel healthy (+5% since 2023)

Gender divide: Girls trail boys in health/well-being metrics

Ongoing challenges: Anxiety (34% girls) and bullying (8%) demand attention

Prevention focus: Daily routines and early intervention prove critical

While trends are positive, targeted efforts remain essential to address persistent mental health and social challenges facing Finnish youth.



# TOWN PLANNING

## MARKET SQUARE

### Market Square to Become Our Shared Living Room!



#### **Vasa's central square is being renewed – explore the plans and share your opinion!**

The heart of the city of Vasa, Kauppatori (Market Square), is undergoing a major transformation. A new draft of the general plan for Salutorget and the adjacent Hovrättsplanaden is now available, and residents are invited to review the plans and submit their feedback by July 4th.

The plan is based on the winning entry "Vaasan helmi" ("The Pearl of Vasa") from a 2022 landscape architecture competition. The vision combines historical charm with the needs of modern city life. The aim is to create a vibrant, accessible, and inclusive city square – a shared living room for all citizens.

Green, Playful, and Accessible

The traditional market stalls will remain at the center of the square, surrounded by elevated, leafy zones designed for relaxation and social interaction. These areas will be defined by steps and plantings, and include benches, urban swings, game tables, and a playground with an archipelago theme.

A special feature will be a map of the Vasa archipelago engraved into the paving stones in the northern section of the square, between the existing pavilion structures. A playful art installation will also be added – a misting feature that sprays water vapor, providing both entertainment and visual charm, while still allowing the area to be used for events.

#### **For Everyone, Year-Round**

Accessibility is at the heart of

the design. Heated walkways, improved lighting, and new bike parking areas will ensure the space is welcoming and functional for people of all ages throughout the year.

At the southern edge of the square, a new public transport hub will be constructed. A covered waiting area will shelter up to three buses at a time, providing better conditions for passengers. More seating and climbing plants will be added to enhance comfort and aesthetics. The current pergola will be partially preserved and incorporated into the new structure.

#### **The Esplanade as an Art Axis**

Hovioikeudenpuistikko will be transformed into an artistic promenade, with public artworks used to shape intimate, room-like spaces. Cultural and historical values have been carefully considered, and the upgrades will be carried out with sustainability in mind. Tree rows, greenery, and eco-friendly materials will help strengthen the

area's identity while supporting the city's climate goals.

#### **What Happens Next?**

The renovation of Salutorget is included in Vasa's investment plan for 2027. However, the project's realisation will depend on available funding.

Now it's the residents' turn to speak up. Feedback can be submitted to the City of Vasa's registry office by email at [registrituren@vasa.fi](mailto:registrituren@vasa.fi) or delivered in person to Vaasanpuistikko 10. All input will be reviewed before the project proceeds to the construction planning phase and potential implementation.

For more information, visualizations, and the full plan, visit the city's website:

□ [www.vaasa.fi/](http://www.vaasa.fi/)

**The Market Square of the future won't just be a place to pass through – it will be a place to stay, meet, and enjoy.på.**



# NEWS

## STREET ART

# Street Art Transforms Vaasa Into a Vibrant Open-Air Gallery



**This summer, Vaasa comes alive with stunning street art as part of the global *Meeting of Styles* festival. Colorful murals are brightening neighborhoods across the city, creating free public art for everyone to enjoy.**

Vaasa's urban landscape is getting a creative makeover as internationally acclaimed street artists and local talent collaborate on eye-catching murals. New works have already appeared in Palosaari, Hietalahti, and Vöyrinkaupunki, turning ordinary electrical substations into extraordinary works of art.

### Art for Everyone

Residents and visitors can discover these urban masterpieces at locations including:

- Along the road to Mansikkasaari (Pikisaarencatu 1)
- Near Maasilla bridge in the city center
- Along Tiilitehtaankatu in Hietalahti (numbers 10, 44 and 45)
- At Tiklaspuisto park in Vöyrinkaupunki (Kalastajanka-

tu 14)

Additional murals will soon decorate pedestrian underpasses throughout the summer.

"Events like Meeting of Styles enrich our urban culture and bring new forms of expression to public spaces," says cultural producer Ilkka Nyqvist. "They also increase youth participation and create a more art-friendly city environment."

### Global Art Comes to Vaasa

The main *Meeting of Styles* event will take place June 27-29 at Wasa Graffitilandia (Opistokatu 8), featuring live painting by top artists from around the world.

"Our goal was to create a 24/7 open-air gallery that's free and accessible to everyone," explains Aku Siik, chairman of Katukulttuuri Ry, the organization behind the "Back to the Streets" project.

Vaasa's new street art not only beautifies the city but also sparks conversations and brings communities together. Don't miss this chance to see world-class art being created in your neighborhood!









