

**WASA DAILY**

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**Protectivde Fence ovar Vaasa sky next week**

**Bilingualism is good for You**

**Why do women get heart attacs?**

**Travel free on Lifti tomorrow**

**Édith Piaf**

# **WASA DAILY**

**HERE WE ARE:  
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**ÉDITH PIAF!**

# The Cognitive Reserve Advantage: How Bilingualism Fortifies the Brain Against Age-Related Decline

THE ABILITY TO SPEAK more than one language has long been valued for its social and economic benefits. However, a growing body of neuroscientific research reveals that bilingualism also confers a significant and powerful advantage for brain health, acting as a protective factor against cognitive decline and dementia. This article explores the mechanisms behind this phenomenon, focusing on the concepts of cognitive reserve and enhanced executive function.

The cornerstone of bilingualism's benefit lies in the constant mental juggling act it requires. A bilingual person is not simply equipped with two sets of vocabulary; their brain must continuously manage both language systems, selecting the appropriate language and suppressing the irrelevant one in a given context.

This ongoing exercise strengthens the brain's executive control system, a network primarily housed in the prefrontal cortex and anterior cingulate cortex. This system is responsible for high-level cognitive processes such as attention, task-switching, conflict monitoring, and inhibitory control (Bialystok, 2011). Essentially, the bilingual brain receives a daily workout in mental flexibility and focus.

This lifelong training builds what neurologists call "cognitive reserve"—the brain's resilience to neuropathological damage. Think of it as a buffer or a redundancy in the neural network. While two individuals might show similar levels of

Alzheimer's-related brain pathology (e.g., amyloid plaques and neurofibrillary tangles), the individual with a higher cognitive reserve can maintain functional cognition for longer. Bilingualism is a potent contributor to this reserve. A seminal study by Bialystok, Craik, and Freedman (2007) found that bilingual patients were diagnosed with dementia, on average, 4.3 years later than their monolingual counterparts. This delay in onset was independent of factors like education, occupation, and immigration status, pointing directly to bilingualism as the key variable.

The benefits extend beyond staving off dementia. The enhanced executive functions in bilingual individuals have been linked to superior performance on tasks requiring attention to detail and switching between tasks. Furthermore, research indicates that bilingualism can aid in cognitive recovery after injury. For instance, a study of stroke survivors in India found that "bilingual patients were twice as likely as monolinguals to have normal cognitive functions following a stroke" (Alladi et al., 2013, p. 1). This suggests that the cognitive reserve built by bilingualism not only protects against decline but also supports recovery from acute brain events.

It is crucial to note that the degree of benefit may be influenced by factors such as the age of acquisition, frequency of use, and proficiency in each language. However, the overarching evidence is clear: actively managing two languages fundamentally alters brain structure and function in ways that promote long-term cognitive health. In a world facing

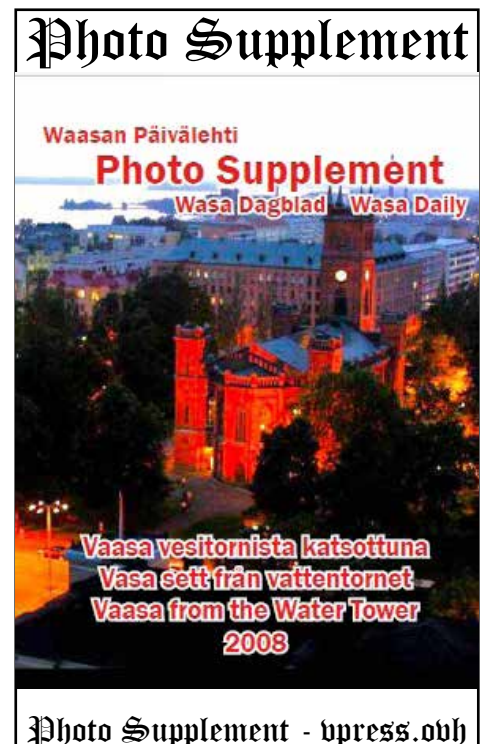
an increasing prevalence of age-related neurological disorders, promoting bilingualism can be seen not just as a cultural or educational goal, but as a significant public health initiative.

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# NEWS



## On 22.9, We Travel for Free on Lifti Buses

**T**OMORROW, Monday, September 22nd, you can travel for free on all Lifti buses in Vaasa, with the exception of service lines. Free bus rides are available all day, from morning to evening, as part of Car-Free Day, which is celebrated during European Mobility Week.

Pertti Hällilä, Vaasa City's Traffic Manager, encourages everyone to take this opportunity and try public transportation: "We want to encourage everyone to adopt sustainable travel habits and use Lifti buses with ease. Taking the bus is an eco-friendly choice, and we hope that more people will see it as a viable alternative to using their own cars."

European Mobility Week is held annually from September 16th to 22nd, with Car-Free Day as the grand finale. During this themed week, cities and municipalities

across Europe organize events and campaigns to promote sustainable travel, such as cycling and using public transport. Mobility Week is an excellent opportunity to highlight eco-friendly transport options and raise awareness

of their benefits for both individual health and the environment. Lifti buses in Vaasa now offer an easy way to experience sustainable travel, and the hope is that more people will choose public transport in the future as well.

The goal of Car-Free Day is to make people reflect on their daily travel choices and how they impact society and the environment. So today is a great chance to leave the car at home and hop on a Lifti bus – for free!





# NEWS

## YOU CAN READ THIS NEWSPAPER ANYWHERE



You can read this paper wherever You are. Like here in Palo-saari

## BLOG WRITERS

### Join Wasa Daily as a Blog Writer!

Are you passionate about sharing your thoughts, stories, or expertise with the community? *Wasa Daily* is looking for enthusiastic blog writers to contribute engaging content for our readers.

Whether you love writing about local events, culture, lifestyle, business, or personal experiences, we welcome your voice!

Writing for Wasa Daily is a great opportunity to reach a wider audience, connect with fellow locals, and showcase your creativity. No prior experience is needed—just bring your ideas and enthusiasm! We value diverse perspectives and fresh voices that reflect the vibrant spirit of our community.

Interested? Send us your blog pitch or a short sample, and let's get your words published! Join us in making *Wasa Daily* a platform for meaningful conversations and inspiring stories.



Contact us at [wasadagblad@gmail.com](mailto:wasadagblad@gmail.com) for more details. We can't wait to hear from you!

## VAASA ELDERLY COUNCIL

### Vaasa Elderly Council Challenges Everyone to Join the "Take an Elderly Person Out" Campaign. Today!

THE VAASA ELDERLY COUNCIL is encouraging all citizens to participate in the Age Institute's national "Take an Elderly Person Out" campaign, running from September 8th to 21st, 2025. The initiative aims to brighten the daily lives of seniors and reduce social isolation.

Many older adults greatly benefit from regular outdoor activities and companionship, yet often find it difficult to ask for help. The campaign invites everyone to consider: Do you know an elderly person who would appreciate a walk or a relaxing moment in the park?

Participating is simple. You can accompany a neighbor, relative, or acquaintance outdoors. Volunteer groups are also encouraged to visit nursing homes to assist with outdoor activities. Even spreading awareness about the campaign on social media or within personal networks provides valuable support.



AI Image

# NEWS

## THEATRE

### Aleksis Kivi on Stage – Red Nose Company Touring Ostrobothnia



**T**HIS OCTOBER, Red Nose Company brings its acclaimed production *Aleksis Kivi* to Ostrobothnia. The performances take place at Vaasa City Theatre on October 9, Ylivieska's Cultural Centre Akustika on October 10, and Kokkola City Theatre on October 11.

The tour is part of the theatre company's 20th anniversary celebrations. *Aleksis Kivi* premiered at the Finnish National Theatre's Main Stage in 2022 and has since been praised by audiences and critics alike across Finland.

Actors Timo Ruuskanen and Tuukka Vasama perform alongside accordionist Niko Kumpuvaara. In Vaasa, the ensemble will be joined by a string duo from the Avanti! Chamber Orchestra, offering a spe-

cial version of the show.

The performance is a warm and witty journey through the life and works of Aleksis Kivi, Finland's national author. On stage appear the famous Seven Brothers as well as Esko from *The Cobblers on the Heath*. The play also highlights Kivi's strong female characters, including Lea – the protagonist of the play whose 1869 premiere is considered the birth of Finnish theatre.

"Touring is tremendous fun, but it also requires flexibility and new solutions. Each stage is different, and the production has to adapt. Dialects are another fascinating aspect for us, since in Kivi's time there was fierce debate about whether the Finnish written language should be based on eastern or western dialects," says actor Timo Ruuskanen.

Known for blending physical theatre, music, and clowning, Red Nose

Company once again combines humor with cultural reflection. Aleksis Kivi entertains while exploring themes central to Finnish identity, language, and history.

Performances in Ostrobothnia:

- October 9, 19:00 – Vaasa City Theatre (with Avanti! string duo)
- October 10, 18:00 – Cultural Centre Akustika, Ylivieska
- October 11, 14:00 – Kokkola City Theatre

Tickets are available via each theatre's ticketing service.

**PHOTO:** In the foreground are actors Tuukka Vasama (Mike) and Timo Ruuskanen (Zin) and in the background is musician Niko Kumpuvaara. Cata Portin. No publication restrictions.



# NEWS

## FINNISH AIR FORCE

### Increased Air Activity Over Vaasa This Week



IMAGE: Jim van de Burgt from Wijk bij Duurstede, Netherlands

The skies above Vaasa will be unusually busy this week as the Finnish Air Force conducts its **Protective Fence 25 exercise** from September 22 to 26. The large-scale drill involves numerous aircraft, helicopters, and personnel, and will be clearly visible and audible in the Vaasa region. The purpose is to strengthen Finland's defense capability and readiness through versatile air operations.

#### What does the exercise involve?

A total of around 50 aircraft and 1,200 personnel are taking part. Alongside the Finnish Air Force's F/A-18 Hornet fighters, the lineup includes Hawk jet trainers, transport and liaison aircraft, as well as the Army's NH90 helicopters and the Finnish Border Guard's Dornier

228 surveillance plane. International participants include the Swedish Air Force with JAS 39 Gripen fighters, and both Sweden and Denmark are contributing C-130 Hercules transport aircraft.

#### Vaasa as a base of operations

The exercise areas cover multiple locations and airfields, with Vaasa Airport serving as one of the operational bases. Flight routes extend across a wide area between Vaasa, Rovaniemi, Kajaani, Kuopio, and Jyväskylä, as well as over the Bay of Bothnia. Kokkola-Pietarsaari Airport is also in use.

Flights will be noticeable both in the sky and on the ground, especially during low-level flights and possible supersonic operations. The Air Force has announced that flight activity will end no later than 11

p.m. each evening. During the exercise, flares and chaff will also be deployed. These countermeasures may appear as light phenomena in the sky or cause brief interference with weather or radar signals.

#### Why is the exercise held?

Protective Fence 25 is Finland's largest air exercise of the autumn. According to the Air Force, the goal is to strengthen defensive capacity and to train the execution of air operations from dispersed basing, in line with Finland's air combat doctrine.

The exercise also has a strong international dimension: units from Sweden and Denmark are participating, and the activity forms part of a broader pattern of Nordic and Baltic Sea-based exercises taking place during September and October.