# ART

## GRAFFITI

# Youth Co-Create Stunning Street Art Mural at Care Home



### Young artists collaborate with graffiti pro to transform Vaasa service building

Vaasa's urban landscape has gained a vibrant new addition as local youth and professional graffiti artist Tony Laine teamed up to create a spectacular mural on the wall of Carl & Carolina service home's storage building. The five-day street art camp resulted in a colorful masterpiece now visible from the Fredrikinkatu parking area.

### First-Ever Graffiti Camp Inspires Participants

The City of Vaasa Youth Services organized its inaugural graffiti art camp from June 2-6, attracting nine young participants of varying ages. Local street art veteran Tony Laine guided the aspiring artists through the creative process.

"This was the perfect way to combine artistic expression with youth work," explains Anne Lamminen, youth services coordinator. "The participants learned technical skills while understanding how street art can be both legal and valued."

### Art With Purpose

The new artwork now adorns the

exterior wall of Carl & Carolina service home's storage building on Fredrikinkatu. The property's owner, a local foundation, gave the artists complete creative freedom.

"We immediately said yes when approached about this project. The result is absolutely stunning!" enthuses Lena Sjöholm-Fahlund, facility manager at Carl & Carolina.

Laine designed the composition so he handled the upper section while youth participants executed the lower portion under his guidance.

### More Than Just Paint

The camp served multiple important purposes:

**Community building:** Participants aged 12-17 bonded despite age differences

**Vandalism prevention:** Providing legal outlets reduces destructive graffiti

**Skill transfer:** Professional artist shared techniques and ethical guidelines

"We established artists want to show this is legitimate art form," says Laine. "Projects like this help change perceptions about street art."

### Future Plans

The successful pilot has organizers considering making this an annual event.

"We see great potential to develop this initiative," reveals Lamminen. "There's interest from both youth and property owners wanting to beautify their spaces."

For young participants, the experience proved transformative:

"It was amazing to help create something everyone can see and appreciate," shares one participant. "And learning from a professional was incredible!"

The mural has done more than brighten a service home wall - it's built intergenerational connections and demonstrated street art's positive potential.





# PRESS

## PRESS

Åbo Underrättelser almost entirely digital – the paper newspaper will only be published once a week



Åbo Underrättelser is the oldest daily newspaper in Finland. Its first issue appeared on 3 January 1824

**Finland's oldest newspaper, Åbo Underrättelser, is significantly reducing the number of printed newspapers.**

From October onwards, the magazine will be delivered on paper only once a week, whereas it is currently published five days a week. However, digital publishing will continue five times a week. The first to report on the change was Turun Sanomat.

The decision is based on rising production costs. In particular, the increase in postage and the price of paper has forced the newspaper to consider the cost-effectiveness of distribution and printing.

"I know that changes evoke emotions. But by reducing the number of publication days and investing in

a carefully produced printed magazine once a week, instead of paying distribution and printing costs for five publication days a week, we can preserve what is most important: reliable, local and unique Swedish-language journalism that lives on the terms of its time," says Susanna Landor, CEO and Publisher of ÅU Media, according to Turun Sanomat.

Founded in 1824, Åbo Underrättelser (ÅU) is the oldest newspaper still published in Finland. The magazine is in Swedish and its circulation area covers the whole of Southwest Finland, especially the regions of Turku, Pargas, Kaarina and Kimitoön.

ÅU is distributed several times a year as a blanket distribution to all bilingual households in Southwest Finland, to all households and busi-



The front page of Åbo Underrättelser on 1.12.1939. The Soviet Union had attacked Finland the day before, and that was the beginning of the Winter War

nesses in the centre of Turku and in the archipelago areas. According to Wikipedia, the circulation of blanket distribution is about 60,000 copies at a time.

At the moment, ÅU is published from Tuesday to Saturday, but the exact day of the week when the paper version will be published in the future has not yet been announced.

The magazine is published by ÅU Media Ab, which rose to an exceptional position in the Finnish press after the Swedish media company Bonnier acquired the majority of other Swedish-language newspapers in Finland. In 2023, Bonnier acquired a majority stake in KSF Media (e.g. *Hufvudstadsbladet*, *Västra Nyland*, *Östnyland*) and in 2024 the entire HSS Media (e.g. *Vasabladet*, *Syd-Österbotten*), which will as a result be layout-

ed in Sundsvall, Sweden). In this way, ÅU Media became the only Swedish-language media house in mainland Finland that is fully Finnish-owned.

The Swedish-language press is undergoing a transformation in other ways as well. For example, *Vasabladet* is published only digitally on Mondays, and the other main newspaper in Vaasa, *Ilkka-Pohjalainen*, is published in print six days a week. Vaasa's newest newspaper, *Vaasa-Pohjanmaa*, is mainly digital, but is also published a few times a year as a paper newspaper – usually free of charge. And perhaps we can mention our own newspaper, *Wasa Daily*, one of the very few newspapers in English in Finland. This magazine is also part of a new trend: it is published digitally on Sundays.

# PRESS

## An interview with our newspaper's editor-in-chief in Hufvudstadsbladet

**An inspiring story about a lifelong desire to learn and contribute.**

The article in Hufvudstadsbladet on 17 June 2025 presents an uplifting interview with the 79-year-old Hans Björknäs, a person who refuses to let age set limits to his curiosity and willingness to work. His story is not only a celebration of the individual's drive but also an important reminder of the potential value of looking at aging and retirement with new eyes.

### Retirement as a new beginning

Hans Björknäs is a living counter-image to the traditional view of retirement as a time of passive rest. Instead of retiring when he reached retirement age at the turn of the millennium, he has continued to develop – both professionally and personally. Today, he is studying journalism at the Swedish School of Social Science (Soc&kom), an education that complements his long career as a doctor. His attitude is both inspiring and thought-provoking:

*"Retirement can be the start of something new."*

This view of retirement as an opportunity rather than an end is something that more and more Finns share. According to Barbro Schauman, who works with the EU-funded project Restart, almost half of those who retired in 2023 want to continue working in some way. The project, which is run in collaboration with Åbo Akademi University, Novia University of Applied Sciences and Kimitoön Municipality, aims to break down prejudices against older people in working life and highlight their skills.

The project, which is run in collaboration with Åbo Akademi University, Novia University of Applied Sciences and Kimitoön Municipality, aims to break down prejudices against older people in working life and highlight their skills.

### The need to reassess age in working life

Although many older people want to continue working, they often face obstacles. Schauman points to a "rigidity in Finnish working life", where age discrimination and inflexible working models make it difficult for seniors to contribute. While Japan – a country with similar demographic challenges – has a more accepting culture around older people in working life, Finland still has potential for development in this area.

This is particularly important in view of demographic developments. Schauman points out that the Finnish pension system was originally created to guarantee five secure years after retirement – but today many people live "up to twenty years" after they stop working. At the same time, the number of gainfully employed people per pensioner is decreasing, which makes it increasingly important to exploit the potential of seniors.

### Lifelong learning as a key to meaningful old age

For Hans Björknäs, the search for knowledge has always

been a central part of his life. As a doctor, he had to constantly update his knowledge, and this attitude has been carried over into his retirement. His studies in ecology and journalism show that it is never too late to learn something new.

*"There are so many advantages to the so-called second career. You don't have to choose a career that will support the family. You can really do anything."*

This philosophy is not only rewarding for the individual but also for society at large. Taina Leinonen from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health points out that longer careers not only benefit the individual, but can be "necessary for the welfare system".



**Hans, 79, vill inte vara pensionär**

**Hans Björknäs** är en av de få som vill fortsätta arbeta efter pensionen. Hans 79-åriga liv har varit fullt av utmaningar och framgångar. Han har varit läkare, forskare och nu studerar han journalistik vid Svenska Skolan för Socialvetenskap. Hans attityd är att ålder inte ska vara ett hinder för att lära sig något nytt. Han ser pensioneringen som en ny början och vill inte låta sig begränsas av ålder. Hans liv är ett exempel på att det aldrig är för sent att sätta nya mål och utmaningar för sig själv.

### A positive vision of the future

The article provides a hopeful picture of how retirement can be redefined. Instead of seeing old age as a period of withdrawal, it can be a time for new challenges, learning and contributing. Hans Björknäs is a shining example of this – a man who, instead of stopping, has chosen to continue growing.

Finally, it is about finding your own way. As Hans himself says:

*"You can enjoy your retirement days just as you want. As long as you don't sit at home, lonely and depressed."*

With his approach and initiatives as Restart, there is hope for a future where age does not set limits, but opens doors to new opportunities. It is a vision that benefits not only the individual but the whole of society.



# ASTRONOMY

## ASTRONOMY

# Astronomers Unveil Unprecedented Thousand-Color Image of the Sculptor Galaxy



**In a groundbreaking achievement, astronomers have captured the most detailed and colorful image ever taken of a galaxy, revealing its intricate structure in stunning clarity.**

The mesmerizing portrait of the Sculptor Galaxy (NGC 253), located 11 million light-years away, showcases a dazzling array of a thousand distinct hues, each representing different stellar populations, swirling gas, and cosmic dust. The image transforms the galaxy into a luminous tapestry, with its golden-orange core fading into deep blue spiral arms that dissolve into the darkness of space. Bright pink star-forming regions and dark dust lanes speckle the galaxy, offering a breathtaking glimpse into its dynamic evolution.

This extraordinary feat was accomplished using the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope (ESO's VLT), equipped with the Multi Unit Spectroscopic Explorer (MUSE) instrument. By observing the galaxy in thousands

of wavelengths simultaneously, the team compiled an unprecedented dataset, capturing the life cycles of stars and the distribution of interstellar matter with unparalleled precision.