# NEWS

**THL**

## **THL: Only a Small Fraction of Young People Get Enough Sleep, Exercise, and Eat Breakfast Daily, Reveals School Health Survey**



AI Image

**A** NEW SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY has uncovered concerning trends in the daily habits of Finnish youth. Just a small fraction of schoolchildren's daily routines include all three key pillars of a healthy lifestyle: sufficient sleep, regular physical activity, and daily breakfast.

According to the spring 2025 survey, only 17% of 8th and 9th grade boys and a mere 9% of girls reported meeting all three healthy habit benchmarks: at least one hour of daily

physical activity, at least eight hours of sleep on weeknights, and eating breakfast every weekday morning.

Particularly concerning is the finding that only about one in four adolescents engages in at least one hour of physical activity per day. Daily breakfast consumption is a regular habit for just half of lower secondary school students. On a more positive note, sleep habits appear slightly better – approximately two-thirds of young people report getting enough sleep.

Among primary school students (4th and 5th graders), healthy habits are so-mewhat more established.

About one-third of these younger students eat breakfast, get enough physical activity, and feel they sleep sufficiently.

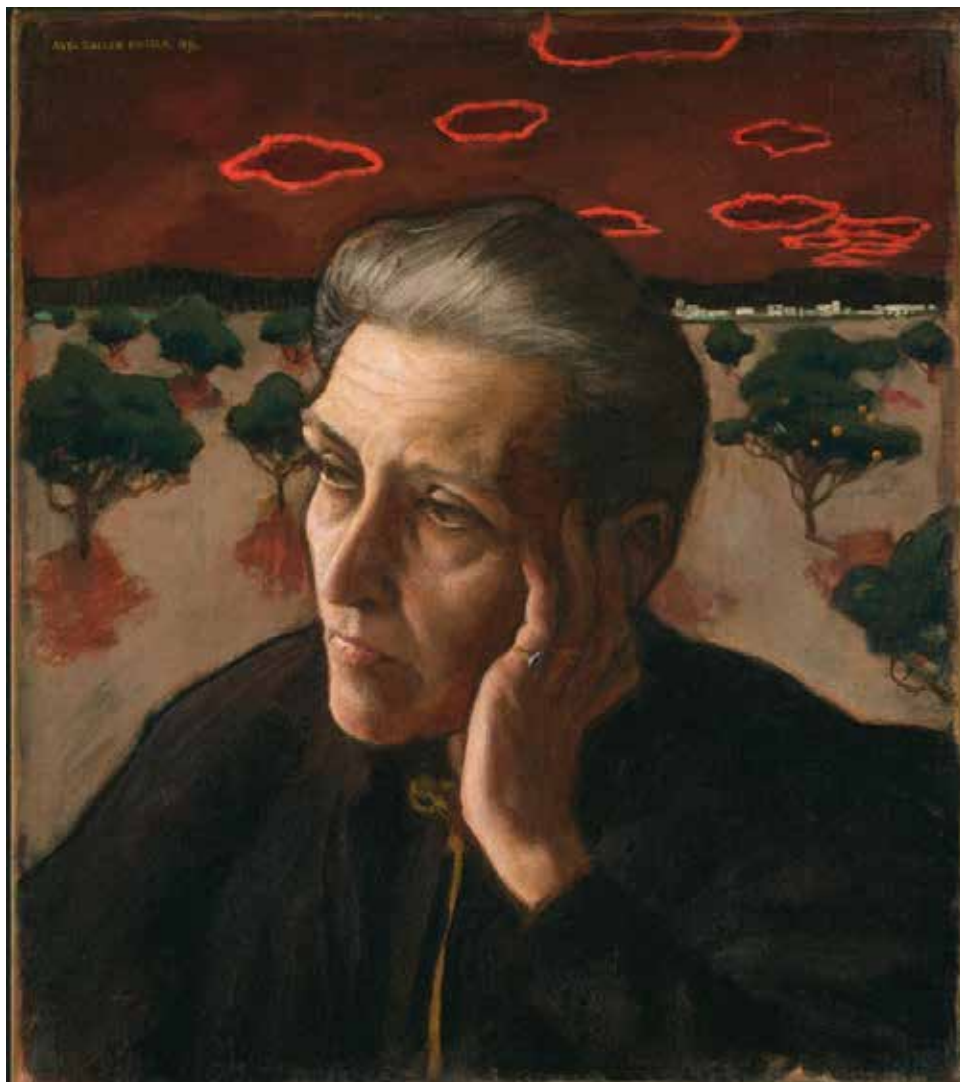
Chief Physician Terhi Aalto-Setälä emphasizes that young people need adult support to maintain healthy routines:

"Children and adolescents need support from adults to adopt healthy lifestyle habits and maintain regular daily rhythms. Sufficient sleep, physical activity, and nutrition are fundamental pillars of wellbeing. Their importance for mental health cannot be overstated."



## ATENEUM

# Ateneum's Spectacular Exhibition Brings You to Vienna's Artistic Epicenter



**I**N THE AUTUMN OF 2025, the Ateneum Art Museum will open a unique exhibition that promises to be an art historical delight for both art enthusiasts and the newly curious. The "Gallen-Kallela, Klimt & Vienna" exhibition will transport us to Vienna at the turn of the 20th century—a city pulsing with new ideas and creative imagination.

The exhibition presents the international artists with whom the Finnish

master Akseli Gallen-Kallela collaborated and in whose shows he participated. The Vienna Secession, led by Gustav Klimt, was a radical break from conservative art ideals—a passionate striving towards a freer and more modern understanding of art.

One of the most fascinating themes of the exhibition is the dialogue between different art forms. The Secessionists' goal was equality among all artistic disciplines, and this is showcased in a multifaceted way: painting is complemented by design, jewellery, and everyday ob-

jects. Akseli Gallen-Kallela shared his colleagues' interest in the Gesamtkunstwerk (total work of art), where different art forms unite into a harmonious whole.

The exhibition highlights the significant role of women as innovators in art. Although women could not become official members of the Secession group, their work was crucially important. In the Wiener Werkstätte (Vienna Workshops), women were active as artists and designers. Particularly interesting is Emilie Flöge's revolutionary reform dress, which liberated women from the shackles of the corset and created a new, functional language of fashion.

This exhibition offers a unique opportunity to follow Gallen-Kallela's artistic journey within international movements. He participated in Secessionist exhibitions in several European cities, and his interaction with international modernists significantly influenced his art.

This show is more than just an art exhibition—it's an immersion into a time when art revolutionized society and society revolutionized art. Visit the Ateneum in the autumn of 2025 and immerse yourself in the creative energy of fin-de-siècle Vienna!

Gallen-Kallela, Klimt & Vienna  
Ateneum Art Museum  
26 September 2025 – 1 February 2026

**IMAGE:** Akseli Gallen-Kallela  
The Artist's Mother  
Stockholm National Museum  
1896



# NEWS

## HELSINKI RAILWAY STATION

### The Landscape from Koli Painting is Back in its Rightful Place – And Will Remain There for the Next 100 Years



The iconic *Landscape from Koli* painting at Helsinki Central Station has been restored to its former glory following extensive conservation work. Created in 1911 through the collaboration of Eero Järnefelt, A. W. Finch, and Ilmari Aalto, it is one of the largest paintings on canvas in Finland.

The artwork has adorned the station's restaurant hall for over a hundred years, and its preservation in its original location is safeguarded by the station's protection regulations. Before becoming part of Eliel Saarinen's architectural masterpiece, the painting was exhibited at the Berlin Tourism Exhibition, where it represented Finland.

Jani Jääskeläinen, Project Manager at VR Group, highlighted the significance of the work:

"Järnefelt's painting is an essential part of the cultural and historical identity of Helsinki Central Station. Restoring it to its original splendour underscores the station's role not only as a transport hub but also as a centre for culture."

The extensive conservation efforts ensure that the painting will remain in its historic setting for at least the next hundred years, preserved for future generations to enjoy.

# NEWS

## HEALTH

### Why do women without any risk factors get heart attacks?



**A** NEW STUDY has uncovered a key reason why many seemingly healthy women suffer heart attacks and strokes, even when they don't smoke or have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes. The answer, researchers say, lies in inflammation.

For years, doctors have been puzzled by the fact that up to half of all heart attacks occur in people without these "standard modifiable risk factors" (often called SMuRFs). A team from Mass General Brigham has now found that a simple blood test for inflammation can identify many of these at-risk women who are missed by current health screenings.

The research focused on a marker in the blood called high-sensitivity C-reactive protein, or hsCRP, which

measures inflammation in the body. The study followed over 12,500 initially healthy women for 30 years. Those with high levels of hsCRP had a dramatically higher lifetime risk of heart disease and stroke, even though they had no traditional risk factors.

"Women who suffer from heart attacks and strokes yet have no standard risk factors are not identified by the risk equations doctors use in daily practice," explained Dr. Paul Ridker, the study's lead author and a preventive cardiologist. "Yet our data clearly show that apparently healthy women who are inflamed are at substantial lifetime risk."

The researchers have introduced a new term for this group: "SMuRF-Less but Inflamed."

The good news is that this risk can be significantly reduced. The study also showed that treating these wo-

men with statins, common cholesterol-lowering drugs, lowered their risk of heart attack and stroke by 38%.

Doctors hope this discovery will change how women are screened for heart disease, encouraging the use of inflammation testing, especially for those in their 40s and 50s. This would allow for earlier prevention through lifestyle changes and, if needed, medication, long before heart disease becomes a serious threat.

The findings were presented at the European Society of Cardiology Congress and published in The European Heart Journal.

Source: <https://www.mass-generalbrigham.org/en/about/newsroom/press-releases/inflammation-may-explain-womens-heart-attacks-strokes>



# NEWS

## HEALTH

### Gut Bacteria Influence Our Metabolism Far More Than Previously Thought



**A** NEW STUDY published in *Nature Communications* reveals that the bacteria in our colon have a significantly greater impact on our metabolism than scientists previously believed. The findings show that the gut flora is not only involved in digestion but is also directly linked to how the body processes nutrients, regulates energy balance, and even influences the risk of metabolic diseases.

The study, conducted by an international research team, mapped how microbial metabolic pathways in the gut interact with the host organism's metabolic processes. By analyzing thousands of samples from both humans and model organisms, re-

searchers were able to identify how specific bacterial species and their metabolites—small molecules formed during metabolism—govern processes such as fat storage, blood sugar levels, and inflammation.

One of the most prominent discoveries is that gut bacteria produce bioactive compounds that directly affect our cells' function. These compounds can either promote healthy metabolic pathways or contribute to the development of conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, and insulin resistance.

"We have long known that gut flora plays a role in metabolism, but the extent of its influence is much greater than we understood," says one of the researchers involved in the study. "It turns out that these microbes act as a dynamic part of our metabolic machinery."

The study underscores the im-

portance of a healthy gut flora for maintaining balanced metabolism. Dietary choices, probiotics, and lifestyle factors such as exercise and sleep can directly influence the composition of these bacteria and thus our metabolic health.