### A Galactic Masterpiece

Galaxies are vast, complex systems, spanning hundreds of thousands of light-years, yet their evolution is governed by processes occurring at much smaller scales. "The Sculptor Galaxy is in a sweet spot," explains Enrico Congiu, an ESO researcher and lead author of the study published in *Astronomy & Astrophysics*. "It's close enough that we can resolve its fine details, yet large enough to study as a complete system."

Traditional astronomical images capture only a handful of colors, limiting the information scientists can extract. However, this new ultra-wide spectral map provides a comprehensive view of the galaxy's composition, motion, and star formation history. "Each color tells a different story," says Congiu. "We can now trace the ages of stars, the chemistry of gas clouds, and even the movement of material across the galaxy."

### A Monumental Observational Effort

Creating this cosmic atlas required over 50 hours of observations, stitching together more than 100 individual exposures to cover an area spanning 65,000 light-years. The result is a powerful tool that allows astronomers to zoom in on individual star-forming regions or zoom out to analyze the galaxy's large-scale structure.

Kathryn Kreckel, a co-author from Heidelberg University, Germany, emphasizes the map's versatility: "We can examine stellar nurseries at nearly the scale of individual stars while also understanding how they fit into the galaxy's broader ecosystem."

### Discoveries Hidden in the Data

Already, the team has uncovered around 500 planetary nebulae—glowing shells of gas ejected by dying Sun-like stars—scattered throughout the Sculptor Galaxy. "Beyond our local galactic neighborhood, detecting even 100 planetary nebulae in a single galaxy is rare," notes Fabian Scheuermann, a doctoral stu-

dent at Heidelberg University and study co-author.

These nebulae serve as cosmic yardsticks. "They help us measure the galaxy's distance with high precision, which is fundamental for all subsequent research," explains Adam Leroy, a professor at The Ohio State University and co-author of the study.

### Unlocking Galactic Mysteries

The new dataset opens doors to future investigations into how gas flows through the galaxy, transforms into stars, and shapes its evolution. "The biggest puzzle," says Congiu, "is how small-scale processes—like individual star formation—can influence an entire galaxy, which is thousands of times larger."

As astronomers continue to analyze this treasure trove of data, the Sculptor Galaxy's thousand-color portrait stands as a testament to human ingenuity—a dazzling fusion of art and science that brings us closer to understanding the universe's grand design.

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# SUMMER FLOWERS

**VAASA**

## Summer Blooms Return – Vibrant Flower Displays Ready for Midsummer



**Vaasa's city center has once again transformed into a living canvas of color and fragrance as its summer flower displays reach full bloom.**

The plantings, completed just in time for Midsummer, bring joy to both residents and visitors. This year's arrangements feature a rich palette of lilac, soft pink, blue, and deep purple hues—a true visual feast that will last for approximately four months.

### **From Easter Bulbs to Midsummer Blooms – An Annual Floral Journey**

Vaasa's flower season begins as early as March-April with the planting of Tête-à-tête daffodils. In May, violas take over alongside tulips and autumn-planted daffodils, showcasing yellow, lilac, and white blossoms. But it's now, on the cusp of Midsummer, that the city's real explosion of color begins.

"Preparations start in May with gre-

enhouse cultivation, and once the risk of night frost has passed, the potted plants and flower towers are moved out to the city's streets and squares," explains Åsa Enholm, a horticultural planner for the city's green spaces.

After the spring bulbs finish flowering, the soil is fertilized and carefully prepared for the summer blooms—a process that must be completed by Midsummer.

### **Flower Walk – Discover Vaasa in Full Bloom**

For the fourth consecutive year, the city invites visitors to take a Flower Walk, a 3.5-kilometer route that passes by the most stunning floral displays in the center. The path winds through Esplanadi Park, around Market Square, and along the waterfront promenade—a perfect summer activity for those who want to enjoy nature's beauty in the heart of the city.

"Flowers have a unique ability to spread joy and create a sense of community. With the Flower Walk, we want to encourage both child-

ren and adults to pause, take a closer look, and appreciate the beauty around them," says Enholm.

For those curious about the flowers adorning the city's streets and squares, a special Summer Flower Brochure is available for download on the city's website. It lists all the species and their locations, making it easy to find your favorites.

### **More Than Just Decoration – Flowers at Work**

Vaasa's floral displays aren't just beautiful—they also play an important role in the city's environment and well-being:

**Biodiversity:** The flowers attract bees, butterflies, and other pollinators essential to the ecosystem.

**Urban Environment:** Greenery and blooms improve air quality and help mitigate heatwaves.

**Mental Health:** Studies show that flowers and green spaces positively impact people's well-being.

This year, extra attention has been

given to extending the flowering period by combining different species that bloom in succession throughout the summer.