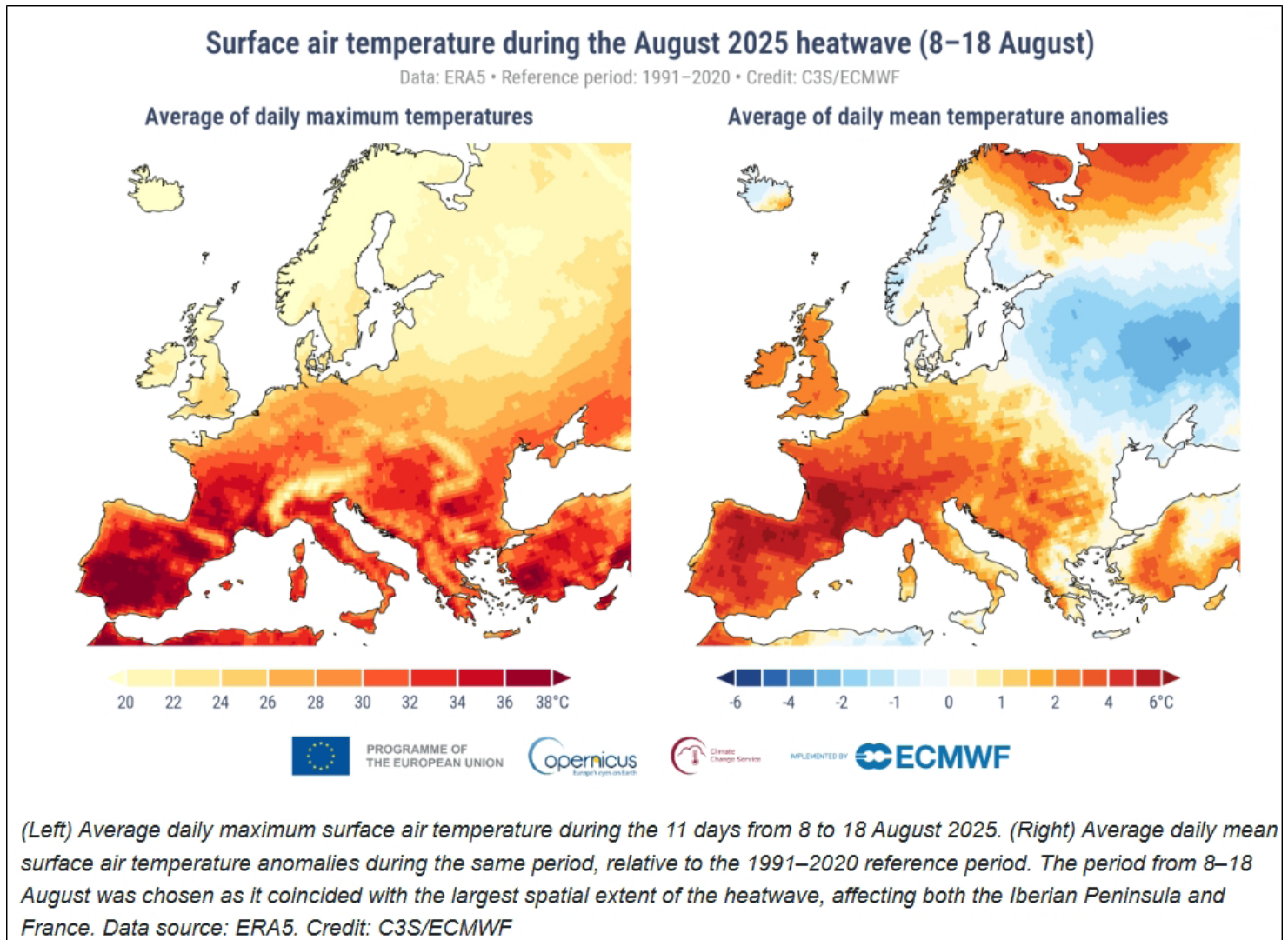
The new insights also open doors for future treatments of metabolic diseases. By targeting specific bacterial species or their metabolites, it may be possible to develop more tailored therapies for patients with metabolic disorders in the future.

This research marks an important step in understanding how humans and our microbial inhabitants interact to maintain health—and how this balance can be disrupted in disease.

# NEWS

## CLIMATE CHANGE

# Extreme Heat in Southwestern Europe in August



**L**AST MONTH, large parts of southwestern Europe endured an intense and dangerous heatwave, with scientists confirming it was part of the third-hottest August ever re-corded globally.

According to data from the Copernicus Climate Change Service, countries including Spain, France, and Italy experienced temperatures far above the seasonal average. The peak of the heat occurred between August 22nd and 24th, when many areas saw thermometers reach well over 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit). This se-vere

”heat stress” was made even more intense by high humidity levels in coastal regions.

The impact on daily life was significant. Local authorities issued health warnings, ur-ging people, especially the elderly and vulnerable, to stay indoors and hydrated. The scorching temperatures also increased the risk of wildfires, putting a strain on emer-gency services across the Mediterranean region.

Globally, August 2025 was marked as the third-warmest such month on record. The average global temperature was nearly 0.7°C higher than the average for August between 1991 and 2020. The only warmer August months were in 2016 and 2019.

Scientists at Copernicus directly link these extreme weather events to human-caused climate change. They explain that the burning of fossil fuels releases greenhouse gases that trap heat in the atmosphere, making heatwaves more frequent, longer, and more intense. The record-breaking sea surface temperatures, a key factor in warming the planet, also played a major role.

This summer’s intense heat serves as a clear reminder that climate change is not a future problem but a current reality, with tangible consequences for people’s health, safety, and environment.



# UKRAINE

## UKRAINE PRESIDENT

### The Russians Have Suffered Heavy Losses, and Our State's Exchange Fund Has Been Significantly Replenished – Address by the President



19 September 2025 - 19:30

**I wish you good health, fellow Ukrainians!**

**A** LOT HAPPENED TODAY. There were military reports, including from the Commander-in-Chief. Our counteroffensive operation in the Donetsk region – Pokrovsk and Dobropillia sectors – continues.

For the Russians, it was one of the most important axes of their offensive, but they failed to mount a full-scale offensive there – our army is destroying their forces. The Russians have suffered heavy losses, and our state's exchange fund has been significantly replenished – every day adds new Russian prisoners of war. I want to thank all our units in-

involved: the 79th and 82nd Air Assault Brigades, our assault units – the 1st, 33rd, 225th, and 425th Assault Regiments, and the 14th National Guard Brigade.

Thank you, warriors! In Kupiansk and the surrounding areas, we are defending our positions – I thank all the brigades. Also, there will be our new deep strikes in retaliation to Russia's actions. I held a Staff meeting today. The main topic was on the production of our weapons. We have a clear understanding of volumes – what our army needs till the end of the year, as well as what it will need next year, and what we need to have in stock to continue our defense and to maintain our sufficient strength.

Of course, this includes sufficient funding for weapons production here in Ukraine, and co-production together with our partners, and deliveries to Ukraine of what our partners manufacture. Starting this year, we will cover the deficit in financing weapons production, in particular, through controlled exports of certain types of our weapons. Via such controlled exports, we will increase the production of drones for the front line. We will have the funding.

We can produce certain types of weapons – modern weapons – in much lar-

ger quantities than we can self-finance, and we already have certain types of weapons in much larger quantities than we actually need today in Ukraine. For example, naval drones that the world counts on and that we have in surplus, as well as anti-tank weapons and some other types.

This means the first priority is the front – supplying our brigades. The second priority is our Ukrainian arsenals. And only the third priority is this kind of controlled export. Within two weeks, a concept for three new export platforms will be presented. One platform will be for export and partnership with the United States, another platform will be for our European partners, and a third one – for other global partners who are also interested in Ukrainian weapons and who have supported Ukraine in certain ways.

It is vital that they also assist us so that we can support them in return. Currently, it is the Ukrainians, it is the Ukrainian companies and the Ukrainian army that have one of the strongest experiences in modern warfare – and this is largely about cutting-edge weapons and advanced technologies. Ukraine will not engage in “gun charity” – helping those who don't care about Ukraine.

We are ready to work with those who

have truly supported us and our independence. Naturally, there must also be reliable export control – so that Russians and their accomplices do not gain access to Ukrainian technology or our weapons. Our Ukrainian companies, particularly arms manufacturers, have raised this issue repeatedly.

There is significant global interest in joint projects with Ukraine for weapons production. There is also a clear demand for our weapons. Accordingly, it is due to controlled exports that we can accumulate funds to produce more of what our army truly needs.

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# NEWS

## RUSSIA

### Russia's growing isolation from the West



**B**ANS, SURVEILLANCE and closed borders are shaping a new reality for Russian citizens

#### **A new Iron Curtain is emerging**

In recent years, Russia has taken steps towards an increasingly isolated existence in relation to the West. This is done digitally, culturally and physically. The coun-

try's leadership has introduced a series of measures to limit citizens' contacts with Western ideas, communication tools and travel opportunities. The goal is to strengthen control over the flow of information and thus also over the population.

#### **Ban on Western social media**

Among the most high-profile

measures is the ban on popular platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. These services, which were previously important channels for both private and public communication, have been blocked by Russian authorities on the grounds of national security and protection against "harmful influence from abroad". YouTube is also under pressure, with authorities repeatedly trying to block or restrict access to the service. As a result, many Russians now lack access to the world's largest video platform and thus an important channel for independent information.

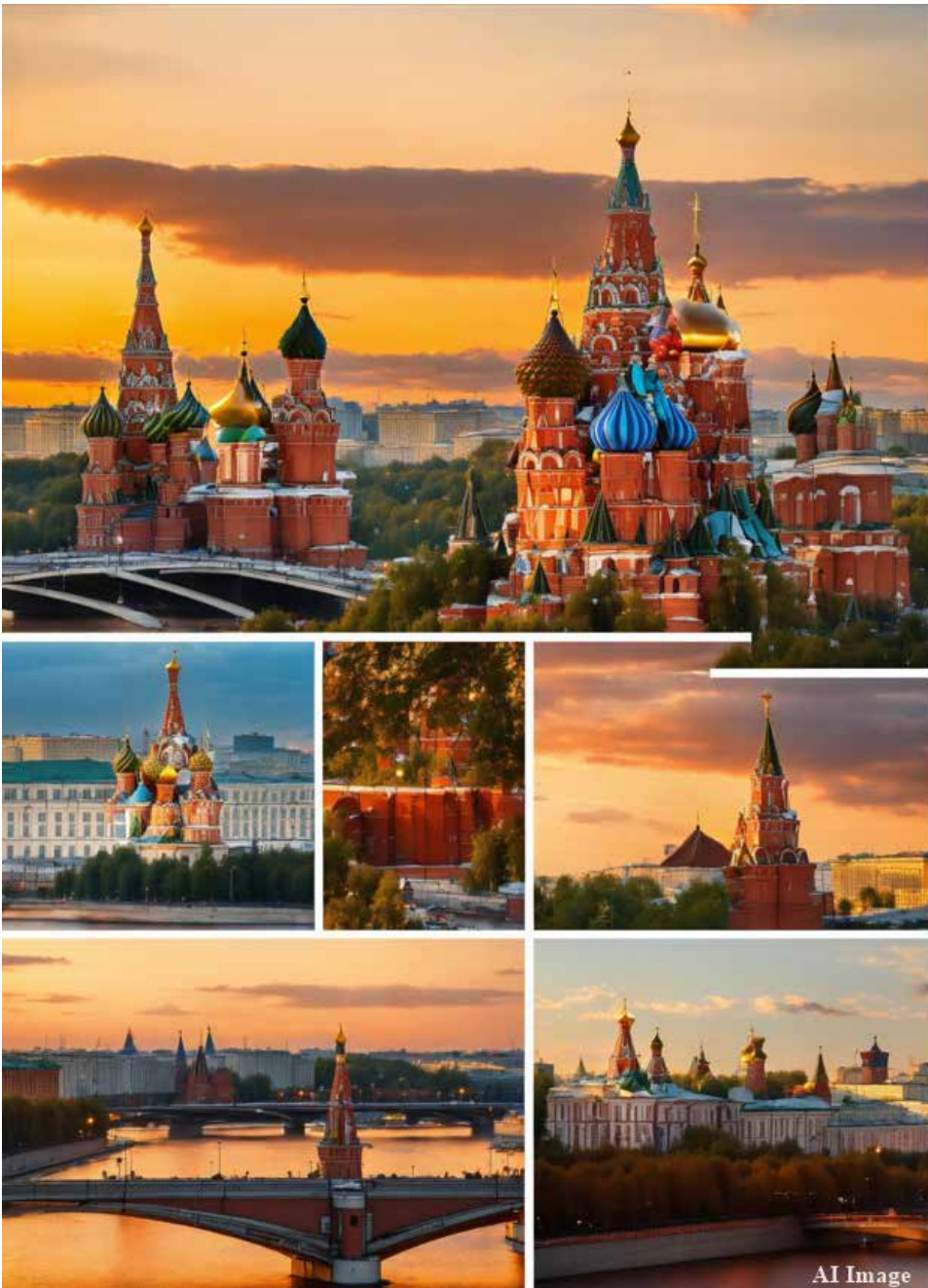
#### **MAX: State-supervised alternative**

As part of replacing WhatsApp, the Russian state has introduced the MAX app, which is marketed as a secure and domestic alternative, but critics say it allows for extensive monitoring of users' communications. Experts warn that MAX is designed to give authorities visibility into messages, calls, and user behavior. This means that private communication can in practice be controlled by the state, which further reduces the scope for free conversation and critical voices.

#### **Education policy: Reduced English teaching**

The government has also proposed to reduce the teaching of English and other Western languages in schools and universities.





Western countries have closed their borders to Russian citizens. Tourist visas are denied, and the opportunity to travel west has effectively disappeared. President Vladimir Putin has expressed that this is a development he welcomes, as it prevents Russian citizens from leaving the country, especially in times of mobilization or political unrest.

### **Impact on citizens**

This development affects the everyday lives of millions of Russians. The opportunity to travel, study and work abroad is severely limited. At the same time, the digital barriers and surveillance have led to a more closed and controlled information environment. Many young Russians worry about the future, as they risk being cut off from global trends, educational opportunities and international contacts. For those who want to leave the country for political or personal reasons, the doors have effectively been closed.

### **Prospects**

Russia's policy of isolation has had profound consequences for both society and individuals. With bans on Western apps, restrictions on education and plans for a separate internet, a new Iron Curtain is being formed – this time digitally and culturally. The borders with the West are closed, and that is something that suits the country's leadership. The future of Russian citizens is uncertain, and the question remains whether the country will ever be reintegrated into the global community.

The aim is to counteract "cultural infiltration" and strengthen the Russian language and identity. However, critics believe that this risks further isolating young Russians and making future international contacts more difficult, both in education and working life.

### **Digital isolation: Plans for a dedicated Internet**

One of the most far-reaching ambitions is the plans to create a so-called "sovereign Internet" – a system where Russia can disconnect from the global network and

instead use its own, state-controlled network. Comparisons are often made with North Korea, where the inhabitants are completely cut off from the outside world's internet content. If fully implemented, this would mean that Russian citizens would only have access to information approved by the state.

### **International Relations: Closed Borders and Putin's View**

In addition to digital and cultural measures, Russia has also been hit by physical limitations. After the invasion of Ukraine, many

# ART EXPERIENCE OF THE WEEK



**Maria Martinau**

22.6.1847, Novomirgorod, Venäjä

10.2.1914, Helsinki

**Portrait of a Woman 1880 - 1899**



# EVENTS

## 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/>



## MUSTASAARI CHURCH

### DIANDRA

17.10.25 at 6 pm

Mustasaari Finnish Parish

## VAASA 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>

## HELSINKI BOOK FAIR

**23.-26.10.2025**

in Helsinki Exhibition Hall.

The Helsinki Book Fair was founded 25 years ago at the request of the book industry – now the event is bigger than ever. This year, the Helsinki Book Fair is being held for the 25th time, and last year it had almost 98,000 visitors.

This is the most important cultural event of the autumn,

The theme of the Book Fair 2025 is Education and Joy!

At the same time, with the same ticket: Wine & Food event

<https://kirjamessut.messukeskus.com/>

## VAASA 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/ikuisesti-nuori-vaasa>

## VAASA 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 days of literature have been promised!

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

## KÅLKÅBRA Kokkola Opera Festival

14-16.11.25

"From people to people and opera for opera's sake"

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

## RUSK

18-22.11.2025

Chamber music at Jakbostad

Artistic Director

Anna-Maria Helsing

Composer of the Year

Dobrikna Tabakova

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

## BEATLES GOES KOKKOLA

Snellman Hall, Kokkola

21.11.2025 at 6 pm

Vaasa City Orchestra

cond. Jussi Lampela

Markku Veijalainen, presenter

"The Vaasa City Orchestra will visit Kokkola with its popular Beatles programme together with Markku Veijalainen, who knows everything about 1960s pop culture. During the evening, we will hear great stories and, above all, rich arrangements of the songbook of Liverpool's Fab Four."

<https://www.vaasa.fi/koe-ja-nae/kulttuuria-vaasassa-ja-seudulla/vaasan-kaupunginorkesteri/beatles-goes-kokkola/>

## CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

19.12.2025 at 6 pm

Vaasa City Orchestra

cond. Tomas Djupsjöbacka

sol. Kathrin Lorenzen, soprano

Jingjing Xu, alto

Juan de Dios Mateos, tenor

Aksel Daveyan, bass guitar

Chamber Choir Canticum Maris

Johann Sebastian Bach:

Christmas Oratorio, cantatas 1–3

Is there anything more festive Christmas music than Johann Sebastian Bach's Christmas Oratorio, which with its extensive line-up of performers, arias and choir numbers is a cornucopia by any standards?

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

## VAASA BAROQUE

### THE MOST BEAUTIFUL BAROQUE CHRISTMAS CAROLS

20.12.25 at 18.00 Karjasilta Church in Oulu

21.12.25 at 10.00 Kaustinen Church  
K1 18.00 Schaumansalen,

Jakobstad

22.12.25 at 19.00 Brändö church

[vaasabaroque.com](http://vaasabaroque.com)

## SONG AND MUSIC FESTIVAL 2026

11-14.6.2026

Helsinki

"Every five years, thousands of choir singers and instrumentalists gather for a huge party in the name of song and music, in Swedish. The great Finland-Swedish song and music festival has been organised since 1891. In 2026, the festival will be held in Helsinki. There will be a mass music festival for four days between 11 and 14 June, with large mass choirs, wind and string orchestras, choral singing in the city, evening party, song festival parade and more."

<https://2026.sangfesten.fi/start/om/punginorkesteri/jouluoratorio/>

## ZINK CRAFT BEER & STREET FOOD FESTIVAL 2026,

17-18-7.2026 VAASA MARKET SQUARE

An international festival for craft beer lovers and food lovers.

<https://www.zincfestival.fi/>

# CAUSERIE

## BILINGUALISM

### Bilingualism: The brain's secret superpower – and the excuse to avoid cleaning



**W**ELL. The researchers have come up with something again. It is not enough that bilingualism allows us to easily order coffee in two languages or find a better price on a holiday trip. Now it's claimed that it's also the brain's antidote to everything that will ever come – dementia, stroke, and apparently even bad luck in the lottery.

Imagine: when we speak Finnish and Swedish (or any language pair), our brains don't just sit passively in an armchair with a dictionary in hand. They are engaged in a constant mental martial art. There is a little inner game going on in our prefrontal lobes: "No, Pekka, now we speak Swedish, and don't speak Finnish

then!" and "I argue, but 'reindeer herding' is a better word than 'reindeer herding'!"

This constant battle between the strings is like going to the gym – but without sweat and moving parts. And just like going to the gym, it gets stronger. Scientists call this "cognitive reserve," which sounds like something a banker would suggest, but it's actually the brain's resistance to going crazy as you get older.

The best part is that this benefit of bilingualism is like a free brain insurance. You don't have to do anything special – you don't have to solve crosswords or memorize sequences – it's enough to speak two languages. And if you complain that

"I don't know the other language properly," studies show that it doesn't matter that much either. The brain appreciates the attempt, even if it involves confusion and strange grammatical errors.

The conclusion is clear: bilingualism is the brain's secret superpower. That's why you can explain to your parents that you don't clean your room because your brain is busy fighting between languages – and that's much more important than taking out the garbage. And who knows, maybe it will also protect you from getting hit by a car or losing the lottery. Or well, at least it gives you an excuse to refuse to clean in two languages.



# WINTER AGENT

**VAASA**

## There's Still Time Today to Become Vaasa's Winter Agent!



**A**RE YOU A PASSIONATE outdoor enthusiast who wants to have a direct impact on the quality of winter maintenance in your city?

Now you have a unique opportunity to become part of the City of Vaasa's network of winter agents! The intensified maintenance of key walking and cycling routes, launched last winter, continues, and the city is now looking for active citizens to help evaluate the results.

The role of a winter agent is both easy and meaningful: once a week, you provide your assessment of the condition and accessibility of the routes via a

simple online survey. Your feedback is invaluable, as it directly guides the development of the city's winter maintenance. As Project Engineer Samuli Huusko states, the observations from the winter agents are taken seriously and have a concrete impact on daily upkeep.

The city is particularly eager to attract pedestrians and users of various mobility aids, such as rollators, wheelchairs, and strollers. The goal is to get a comprehensive overview of accessibility in all situations. Agents are not assigned specific routes—you can evaluate any pathway within the intensified maintenance zone along your usual daily travels.

Participation requires no extra effort—your normal everyday travel routine is sufficient. As a reward for active agents, gift cards are raffled off every month. All interested participants are invited to a training session to learn more about the assessment criteria.

The Winter Agent program is part of the Vaasa Cycling Alliance and the European Green Leaf 2026 project's strong commitment to sustainable and accessible mobility for all. Registration is open until September 21, 2025, via the city's website.

Don't miss this chance to help make Vaasa a better winter city!

# CHILDREN CULTURE

**VAASA**

## Children's Culture Weeks "Puddle" Return to Vaasa in October



**A**FTER A BREAK, the Children's Culture Weeks, known as Puddle, are back in October. The events are designed for children, schools, and families. Most activities are free of charge. The program includes workshops, art exhibitions, concerts, storytelling sessions, playhouses, autumn festivals, and much more.

### Opening Day: Music and Play

PÖL opens on Tuesday, October 1, from 5:00–8:00 p.m. in the Drama Hall of the Main Library. The children's music orchestra Orffit will perform at 6:00 p.m. Visitors can also enjoy various activities indoors and in the library yard, such as TaiKon's community art project Drops of Joy, the board game PÖL, or a Moomin-themed treasure hunt. Outdoor games and the PÖL polka will also be featured.

Before the official opening, a pre-party will be held, led by the Museum Hermelin. Visitors can join plush toy tours at the Ostrobothnian Museum at 2:00 p.m. in Swedish and at 3:00 p.m. in Finnish.

### Studio PUDDLE– Create and Explore

In the Matilda space at the Main Library, Studio PÖL opens. The exhibition showcases works and decorations created by students from Onkilahden Yhtenäiskoulu, Vaasa Christian School, and summer artists from the youth services. Studio PÖL also offers children the opportunity to create their own art.