### **A Growing Tradition**

Vaasa's floral displays have become a beloved tradition eagerly anticipated each spring. The project is a perfect example of how small details can make a big difference in urban spaces.

"It's wonderful to see how the flowers transform the cityscape and spark positive conversations. Many people stop to take photos or simply enjoy the scents," says Enholm with a smile.

For the best experience, take a stroll during the Midsummer weekend when the displays are at their peak. And don't forget your camera!

Download the Summer Flower Brochure ([https://www.vaasa.fi/app/uploads/2025/04/kukkaesite\\_2025.pdf](https://www.vaasa.fi/app/uploads/2025/04/kukkaesite_2025.pdf)) to plan your own floral tour of Vaasa.

SOURCE: [vaasa.fi](https://www.vaasa.fi)







# CLAUDE OPUS 4 , a review



## Revolutionary AI Model Claude Opus 4 Raises the Bar for Artificial Intelligence

A new generation of AI arrives with unprecedented capabilities in coding, creative writing, and autonomous task completion. Anthropic has unveiled Claude Opus 4, marking what many experts consider a significant leap forward in artificial intelligence technology. The latest addition to the Claude 4 family promises to transform how we interact with AI, offering capabilities that extend far beyond simple question-and-answer exchanges.

### Breaking New Ground in AI Performance

Claude Opus 4's most remarkable feature is its ability to maintain autonomous coding sessions lasting up to seven hours, representing a dramatic improvement in AI attention span and persistence. This advancement allows the model to tackle complex programming challenges without constant human supervision, effectively functioning as a digital collaborator rather than

just a quick-response tool.

The model has achieved record-breaking performance on industry benchmarks, particularly in software engineering tasks. Claude Opus 4 scored an unprecedented 72.5% on the SWE-bench coding evaluation, significantly outperforming previous AI models including OpenAI's GPT-4.1.

### What Makes Opus 4 Different?

Unlike earlier AI systems that provided rapid but shallow responses, Claude Opus 4 employs what Anthropic calls "hybrid thinking." The model switches from lightning response speed for simple tasks to extended thinking for deeper reasoning on complex problems. This adaptive approach allows it to provide quick answers when appropriate while dedicating substantial computational resources to challenging tasks that require careful analysis.

The model excels across multiple domains. It outperforms previous Claude models on creative writing, in addition to exceptional visual taste, making it particularly suited for artistic and literary endeavors. According to Anthropic, the model "can analyze thousands of data sources, execute long-running tasks, write human-quality content, and perform complex actions".

### A Writer's New Companion

For aspiring novelists and professional writers, Claude Opus 4 represents a powerful creative partner. The model's enhanced capabilities in creative writing, combined with its ability to maintain context over extended periods, make it well-suited for long-form writing projects like novels. Writers can collaborate with the AI on plot development, character creation, dialogue refinement, and even complete chapter drafts while maintaining narrative consistency throughout lengthy works.

The model's 200,000-token context window means it can keep track of complex storylines, character relationships, and thematic elements across an entire book-length manuscript, providing coherent suggestions and maintaining stylistic consistency from beginning to end.

### Internet Access and Real-Time Information

Claude Opus 4 does have access to current information through web search capabilities, allowing it to incorporate up-to-date facts, recent events, and contemporary references into its responses. This internet connectivity sets it apart from earlier AI models that were limited to their training data, enabling more relevant and timely assistance

across various tasks.

### The Coding Revolution

Perhaps most impressive is Opus 4's programming prowess. Both Claude Opus 4 and Sonnet 4 were specifically tuned to perform well on programming tasks, making them invaluable tools for software developers. The model can handle everything from debugging existing code to developing complex applications from scratch, working autonomously for hours without losing focus or context.

### Looking Forward

The release of Claude Opus 4 signals a new phase in AI development, where artificial intelligence systems can serve as genuine collaborators on complex, time-intensive projects. Whether you're writing the next great American novel, developing software applications, or analyzing complex datasets, Opus 4 offers capabilities that were unimaginable just a few years ago. As AI continues to evolve at this rapid pace, Claude Opus 4 sets a new standard for what we can expect from artificial intelligence partners in our professional and creative endeavors. The age of AI as a mere answering machine appears to be giving way to something far more sophisticated: true digital collaboration.



WASA DAILY  
Nr 23 Sunday, June 8, 2025  
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The year of the City Theatre  
Korsholm cheapest in Finland  
Prostate Cancer  
Inkeri Julkunen  
A new era in weight loss  
A New Dwarf Planet

WASA  
DAILY

# Wasa Daily



Welcome to a new era of newspapers! Say hello to **Wasa Daily** - the smart news source that you can read anywhere and that keeps you well-orientated.