A highlight of PUDDLE is Konstplask – curated cultural experiences for families. All events are free. This year, children can take part in The Goldfish in PÖL, a crafting and

painting event organized by Vaasa 4H on Saturday, October 4, from 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. in the Drama Hall.

On Saturday, October 11, from 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m., the orchestra Ylimääräiset Asemamiehet will perform, followed by dance workshops led by Kipinä Dance School, suitable for children of all ages.

### Full Program Online

The full program is available on the City of Vaasa's cultural services website: [vasa.fi/pol](https://vasa.fi/pol)

PÖL offers a playful way for children and families to experience art, music, and creativity up close. It is an opportunity to explore new forms of expression and enjoy fun activities together across the city.

Image: Vaasa City



# COMMUNICATIONS

## VAASA - HELSINKI

### FlixBus Partners INGSVA, Expanding Affordable Travel Options



**I**N A SIGNIFICANT move to strengthen its footprint in the Nordic market, the European travel giant FlixBus has announced its first-ever Finnish partnership with Ostrobothnian-based transport company INGSVA. This collaboration marks a new chapter for inter-city bus travel in Finland, promising more choice and competitive pricing for passengers.

The partnership signifies a major milestone for FlixBus, which has until now operated in Finland with its own branded buses. Teaming up with INGSVA, a well-established operator in Western Finland known for its public bus and charter services, allows FlixBus to le-

verage local expertise and infrastructure.

As a result of this deal, INGSVA will now operate the FlixBus route connecting Vaasa to Helsinki via Pori and Turku with a daily service. The buses will be branded in FlixBus's distinctive green livery but will be driven by INGSVA's Finnish drivers, ensuring a familiar and reliable service for passengers.

"This partnership with INGSVA is a key strategic step for us," a FlixBus spokesperson commented. "It allows us to combine our global network and brand with a trusted local partner's operational excellence, ultimately providing more value and options for Finnish travelers."

The collaboration is driven by a shared goal of growth. For INGSVA, the partnership provides access to FlixBus's vast international network and booking platform. For FlixBus, it means a stronger, more integrated presence on Finnish roads.

Passengers can already book tickets for the route, which offers five daily departures. Fiercely competitive pricing remains a cornerstone of the FlixBus model, with tickets on the Vaasa-Helsinki route starting from just €12.50.

This expansion is seen as a direct boost to regional connectivity, offering a cost-effective and comfortable travel alternative for students, commuters, and tourists along Finland's west coast.



# BLUE ZONES

## BLUE ZONES

### Ostrobothnia - A Blue Zone?



**C**AN AN AREA IN Western Finland become the next blue zone? New research suggests that Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia could join the ranks of the world's famous longevity hotspots.

#### What are blue zones?

Blue zones are special places where people regularly live to age 90 and older while staying remarkably healthy. These regions are known for an unusually large number of people who live to their 90s and beyond, often in good health. Well-known examples are Okinawa in Japan, Ikaria in Greece and parts of Italy.

#### Discovery in Finland

Researchers from Åbo Akademi University studied three regions in western Finland with different life expectancies: Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia, Åland and Finnish-speaking southern Ostrobothnia. They used national statistics and survey data from more than 12,000 older adults born between 1930 and 1955. Why Ostrobothnia stands out Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia distinguished itself by having both strong health and the one that most closely followed the

"blue zone" lifestyle. This means that the inhabitants there practice the healthy habits that people in the Blue Zone are known for:

#### Eat nutritious, local food

Staying physically active in daily life (not just at the gym)

Having strong family and community ties

Living with purpose and meaning

Surprising results from other regions

The study revealed some unexpected results. Åland had the highest life expectancy and the best health outcomes, but did not align with many of the lifestyle principles commonly seen in the Blue Zones. This suggests that other factors such as access to healthcare or economic conditions may explain their longevity.

#### Even more puzzling was South Ostrobothnia.

Residents there reported that they followed healthy lifestyles similar to those in Swedish-speaking Finland, but they showed the worst health and the lowest life expectancy of the three groups. This shows that lifestyle alone does not guarantee a longer life.

What makes the difference?

The relationship between longevity, health,

and lifestyle is shaped by cultural, social, political, and economic contexts. It's not just about individual choices – the entire community environment is important. In Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia, this seems to go together in a special way. The region combines the traditional lifestyle habits of the Blue Zone with a supportive cultural environment that helps people maintain these practices throughout their lives.

#### What's next?

The researchers suggest that Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia could be considered a potential new blue zone, although further demographic studies are needed to confirm the extraordinary life expectancy reported in this group.

"Blue Zones in the Nordic Region" that will run until 2026. The results can provide valuable lessons not only for Finland, but for aging populations all over the world who want to learn the secrets of a healthy and long life.

For the time being, Ostrobothnia looks promising as Finland's answer to the world's blue zones – a place where good health and a long life are not just luck, but way of life.



# HEALTH

**THL**

## **THL invites 16,000 Finns to a health survey – provides a broad picture of lifestyles, functional capacity and obesity**



**T**HIS AUTUMN the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) will launch a comprehensive national health survey by inviting approximately 16,000 randomly selected people living in Finland and at least 15 years old to respond to a survey. The aim is to collect reliable information on key factors in public health: lifestyle, functional capacity, obesity and experiences of health services.

The survey is part of the European Union's joint European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), which produces comparable statistics between the Member States. According to THL, the rapid rise in obesity is particularly worrying: around 30 per cent of adults in Finland are obese, and severe obesity has increased significantly, especially among 20–44-year-olds.

### **Key themes of the survey**

#### **The questions include:**

Lifestyle: how often people eat fruit, vegetables or whole grains, how their diet has changed over time and the amount of everyday exercise.

Functional capacity: how well people feel that they can cope with everyday tasks and how physical and social functional capacity is affected by various factors.

Obesity: both prevalence in the population and the development of severe obesity in younger age groups.

Health and welfare services: experiences of accessibility, information and the possibility of receiving treatment at the right time.

### **Practical information for participants**

Invitations will be sent by post during September. The survey can be answered either online or on a paper form, and is available in Finnish, Swedish and English. Participation takes an estimated 15 minutes.

For THL and decision-makers, the survey provides a valuable knowledge base for better planning health and wellbeing policy. The results can be used, for example, to target obesity prevention, support functional capacity and improve the quality of services.

### **Why this is important**

Obesity and reduced functional capacity are not only individual health problems, but also societal challenges that burden healthcare and increase costs. By knowing more about the lifestyle and well-being of Finns, we can create more effective measures – promoting healthy food choices, physical activity and sleep, and building environments that support better everyday decisions. THL's invitation thus affects thousands of people, but the results can contribute to the well-being of the entire country. Participation is therefore a concrete way of influencing.

**WÄRTSILÄ**

**WÄRTSILÄ**

## **Wärtsilä Powers Danish Ferry Operator with Fully Electric High-Speed Vessels**



**F**INNISH TECHNOLOGY GROUP Wärtsilä has been chosen to equip two groundbreaking high-speed catamaran ferries for Danish operator Molslinjen with a fully integrated battery-electric propulsion system and advanced waterjets. The ferries, under construction at the Incat Tasmania shipyard in Australia, mark a significant step towards decarbonising ferry transport in northern Europe.

Wärtsilä's delivery package includes an integrated electric propulsion system, DC power conversion, energy management and automation systems, eight electric propulsion motors, waterjets, and the Wärtsilä ProTouch control system for smooth

and efficient operations.

The two vessels will serve the busy Kattegat route, linking Jutland and Zealand. Measuring 129 meters long and 30.5 meters wide, each ferry will carry up to 1,483 passengers and 500 cars, increasing Molslinjen's capacity by more than 25 percent.

"With these electric ferries, we aim to remove thousands of tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from Denmark's climate footprint each year," said Kristian Durhuus, CEO of Molslinjen.

Wärtsilä highlights that ship electrification is central to meeting global climate targets. The company has already contributed to more than 150 hybrid-electric ships, and sees this project as a milestone in its long-term sustainability strategy.

"Our partnership with Molslinjen and Incat accelerates the industry's path to net-zero emissions," noted Roger Holm, President of Wärtsilä

Marine.

Incat Tasmania, renowned for pioneering lightweight and energy-efficient designs, emphasized the wider implications of the project.

"We're not just building ships – we are building the future," said Stephen Casey, CEO of Incat Tasmania.

The vessels' eight waterjet configuration promises low weight, shallow draft operation, high efficiency, and excellent manoeuvrability, combining sustainability with performance. Wärtsilä will begin deliveries to the shipyard in 2026, with the ferries expected to enter Danish service in 2027 and 2028.

Image caption: Wärtsilä will deliver a fully integrated electric propulsion system with waterjets for two new high-speed catamaran ferries being built by Incat Tasmania for Danish ferry operator Molslinjen  
© Incat Tasmania



# Our newspaper's editor-in-chief interviewed by Vasabladet

10 Nyheter

## Hans Björknäs sadlar om vid 80 – börjar studera

**När Hans Björknäs ryttar i ryttens värld är det inte med en sadel, utan med ett stort hjärta. Efter 80 år som läkare har han valt att kasta sig in i en helt ny värld.**

Hans Björknäs är 80 år och bor i Vaasa. Han har varit läkare i 50 år, och har arbetat på olika sjukhus i Finland och Sverige. Han har också varit ordförande i Svenska Läkaresällskapet i Finland. Han har en passion för hälsa och medicin, och han vill fortsätta att lära sig och bidra till samhället.

Hans Björknäs är en aktiv och engagerad person. Han har varit medlem i Svenska Läkaresällskapet i Finland i över 40 år. Han har också varit medlem i Svenska Medicinska Samfundet i Sverige. Han har en stor erfarenhet av att arbeta i ett team, och han är en god lyssnare. Han har också en stor passion för hälsa och medicin, och han vill fortsätta att lära sig och bidra till samhället.

Hans Björknäs har valt att kasta sig in i en helt ny värld. Han har börjat studera vid Vaasan Yliopisto. Han har valt att studera medicin, och han vill fortsätta att lära sig och bidra till samhället. Han har också valt att fortsätta att arbeta som läkare, och han vill fortsätta att bidra till patienterna.



Björknäs besöker Vaasan universitet och lämnar in sin ansökan om att studera medicin.

"En riktig vacker!" Han säger från sitt kontor när han ser på Björknäs.

Hans Björknäs har valt att kasta sig in i en helt ny värld. Han har börjat studera vid Vaasan Yliopisto. Han har valt att studera medicin, och han vill fortsätta att lära sig och bidra till samhället. Han har också valt att fortsätta att arbeta som läkare, och han vill fortsätta att bidra till patienterna.

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WHEN HANS BJÖRKNÄS turned 80, he chose to start a whole new chapter in his life. Because of this, he was interviewed by Hedvig Sandell at Vasabladet. The interview was published in the newspaper on Thursday 11 September. Here are some of the points of view that were touched upon during the interview.

After more than half a century as a doctor, he has taken the step into the world of journalism through studies at the Swedish School of Social Science in Helsinki. The decision came after a heart attack in 2021 that put an end to her work as a traveling doctor. Instead, he started publishing three daily newspapers in Vaasa – in Swedish, Finnish and English – which aroused a deeper curiosity for

newspaper production.

Björknäs describes the studies as an intellectual challenge and a way to develop the ability to express oneself. As a doctor, he was an expert in his field, but believes that journalists have a unique ability to make complicated topics understandable and attractive. He emphasizes that the goal is not a degree but knowledge.