So, what exactly is **Wasa Daily**? Well, it's your weekly dose of news, information, laughter, insight and everything else that makes life a little wiser, and more fun. And the best of all? Its free! Exactly, you read that right. No hidden fees, no subscriptions. We believe news should be accessible to everyone, whether you're on a beach in Thailand or in your favorite cafe around the corner. So how does it work? Easy! Just download our **Wasa Daily** to your tablet, and you have the whole world in your hand.

We at **Wasa Daily** know that Finns love their coffee. Every Sunday morning you can enjoy your favorite coffee and at the same time update yourself on world events. So take out the coffee cup, sit comfortably and read the **Wasa Daily**.

In a world full of boring news, someone like us is needed to spice things up. Welcome to **Wasa Daily** - we make news easier to swallow!

# UKRAINE

## UKRAINE PRESIDENT

# Zelenskyy Meets Pope Leo XIV, Vatican Renews Offer to Host Peace Talks



**Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had a private audience with Pope Leo XIV today at the Papal Palace in Castel Gandolfo, expressing profound gratitude for the Holy See's unwavering support and prayers for peace in Ukraine.**

This marks the second meeting between the two leaders, with their first encounter being Pope Leo XIV's inaugural audience with a Head of State.

During the substantive discussion, President Zelenskyy reiterated Ukraine's readiness for leader-level meetings at the Vatican to halt Russian aggression and achieve a stable, lasting, and genuine peace. However, he lamented that Russia continues to reject this proposal,

along with all other peace initiatives. In response, His Holiness reaffirmed the Vatican's consistent willingness to serve as a neutral venue for such negotiations.

President Zelenskyy emphasized Ukraine's ongoing efforts to strengthen global solidarity, believing that robust diplomatic efforts are crucial for peace to succeed. A significant portion of the conversation focused on humanitarian concerns, particularly the plight of Ukrainian children. The Head of State conveyed special thanks to Pope Leo XIV for his personal support of Ukrainian children, especially those returned from Russian captivity. He also expressed appreciation for the hospitality and sincerity shown to Ukrainian children receiving rehabilitation and rest in Italy, and the leaders discussed the Vatican's con-

tinued efforts to facilitate the return of all Ukrainian children abducted by Russia.

The President also took the opportunity to highlight the deep respect Ukrainian society holds for Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. He underscored Sheptytsky's heroic actions, including the rescue of Jews during the Second World War and his steadfast defense of the Christian faith. President Zelenskyy voiced his hope that Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky's significant contributions will receive the wider recognition they justly deserve.

Concluding the audience, President Zelenskyy extended an invitation to His Holiness to undertake his first Apostolic Visit to Ukraine. This visit would signify a powerful

message of hope and solidarity for the Ukrainian people in these challenging times.

The meeting underscores the Vatican's persistent role as a moral voice and potential mediator in international conflicts, particularly in the ongoing war in Ukraine. While Russia has previously dismissed the Vatican as an appropriate venue for peace talks, the Holy See continues to offer its good offices in pursuit of a just and lasting peace.

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# AI

## AI-Generated Podcasts: A New Era of Audio Content with NotebookLM

## 20 Everyday Abbreviations You Need to Know (and Maybe a Few You Don't)



**Podcast in English:  
Russian disinformation**  
<https://vpress.ovh/podcasts.htm>

In the rapidly evolving landscape of digital media, artificial intelligence continues to push boundaries, reshaping industries and redefining creative processes. One of the most groundbreaking developments is Google's NotebookLM, an advanced language model with the potential to revolutionize the podcasting world. With its ability to generate human-quality audio content, NotebookLM is paving the way for a new era of AI-driven storytelling, education, and entertainment.

### The Emergence of AI-Generated Podcasts

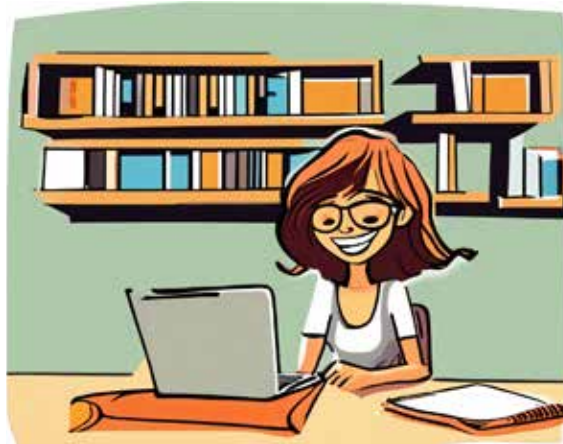
As the podcasting industry continues to grow at an unprecedented rate, content creators and media companies are always on the lookout for innovative tools to streamline production and enhance creativity. NotebookLM, initially celebrated for its ability to generate high-quality written content, has now ventured into the realm of audio. This cutting-edge

technology is capable of producing podcasts that are nearly indistinguishable from those created by human hosts, opening up exciting possibilities for the future of digital content.

The appeal of NotebookLM-generated podcasts lies in several key features that set them apart from traditional podcasts:

**Natural-Sounding Voice:** NotebookLM can produce audio content with a voice that mimics the natural cadence and tone of human speech. This makes it difficult for listeners to discern that the podcast is AI-generated, offering a seamless listening experience.

**Diverse Range of Topics:** Whether it's breaking news, current events, or light-hearted storytelling, NotebookLM can tackle a wide array of subjects. Its versatility makes it an ideal tool for content creators looking to explore different genres without the constraints of time and labor-intensive production.



Abbreviations are everywhere these days. From texting acronyms to technical jargon, those handy 3-letter (and sometimes longer) combos can be confusing if you're not in the know. But fear not, fellow abbreviation adventurer! This article will equip you with the knowledge to decipher 20 of the most common abbreviations you'll encounter in everyday life.

1. **LOL:** Laughing Out Loud (This one might already be a classic for many!)
2. **BRB:** Be Right Back (Perfect for a quick bathroom break during a chat)
3. **OMG:** Oh My God (Expresses surprise or strong emotion)
4. **IMHO:** In My Humble Opinion (A way to preface your opinion politely)
5. **\*\* ASAP:** As Soon As Possible (Lights a fire under someone... nicely)
6. **FYI:** For Your Information (A heads-up for someone)
7. **ETA:** Estimated Time of Arrival (Lets you know when to expect someone)
8. **RSVP:** Please Reply (Formal request for a response to an

- invitation)
9. **PDF:** Portable Document Format (A common file format for documents)
10. **JPG:** Joint Photographic Experts Group (A popular image file format)
11. **GIF:** Graphics Interchange Format (Another image format, known for animations)
12. **TIFF:** Tagged Image File Format (Used for high-quality images)
13. **WWW:** World Wide Web (The foundation of the internet we know)
14. **HTTP:** Hypertext Transfer Protocol (The language webpages use to talk)
15. **GPS:** Global Positioning System (Helps you navigate the world)
16. **ATM:** Automated Teller Machine (Your friendly neighborhood cash dispenser)
17. **DIY:** Do It Yourself (For the handy folks out there)
18. **VIP:** Very Important Person (Someone who gets special treatment)
19. **TBA:** To Be Announced (Stay tuned for more information)
20. **TBD:** To Be Determined (We're still figuring things out)

This is just a taste of the abbreviation world, but with these 20 under your belt, you'll be well on your way to deciphering the everyday lingo, from casual texts to technical documents. So, the next time you see an abbreviation that leaves you scratching your head, remember this list and keep on exploring the wonderful world of shorthand communication!

## Wasa Daily

A modern newspaper with a layout with features of the press of the 1870s. Back then, newspapers had only 4-8 pages. Lots of text, but no images at all, so there's a lot to read on a few pages. Our paper is one of the very few newspapers in English serving English-speaking inhabitants in the Osthrobotnia region

The magazine contains quotations from old daily newspapers taken from the National Archives (digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi). GPT3, Gemini, Aria and Monica do some of the routine editing work, such as translation, corrector reading, and short notice writing. All texts have been checked by journalists and the editorial staff is responsible for all the content of the texts.

Wasa Daily is a daily newspaper type publication, so far it is published on Sunday mornings. But our goal is for it to come out every morning in the future.

The magazine is available online for free.

Editor-in-chief Hans Björknäs.

Readers' writings are welcome!

The magazine is locally owned and will remain so. For ever!

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Helsinki editorial office: Wasa Daily, Toimen linja 9 B 36, 00530 Helsinki. Phone +358-40-5462455.

Email: [wasadagblad@gmail.com](mailto:wasadagblad@gmail.com)





## HOROSCOPE FOR JULY 2025

### July Horoscope – The Stars Are Mumblin' (And Maybe Making Some Sense)

July Horoscope – As  
Unreliable as Your Sum-  
mer Weather App

**Aries** (Mar 21–Apr 19)  
You're full of energy  
this July – unfortunately  
so is your mosquito  
population. Try to avoid  
starting arguments at  
BBQs. Not everyone  
wants to debate the  
correct way to grill hal-  
louni.

**Taurus** (Apr 20–May 20)  
You seek comfort, and  
the stars say you'll  
find it – in a hammock  
you bought online that  
collapses immediately.  
Romance is in the air,  
but so is pollen. Take  
antihistamines.

**Gemini** (May 21–Jun 20)  
This month you'll  
finally finish a project!  
Just kidding. You'll start  
three new ones instead  
and forget what the first  
one was. Embrace your  
chaos – it's charming (to  
some people).