The differences from the medical studies of the 1960s are great: back then, people struggled without computers, e-mail and financial support. Today, teaching takes place digitally and students work in a completely different technical environment. Still, he sees similarities – diligent students existed then as now. Björknäs studies weekdays between 9 am and 3 pm, but the pleasures of student life no longer attract him. On the other hand, he is happy about

the cultural life in Helsinki and the opportunity to live close to his children and grandchildren. He feels well received by his younger classmates and does not experience any age discrimination. For Björknäs, the studies are also a statement for an active life after retirement. He emphasizes that pensioners with long experience are a resource for society and that continued activity benefits both health and well-being. Finland, he believes, offers unique opportunities to realize such projects even at an advanced age. Despite his new focus, Björknäs has not completely let go of medical science – he still runs a small private practice in Vaasa. Looking back, he sees both the medical profession and journalism as parts of the same life journey, where curiosity and the desire to contribute have been the common thread.

# MUSIC

## MUSIC

### Édit Piaf, now on at the Vaasa City Theatre

IMAGINE A VOICE that could tear the velvet off a cabaret chair, a sound that was less about perfect pitch and more about raw, unfiltered truth. That voice belonged to Édith Giovanna Gassion, who the world would come to know as La Môme Piaf—the Little Sparrow. Her life wasn't just a series of events; it was a three-act tragedy sung in a minor key, with brief, dazzling intervals of glorious light.

Her story begins not on a stage, but in the dim, perfume-and-disinfectant-scented halls of a Normandy brothel. Abandoned by her mother, a café singer, and her father, a contortionist, young Édith was raised by her grandmother, the madam. Her first friends were the prostitutes—not societal pillars, but they were her pillars. They were the women who doted on her, nursed her through childhood blindness (reportedly cured by their pooled funds for a pilgrimage), and gave her a warped but very real sense of family. It was here she learned her first lessons in love, loss, and survival in the shadows. The humor is dark, but it's there: where else does a child learn the alphabet and the art of negotiation simultaneously?

Discovered singing on the streets for francs by nightclub owner Louis Leplée, she was groomed, dressed in a simple black dress (a genius branding move that would become her uniform), and christened "La Môme Piaf." Paris fell for this tiny, haunted-looking girl with the gargantuan



voice. But tragedy was her constant companion. Leplée was murdered, and Piaf, though innocent, was tarred by scandal. She sang on.

Then came the war. And here's the chapter that adds a layer of dangerous, complicated glamour to her myth. Piaf performed for German officers in occupied Paris. She was photographed with them, flirted with them. The gossip columns dripped with venom. But the full story, as it often is with Piaf, was messier. She was also working for the Resistance. Using her fame as a shield, she smuggled compasses and maps insi-

de her costume cases to help POWs escape. She posed for pictures with German officers, all the while secretly having their portraits cropped into fake IDs for French prisoners. She was playing the most dangerous game of her life, and she did it with a smirk, turning her own notoriety into a weapon.

After the war, her star exploded globally. She became France's greatest export, a symbol of resilience. She sang anthems of love and despair like "La Vie en rose," "Hymne à l'amour," and "Non, je ne regrette rien." But the spotlight burned.





Her personal life was a carousel of self-destruction: a ruinous addiction to morphine and alcohol following a series of devastating car crashes, and a relentless, desperate pursuit of love with a series of men who could never quite handle the hurricane that was Piaf.

Yet, within this tempest was a generational talent scout. She had an infallible ear. She heard a young, lumbering Italian delivery boy sing and declared, "You will be a star." She forced him on stage, taught him presence, and launched the career of Yves Montand. She heard a shy, nervous Armenian-French composer and lyricist and insisted he perform his own songs. She gave him his first big break, championing the man who would become the legen-

dary Charles Aznavour. She built up the men in her life, even as her own foundations crumbled.

By the end, the Sparrow was frail, addicted, and aged decades beyond her years, but she never stopped performing. She was carried to the stage, a wisp of a woman in a black dress, and then... that voice would erupt. It was the voice of every heartbreak, every joy, every regret, and every triumph. It was utterly, devastatingly human.

So why are we, nearly a century later, still writing books, making movies (the brilliant *La Vie en Rose*), and staging plays about her?

Because Piaf is the ultimate paradox. She was both a victim and a

saviour, a collaborator and a resistance hero, a vulnerable child and a ferocious diva. Her life screams that a person cannot be neatly categorized. She was flawed, gloriously so. In our era of curated perfection and sanitized celebrity, Piaf's raw, unvarnished, and messy humanity is a shock to the system. She didn't just sing about pain, joy, and regret; she was pain, joy, and regret. She reminds us that great art isn't born from comfort, but from the beautiful, terrible wreckage of a life fully, recklessly lived. And we can't look away.

Images: Studio Harcourt, 1939  
Public Domain

PIAF, En kadu mitään, Vaasa Cithy theatre

# THEATRE

## VAASA CITY THEATRE

### Édith Piaf's Fascinating Life as a Musical Play. Premiere at the City Theatre on 11 September 2025



**K**NOWN AS THE “Little Sparrow of Paris,” Édith Piaf’s life was marked by extremes: poverty and sudden success, deep love and devastating sorrow. Born into hardship, she grew up in the slums of Paris, at one point losing her sight as a child—only to recover in what many considered a miracle.

She endured tragedy early, including the loss of her own child. Yet from singing in small cafés she rose to become the queen of French chanson. Piaf’s voice carried the passion of her tumultuous romances and the grief of losing her great love, boxer Marcel Cerdan, in a plane crash. Her later years were clouded by illness and addiction, but her songs—*La Vie en Rose* and *Non, je ne regrette rien*—remain timeless echoes of her triumphs and sorrows. Piaf did not simply live life; she let life carry her.

#### **The Play: “Piaf – I Regret Nothing” in Vaasa**

Vaasa City Theatre opens its autumn season with a journey into Piaf’s dramatic world in the musical play “Piaf – I Regret Nothing,” premiering on Thursday, 11 September 2025, on the Romeo Stage ([sttinfi.fi](http://sttinfi.fi)).

The play, written by British playwright Pam Gems, blends fact and fiction while bringing Piaf’s greatest hits to life: *Non, je ne regrette rien*, *La Vie en Rose*, and *Hymne à l’amour*.

The production is directed by Maiju Sallas, returning to Vaasa with renewed passion. “I have admired Édith Piaf since my youth... she never compromised her unique style,” Sallas explains. Sonja Halla-aho takes on the demanding lead role, donning Piaf’s iconic black dress and channeling the singer’s intensity—her joys, loves, sorrows, and beauty. The artistic team includes conductor Sauli Perälä, choreographer Antton Laine, set designer Mika Haaranen, costume designer Emilia Eriksson, and sound designer Jouni Ilari Tapio.

The play runs about 2 hours and 30 minutes including an intermission, with Swedish subtitles, and is recommended for audiences over 12 years of age ([sttinfi.fi](http://sttinfi.fi)).

The ensemble cast features Anna Lemmetti-Vieri, Mari Hirvi, Oiva Nuojua, Toni Ikola, Ville Härkönen, Jorma Tommila / Panu Valo, Konsta Reuter, Timo Luoma, and Miika Alatupa, alongside new company members Milla Kangas and Anni-Maija Koskinen, and guest actors Anna Arola and Olli Tulkki from Tampere University of Applied Sciences.

In summary: Piaf – I Regret Nothing promises an intense cultural experience, where Édith Piaf’s passion, tragedy, and musical legacy are reborn on stage in a visually striking performance. The premiere on 11 September at Vaasa City Theatre’s Romeo Stage will be a highlight of the autumn theatre season—a chance to feel Piaf’s spirit once more, as only chanson can deliver.

IMAGE: Piaf – en kadu mitään (2025). Sonja Halla-aho. PHOTO: Kasper Dalkarl



# NEWS

## BLUE ZONES

# Åbo Akademi: Swedish speaking Ostrobothnia could be a blue zone



**WHAT IS A BLUE ZONE?** The term refers to regions where extraordinary numbers of residents live significantly longer than average, often exceeding 100 years. Such areas are thought to combine longevity with lifestyle factors like gentle daily physical activity, plant-rich diets, strong social bonds, and a sense of purpose

### New Study Highlights Promising Findings in Western Finland

A recent study published by Åbo Akademi on 1 September 2025 found that Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia in Western Finland shows preliminary potential to be considered a Blue Zone.

Researchers compared three regions: Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia, Finnish-speaking South Ostrobothnia, and Åland. The study found that among these, Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia most closely aligns with the health-promoting lifestyle characteristic of established Blue

Zones—showing good overall health and longevity alongside strong adherence to lifestyle traits such as healthy eating, moderate physical activity, community involvement, and purposeful living

Interestingly, Åland demonstrated the highest life expectancy and best overall health, yet did not follow many of the lifestyle patterns typically associated with Blue Zones—suggesting its success may be driven by different factors

Also notable: South Ostrobothnia mirrored Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia in following Blue Zone-like lifestyles, but lagged in health outcomes—highlighting that adopting those habits alone may not be sufficient without further demographic study

### Why This Matters

The findings suggest that cultural and linguistic context can play a vital role in promoting healthy aging. However, researchers caution that more robust demographic data is needed to confirm whether Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia truly exhibits extraordinary longevity—particularly through independent validation

Postdoctoral researcher **Sarah Åkerman**, principal investigator of the “Blue Zones in the Nordics” project, emphasizes that while lifestyle alignment is promising, further demographic confirmation is a ne-

cessary next step

### Broader Context: The Blue Zone Concept and Its Challenges

The Blue Zone concept—initially identified in renowned longevity hotspots such as Sardinia, Ikaria, Okinawa, and Martinique—has gained global recognition. But it has also drawn scientific criticism. Some recent studies have raised concerns about reliability, including potential errors in age records and data quality in certain regions

Nevertheless, lifestyle traits commonly associated with Blue Zones—natural physical movement, plant-based diets, strong social networks, purposeful living—remain widely regarded as beneficial habits for promoting long and healthy lives

While Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia shows promising alignment with Blue Zone lifestyle patterns and healthy aging indicators, definitive classification as a Blue Zone awaits further validation. This research marks a significant first step in exploring longevity and well-being in a Nordic context—but more investigation is needed before Ostrobothnia can officially join the ranks of the world’s longevity hotspots.

# UNIVERSITY

## UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

### Rector of Vaasa University: Finland's Future Depends on Competence



**M**INNA MARTIKAINEN, Rector of Vaasa University, emphasized in her opening speech for the academic year that Finland's future rests on education and internationally high-quality research. Only through top-level expertise can the country attract investments, boost exports, and secure economic resilience.

Martikainen warns against the Ministry of Finance's proposal to cut university funding by a total of €90 million next year. The plan also includes a two-year index freeze, which would lead to further substantial reductions. The rector

highlights that this threatens student places and the national goal of raising the higher education attainment rate to 50 percent.

– Cutting resources for education and research at a time when the economy needs expertise is the wrong strategy, Martikainen stresses.

She underscores research, development, and innovation (RDI) as the engine for future growth. The target of raising R&D investments to four percent of GDP by 2030 is crucial for Finland's competitiveness and welfare.

Energy transition presents particular opportunities. The Vaasa region

hosts the Nordic countries' largest energy technology cluster, where the university works closely with companies. Initiatives like the Energy Transition Valley aim to build a leading ecosystem for energy research, innovation, and new business.