**Cancer** (Jun 21–Jul 22)  
It's your season, and  
your emotions are  
hotter than your sun-  
burn. You might cry at  
sunsets, stray cats, or  
sandwich ads. Go with  
it. Everyone loves a soft  
crab.

**Leo** (Jul 23–Aug 22)  
You radiate sunshi-  
ne – sometimes a bit  
too much. Tone it down  
before someone mista-  
kes you for a solar flare.  
Great month to shine,  
but wear SPF 50.

**Virgo** (Aug 23–Sep 22)  
You made a spreadsheet  
for your holiday, and  
somehow still lost your  
passport and dignity.  
Let go. Sometimes mes-  
sy beach hair is the plan.

**Libra** (Sep 23–Oct 22)  
Decisions are hard, es-  
pecially when it comes  
to choosing an ice cream  
flavor. Spoiler: it melts  
while you're still deci-  
ding. Love is confusing  
but sweet – like mango  
sorbet.

**Scorpio** (Oct 23–Nov 21)  
Your magnetism is un-  
deniable this month –  
though mostly to sand,  
drama, and old exes.  
Dive deep, but not into  
shallow beach gossip.

Or do, it's summer.

**Sagittarius** (Nov 22–  
Dec 21)  
You want to travel,  
explore, and find mean-  
ing. You'll mostly find  
traffic jams, questiona-  
ble Airbnb decor, and  
seagulls judging your  
snacks. Adventure  
awaits, sort of!

**Capricorn** (Dec 22–Jan  
19)  
You're working hard  
while everyone else  
is sipping rosé. Why?  
July is literally telling  
you to take a break.  
Try napping. It builds  
character.

**Aquarius** (Jan 20–Feb  
18)  
You'll come up with a  
brilliant idea at 3 AM.  
It involves flip-flops,  
NFTs, and a beachside  
utopia. Write it down.  
Or don't. We'll pretend  
we didn't see it.

**Pisces** (Feb 19–Mar 20)  
Dreamy as ever, you  
forget where you put  
your sunglasses, your  
towel, and possibly  
your existential dread.  
Float along. You're the  
inflatable flamingo of  
the zodiac.





# HUMOUR ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

## LUNDBERG

— Do you know Lundberg?  
— Yes, of course! I know him so well that I don't know him anymore.

## NOT HOME

Mrs.: Here comes Mrs. Petterson, tell her I'm not home.  
Maid: Good, madam.  
Mrs.: Well, what did she say?  
Maid: Thank God.

## FISHING LUCK

— Well, what did you do this summer?  
— We've been fishing, you know. And when we fish, we always have on liter 96% with us, and for every fish we take a sip, ; and if we get a lot of fish, we go home and take another liter

## TWO STREET LAMPS

On the streets of Kemi city, there are two lamps on the same pole.  
— Why do you have to be two?  
— Well, you see, one must illuminate the other.

## APPENDIX

— That doctor must have sent a rudely large bill. But it will probably be the last time he gets to operate on my appendix.

## COMMUNISM

— If you had two houses, would you give one to me?  
— Yes.  
— If you had two horses, would you give one to me?  
- Of course!  
— You have a liter of alcohol at home. Give me half a liter!  
— You crazy, human! Never!

## IN THE BEST FAMILIES

"You see, Mrs. Eriksson, the best family is a family in which there was no such thing as occurred even in the best families."

## Difficult to choose maid

— Dear friend, you speak of the difficult maidservant question, yes, I am very unhappy. If I take an old and ugly one, my husband is never at home and if I take a young and beautiful one, I dare not go out myself

## To complain to a newspaper

The editor: — And this joke you say must be new? My grandmother already told me that when she was a little girl.

## CHILD MAIDEN

— My miss, how can you read your novel when the child screams so terribly.  
The nanny: — Bad, my lord, and since you're also bothering me, I cannot read at all.

## IN COURT

— Mr. Judge, my husband called me "you old cow", and then he threw me out. I request that he be punished.

## Astronomic picture of the week:



### Latest Saturn Portrait 20 June 2019.tif

The NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope's Wide Field Camera 3 observed Saturn on 20 June 2019 as the planet made its closest approach to Earth this year, at approximately 1.36 billion kilometres away.

 NASA, ESA, A. Simon (Goddard Space Flight Center), and M.H. Wong (University of California, Berkeley)

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## Next week:

**Wasa Päivälehti**  
**Photo Supplement**  
**Wasa Dagblad Wasa Daily**



**3.8.1852**  
**Vasa stads brand**  
**Vaasan kaupungin palo**  
**The Fire of Vaasa**

## From our readers

We very much welcome submissions from our readers. Comments, stories, memories, debate, news from home. Probably this will be the most important part of this spring paper. But space is limited, so please write as short as possible! So please send posts to:  
[wasadagblad@gmail-com](mailto:wasadagblad@gmail-com)

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