Martikainen concludes that universities are an investment in national resilience. In an uncertain world marked by climate change, geopolitical tensions, and technological shifts, expertise and research are essential for security and sustainable development.

– Universities are not a cost—they are Finland's future, Martikainen asserts.

IMAGE: University of Vaasa/  
Christoffer Björklund.



# HANKEN

## HANKEN

### Hanken Opens 117th Academic Year – Rector Highlights Education’s Role in Finland’s Future



Rehtori Ingmar Björkman. Matilda Saarinen/Hanken

**H**ANKEN SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS opened its 117th academic year in Helsinki and the 46th in Vaasa on 1 September. In his address, Rector Ingmar Björkman emphasized that while Finland faces major economic challenges, the way forward lies in sustained investment in education and research.

Over the past fifteen years, Hanken

has increased the number of new bachelor's and master's students by 77 percent. The university carries a special responsibility for educating Swedish-speaking economists, while also attracting a growing number of Finnish-speaking and international students. This year, Hanken's English-language bachelor's programme was the most popular of its kind in Finland.

Björkman also underlined that state funding per student has declined sharply since 2010, calling on

policymakers to direct part of the increased research and innovation investments to universities. "An investment in universities is an investment in Finland's future," he stated.

The opening ceremony also featured speeches by Christoph Vitzthum, Chair of Hanken's Board, Alma Portin, Chair of the Student Union, and Hanken alumna and diplomat Nicola Lindertz.

# ECONOMY

## EKONOMY

### FINNVERA: The best time to invest was yesterday, but the second-best time is today



**T**HE BEST TIME TO INVEST was yesterday, but the second-best time is today. With these words, Finnvera's CEO **Juuso Heinilä** urged Finnish companies to act quickly and boldly. During a panel discussion at Team Finland Day in Helsinki, he emphasized that the country's economy is on the rise and that demand is now growing across many sectors.

Heinilä highlighted that several factors favor investments right now. Labor is more readily available than it has been in years, and the costs of loans and guarantees remain at a reasonable level. At the same time, all of Europe is looking toward significant opportunities related to Ukraine's reconstruction—something that also entails intense competition for resources, workforce, and market shares. Companies that act first will gain a clear advantage.

Finnvera has already strengthened its support for companies this year. From January to June, loans and guarantees totaling €600 million were granted within Finland, while export guarantees and special guarantees amounted to a total of €3.7 billion—more than double the amount in the same period in 2024. According to Heinilä, this reflects a stronger confidence in both growth and internationalization among Finnish companies.

*"The outlook is significantly brighter than a year ago. Large export deals are back on the agenda, and both investments and major growth projects are underway in small, medium, and midcap companies. This is clearly reflected in Finnvera's financing,"* Heinilä said.

The panel discussion at Team Finland Day also included **Juhapekka Ristola**, Head of Department at the Ministry of Employment and the Economy;

**Jaana Korhonen**, Senior Director at the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (NTM); and **Lassi Noponen**, Director General of Business Finland. The discussion was chaired by **Juho Romakaniemi**, CEO of the Finnish Chamber of Commerce.

The event was opened by the President of the Republic, **Alexander Stubb**. The Minister for Foreign Trade and Development **Ville Tavio** stressed the importance of exports for Finland's future. In total, around 650 representatives from Finnish growth companies and the Team Finland network participated.

The conclusion is clear: according to Finnvera, now is the right time to invest. Companies that take the initiative today can build competitiveness for tomorrow's tougher international market.



**ALKO**

## Alko reports expected drop in sales and profits – but customer service earns praise



### Customer satisfaction remains strong

Despite weaker financial results, customer feedback remained positive. In a survey on product selection, Alko received a record-high rating of 8.64 (on a 4–10 scale), compared with 8.61 last year. The customer experience index (on a 1–5 scale) rose to 4.60 from 4.58. Age verification also remained at a very high level: 98.2% of test purchases were correctly checked, up from 97.3% last year.

### New sustainability initiatives

This spring, Alko introduced the “Certified Alternative” concept, aimed at giving customers the opportunity to make sustainable choices with regard to cultivation, production, and working conditions.

### Role in society and operating environment

Alko emphasized its continued role in Finland’s welfare model: the company positions itself both as a preventive force against alcohol-related harm and as an enabler of responsible enjoyment.

For Alko, the first half of 2025 was financially challenging: sales volumes and revenues declined, and profitability weakened. The development is directly linked to the Alcohol Act reform of summer 2024, which allowed stronger beverages to be sold in grocery stores. At the same time, customers expressed continued appreciation for Alko’s service, product range, and sustainability efforts – strengths that stand out in a period of change.

Source: Alko

**A**LKO OY RELEASED its half-year report for January–June 2025 on Tuesday, showing the clear impact of last year’s changes to Finland’s Alcohol Act. Sales volumes declined as expected and profits weakened, but customers continued to rate the company’s service and selection highly.

Sales and revenue development  
Alko’s total sales during the first half of the year amounted to 30.7 million liters, down from 34.8 million liters a year earlier. Al-

cohol-taxable revenue fell from €536.4 million to €479.3 million – a decrease of €57 million.

### Impact on tax revenues

The Finnish state also collected significantly less in alcohol excise tax: revenues dropped from €278.1 million to €248.4 million.

### Weaker profitability

Operating profit fell sharply to €4.6 million, compared with €15.8 million in the same period last year. Net profit stood at €4.3 million, down from €13.1 million in January–June 2024.

# ASTRONOMY

## ASTRONOMY

### Vera Rubin: A Trailblazer in Cosmic Exploration



The Vera C. Rubin Observatory is shown here amidst a colorful display of clouds around sunrise.

**Credit:** Vera C. Rubin Observatory/NOIRLab/AURA/NSF/J. Fuentes

**V**era Florence Cooper Rubin (1928–2016) was an American astronomer whose observations in the 1970s revolutionized our understanding of the universe. By studying the rotation rates of galaxies, Rubin and her colleague Kent Ford discovered that stars at the outer edges of galaxies orbited at similar speeds to those near the center—evidence for an invisible gravitational force. This finding provided some of the first compelling proof of dark matter, an unseen substance that makes up about 85% of the universe's matter. Rubin's groundbreaking work helped reshape cosmology and paved the way for the Vera C. Rubin

Observatory, which was named in her honor in 2019.

#### **The Observatory's Ambitious Vision**

Situated atop Cerro Pachón in Chile at an elevation of about 2,682 m, the Vera C. Rubin Observatory houses the 8.4-meter Simonyi Survey Telescope and the largest digital camera ever built for astronomy—a 3.2-gigapixel marvel comprising 189 CCD sensors integrated into 21 rafts.

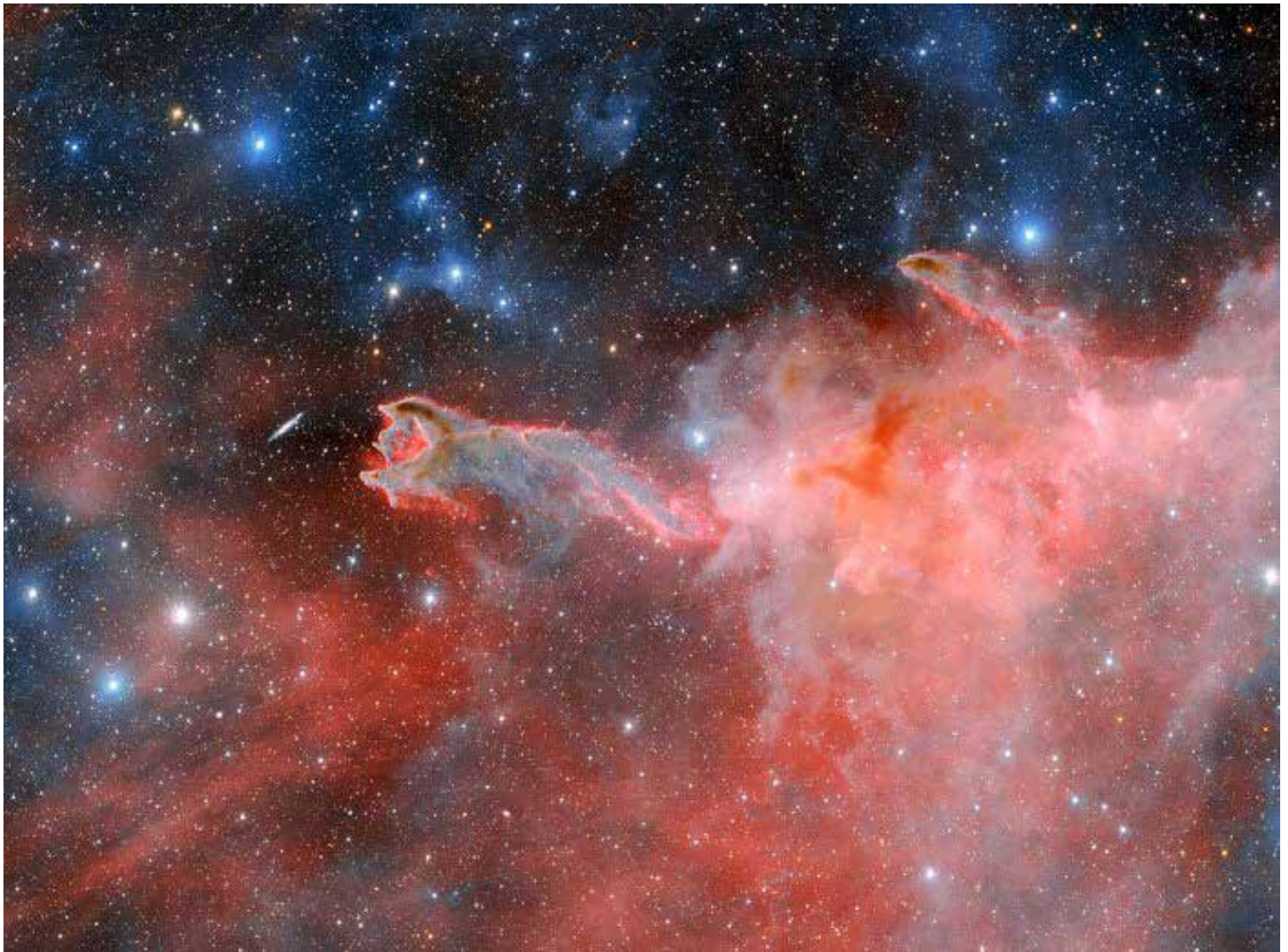
The observatory will conduct the Legacy Survey of Space and Time (LSST)—a ten-year, ultra-wide-field

survey imaging the southern sky every few nights. With a novel three-mirror design enabling a 3.5-degree field of view, this facility will capture roughly 800 visits per sky location over a decade, generating an unprecedented flood of data, including a complete time-lapse “movie” of the cosmos.

Its scientific goals span four frontiers:

- Dark matter & dark energy: probing their nature via weak gravitational lensing, supernovae, and cosmic structure
- Solar System inventory: detecting millions of asteroids and other small bodies
- Transient phenomena: cap-





*This cloudy, ominous structure is CG 4, a cometary globule nicknamed 'God's Hand'. CG 4 is one of many cometary globules present within the Milky Way, and how these objects get their distinct form is still a matter of debate among astronomers. This image was captured by the Department of Energy-fabricated Dark Energy Camera on the U.S. National Science Foundation Víctor M. Blanco 4-meter Telescope at Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory, a Program of NSF NOIRLab. In it, the features that classify CG 4 as a cometary globule are hard to miss. Its dusty head and long, faint tail vaguely resemble the appearance of a comet, though they have nothing in common. Astronomers theorize that cometary globules get their structure from the stellar winds of nearby hot, massive stars.*

*Credit: CTIO/NOIRLab/DOE/NSF/AURA*

*Image Processing: T.A. Rector (University of Alaska Anchorage/NSF NOIRLab), D. de Martin & M. Zamani (NSF NOIRLab)*

turing supernovae, variable stars, and shifting cosmic events in real time

- Milky Way history: mapping its structure and formation via its stellar populations

The observatory will produce around 20 terabytes of data per night, culminating in a catalog database spanning 15 to 500 petabytes over its lifetime

### **Milestone Achievements During Early Operations**

On June 23, 2025, the public was treated to stunning first-light images from Rubin. These early captures included breathtaking views of distant galaxies,

stellar nurseries like the Trifid and Lagoon Nebulae, and dense regions such as the Virgo Cluster

By using image composites (e.g., 678 exposures over seven hours), the observatory revealed fine details of stellar birthplaces, along with a colorful tapestry of galaxies that had previously appeared as dark voids

Within just 10 hours of operations, Rubin identified 2,104 previously unknown asteroids, including seven near-Earth objects (NEOs)—none pose an immediate threat. Projections suggest the observatory will catalog over 5 million asteroids and around 100,000

NEOs during its first decade—vastly exceeding existing inventories. These breakthroughs underscore Rubin's unprecedented data volume—expected to surpass all previous ground- and space-based optical telescopes combined in its first year alone

### **Why It Matters**

- Technological Frontier: Combining rapid sky coverage, the world's largest CCD camera, and powerful data pipelines capable of issuing alerts within 60 seconds, Rubin delivers a scale and responsiveness previously unimagined in astronomy





*The spiral galaxy NGC 925 reveals cosmic pyrotechnics in its spiral arms where bursts of star formation are taking place in the red, glowing clouds scattered throughout it.*

*Credit: KPNO/NOIRLab/NSF/AURA Acknowledgements:*

*PI: M T. Patterson (New Mexico State University)*

*Image processing: Travis Rector (University of Alaska Anchorage), Mahdi Zamani & Davide de Martin*

- **Scientific Discovery:** From quantifying dark energy and dark matter to uncovering millions of small solar system objects and transient cosmic events, the observatory stands to spark a new wave of discovery—some expected, some unforeseen
- **Global Engagement:** Data and alerts will be broadly accessible—first to U.S. and Chilean scientists, then globally—empowering both professionals and the public. Education platforms and tools for citizen scientists amplify its outreach ambition
- **Perspective on Our Place in the Cosmos:** The image nicknamed “Cosmic Treasure Chest” captures millions of galaxies in a single frame—a humbling reminder of our tiny place in the vast universe, yet a celebration of human curiosity and collective endeavor.

In essence, the Vera C. Rubin Observatory fulfills the visionary legacy of

Vera Rubin herself: opening our eyes to what is unseen. With each snapshot and alert, it is not just unveiling the sky—it is narrating the cosmic story of existence in motion.

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# RUSSIA

## RUSSIA

# A Critical Analysis of Russian Government Narratives on Ukraine

THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT's attempts to justify its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine represent a masterclass in historical revisionism, deflection, and the weaponization of legitimate geopolitical concerns to mask imperial ambitions. The standard Russian narrative, consistently promoted through official channels, relies on several interconnected falsehoods that deserve systematic debunking.

### The NATO Expansion Myth

Perhaps the most persistent Russian claim is that NATO expansion "forced" Russia's hand. This argument fundamentally misrepresents both the nature of NATO membership and Russia's own role in driving Eastern European nations toward the alliance. NATO membership is voluntary and requires extensive democratic reforms—qualities that made these nations safer and more prosperous. The suggestion that Russia has a legitimate sphere of influence over sovereign neighbors is a throwback to 19th-century imperial thinking that has no place in modern international law.

Moreover, Ukraine was never on a fast track to NATO membership. The 2008 Bucharest Summit offered only vague future possibilities, not concrete membership plans. If NATO expansion truly concerned Russia, invading Ukraine—thereby guaranteeing permanent NATO reinforcement on Russia's borders—

represents spectacularly counterproductive strategy.

### The "Denazification" Fabrication

Russia's claim that Ukraine needed "denazification" is particularly cynical given that Ukraine elected a Jewish president in 2019 with 73% of the vote. While far-right elements exist in every society, Ukraine's far-right parties consistently receive minimal electoral support—often less than 2%. This contrasts sharply with Russia's own Wagner Group, which openly used Nazi symbols and recruited from extremist networks.

### The historical irony is profound:

Russia invokes the memory of fighting fascism while conducting a war of aggression that mirrors fascist tactics—targeting civilians, forcibly relocating children, and attempting to erase Ukrainian national identity. Historical Distortion and Imperial Nostalgia

Russian narratives consistently portray Ukraine as an artificial construct rather than recognizing its millennium-long distinct cultural and political development. The claim that Russians and Ukrainians are "one people" who were artificially separated ignores centuries of Ukrainian resistance to Russian rule, from Cossack uprisings to the independence movements of the 20th century. This historical revisionism serves to legitimize territorial conquest by denying Ukrainian agency and statehood—a classic imperial tactic used throughout history to justify absorption of neighboring territories.

### The Western Provocation Excuse

Perhaps most fundamentally flawed

is the argument that Western actions "provoked" the invasion. This narrative strips Ukrainians of agency in their own democratic choices while portraying Russia as a passive victim rather than an aggressive actor. The timeline alone undermines this claim: Russia began its aggression in 2014, not in response to any immediate NATO action, but following Ukraine's democratic revolution that threatened Putin's own authoritarian model.

### The Reality Behind the Rhetoric

The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that Russia's invasion stems not from legitimate security concerns but from Putin's determination to restore imperial control and prevent the success of democracy on Russia's borders. Internal Russian documents and statements reveal goals of regime change, territorial partition, and cultural elimination—objectives that have nothing to do with NATO or Western "provocation."

The tragedy is that these false narratives not only justify devastating aggression but also trap Russia in a conflict that serves no genuine Russian interest. By promoting these myths, the Russian government ensures continued international isolation, economic damage, and military losses—all while Ukrainian resistance continues to demonstrate the bankruptcy of imperial dreams in the 21st century.

True security for Russia would come from peaceful coexistence with prosperous democratic neighbors, not from the impossible task of maintaining unwilling imperial subjects through force.

# 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.*

# 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.\***



WASA DAILY  
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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!

# 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 re-defining 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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## HOROSCOPE FOR SEPTEMBER 2025

### September Horoscope for the Gluten-Free Stars ☐ ☐

**Aries** (March 21–April 19)  
You'll boldly march into September – straight past the bread basket. Friends admire your willpower, even if the garlic bread flirts with you.

**Taurus** (April 20–May 20)  
Comfort food calls, but your inner gourmet finds joy in new gluten-free recipes. September's motto: brownies can still be life-changing.

**Gemini** (May 21–June 20)  
You'll be double-booked socially – luckily, you've mastered the art of discreetly asking waiters about cross-contamination. Your charm smooths every menu question.

**Cancer** (June 21–July 22)  
Your sensitive stomach meets your sensitive soul. Good news: the stars show an abundance of gluten-free snacks arriving just when you need them most.

**Leo** (July 23–August 22)  
Spotlight's on you at the dinner table. With confidence, you show others that gluten-free isn't a restriction – it's a culinary adventure. Applause guaranteed.

**Virgo** (August 23–September 22)  
This is your month! Organization shines: you label your flours, conquer the kitchen, and become a gluten-free wizard. Friends beg for your recipes.

**Libra** (September 23–October 22)  
You'll weigh your options between oat milk and almond milk – balance is everything. Don't worry, both go beautifully with your cookies.

**Scorpio** (October 23–November 21)  
Passion is your theme – and it even applies to gluten-free pasta. September brings intensity, but remember: not every debate about pizza bases needs stings.

**Sagittarius** (November 22–December 21)  
Adventures await! You'll discover a new gluten-free café or a recipe that makes travel less risky. Your optimism is more infectious than sourdough starter.

**Capricorn** (December 22–January 19)  
Practical as always, you plan ahead: snacks in your bag, gluten-free crackers in the car. September rewards your foresight with stress-free outings.

**Aquarius** (January 20–February 18)  
Innovation rules your diet this month. Chickpea flour pancakes? Cauliflower crust pizza? The stars applaud your bold experiments. Even skeptics will ask for seconds.

**Pisces** (February 19–March 20)  
Dreamy September brings comfort in soups and safe bread alternatives. Trust your intuition – it will guide you toward the coziest gluten-free gatherings.

☐ **September is proof: you don't need gluten to sparkle.**





# HUMOUR ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

## HE WEATHER GAME.

The Sensitive Lady:

— I always feel it when it rains, in my legs and back.

The sensitive gentleman:

— I also feel all the changes in the weather. The other night I woke up to the barometer falling'

— They're not possible!

— Well, you see, it fell to the floor.

## WIDOW

The teacher asked: — can one of you explain to me what "widow" means.. — A widow, answered little Anna, is a wife who lived with her husband for so long that he died.

## SWIMMING COMPETITION.

Little Karl was with his mother at a swimming competition. Now follows - said the mother - 100 meter breaststroke for ladies.

Little Karl: — Mother — is it forbidden to use the arms?

## EINSTEIN

— Has the lady read Einstein's theory of relativity?

— Well, yes, I'll wait until it comes out as a film.

## SEEN WITH YOUR OWN FEET

— I have a good friend who usually says that you never know anything about anything until you have seen with your own feet where the shoe pinches.

## Mail man

"Where have you been, my little darling?" asked little Albert's mother, when he came home after being gone for a couple of hours. "Yes, we were out with Kalle and Olle playing postman," answered the darling. "Oh really! How did it happen then?"

»Well, we went around to all the houses around here

and put letters in all the boxes.»

"But were they really real letters?"

»Yes then!»

»Where did you get them from then?»

»Yes, yes, find them in mother's desk drawer. It was open, and they were so beautiful and there was a whole bunch of them tied with red silk ribbons».

## BEAUTIFUL BEGINNING.

Colonel: I feel sorry for you, Lieutenant Möller, because there are still complaints about you not paying your debts.

Aren't you going to sort out your financial situation soon?

The lieutenant: Well, Colonel, just yesterday I bought a ticket in the class lottery.

## Astronomic picture of the week:

*Dark Energy Camera Captures Bright, Young Stars Blazing Inside Glowing Nebula*



This image, taken by astronomers using the US Department of Energy-fabricated Dark Energy Camera on the Victor M. Blanco 4-meter Telescope at Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory, a Program of NSF NOIRLab, captures the star-forming nebula NGC 6357, which is located 8000 light-years away in the direction of the constellation Scorpius. This image reveals bright, young stars surrounded by billowing clouds of dust and gas inside NGC 6357, which is also known as the Lobster Nebula.

Credit:

CTIO/NOIRLab/DOE/NSF/AURA

T.A. Rector (University of Alaska Anchorage/NSF NOIRLab), J. Miller (Gemini Observatory/NSF NOIRLab), M. Zamani & D. de Martin (NSF NOIRLab)

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## Next week:



## 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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