

Southwest Finland - Building Climate Resilience Through Collaboration

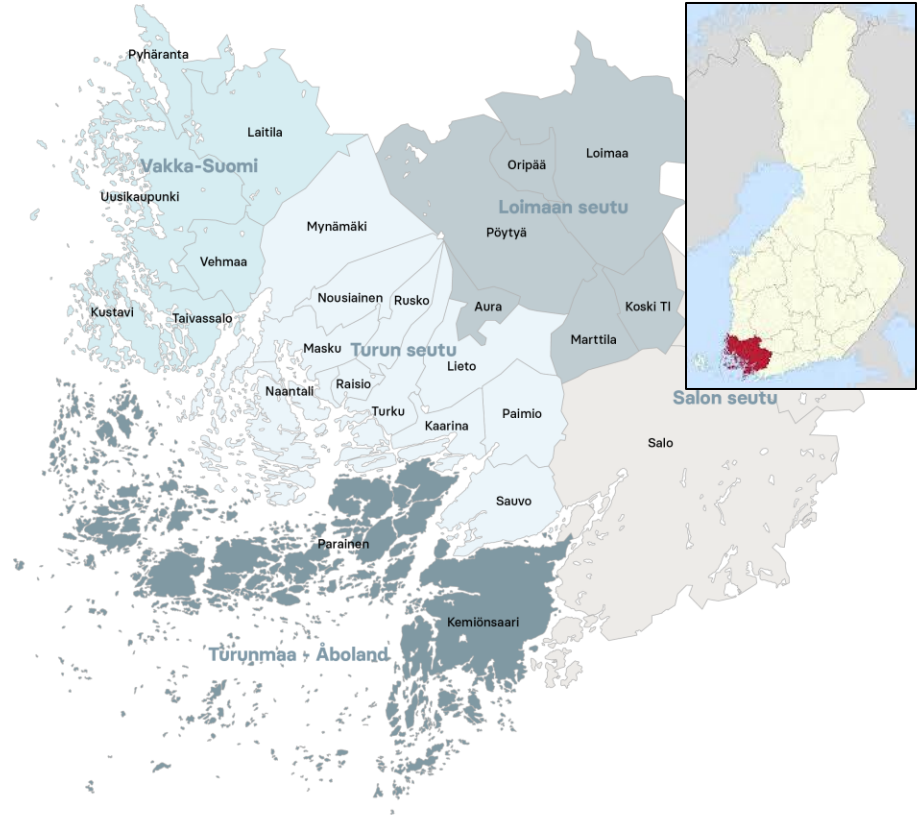
Katariina Yli-Heikkilä

environmental specialist / RESIST project manager

VALONIA

Southwest Finland

- 27 municipalities, Turku the biggest city
- 500,000 inhabitants
- Finland's third most populous region, with a growing population
- Bilingual region (Finnish and Swedish)





Region of Innovation

- Blue economy & modern industry
- Innovative food chains
- Drug development & health technology
- Biotechnology

Five internationally connected universities

- University of Turku – 17,500 students
- Turku University of Applied Sciences – 12,000 students
- Åbo Akademi University – 6,000 students
- Novia University of Applied Sciences – 4,800 students
- Humak University of Applied Sciences – 2,300 students





Valonia – sustainable development for Southwest Finland region since 1997



- Our mission is to support municipalities, communities, companies, and citizens to act more sustainably
- We are mainly project-funded unbiased advisory organisation
- Originally established by region's municipalities to have a joint Agenda21 office
- Today all the 27 municipalities are members and are thus dedicated to sustainable development goals in the region
 - Guiding document 2030 Sustainable Development Programme for Southwest Finland
- The work is done via projects and municipalities are either partners or contributors, however they are beneficiaries in all what Valonia is achieving
- Via projects a strong understanding of what is happening in the region, nationally and globally
- Our way of doing is practical from planning and strategies to implementing actions



Southwest Finland and City of Turku EU Office

- Advocacy and networking in Brussels
- Support for EU projects and funding
- The region's voice in European policy



Elinvoimakeskus

SCIENCE
TURKU
PARK



UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU

TURKU AMK
TURKU UNIVERSITY OF
APPLIED SCIENCES



BUSINESS
TURKU

 Project funding

Valonia

- Dedicated project unit for Regional Council of SWF
- Joint sustainable development expert support for the municipalities of Southwest Finland
- Advisory services, sparring, pilots, nature restoration, networks, training, materials
- Main themes: carbon-neutral region, biodiversity, and sustainable use of natural resources



Regional Council of Southwest Finland. A joint municipal authority comprising 27 municipalities.

- Democratic decision-making body
- Strengthen the region's vitality through regional planning, development, and promoting regional interests



Co-funded by
the European Union



RESIST LSD1 Regional partners

Strong collaboration of local and regional public partners and academia.

Public partners:

- Regional Council of Southwest Finland and Valonia as coordinator
- City of Turku

Research and universities:

- UTU University of Turku
- TUAS Turku University of Applied Sciences
- LUKE Finnish Natural Resources Institute

Clear roles and responsibilities:

- All the partners have clear roles and also responsibilities such as dedicated deliverables in the project
- Fortnightly meetings to follow-up the progress with all regional partners in addition to bi-annual meetings, and dedicated working meeting for deliverables.



Mission on Climate Adaptation signatory



- The region and the city of Turku signatories for the Mission since 2022
 - Also signatory for Ocean and Soil Missions
- Several projects implementing the Adaptation Mission such as RESIST
- Benefits for being in the mission:
 - Participation to Mission-related events
 - Mission support such as Technical assistance ie. for citizen involvement
 - Networking and project opportunities
 - Strong national networking between signatories and Friends of the Mission



What has been key issues in achieving climate resilience?

- Regional ecosystem is a bridge between municipalities, different stakeholders (such as businesses or advocacy groups), government and academia to achieve sustainability goals
- Long-term collaboration and bottom-up approach helps the region to translate climate ambitions into concrete actions
- Our ecosystem is not about planning, it combines expertise and planning into implementation such as nature restoration projects, mobility solutions and hands-on advisory services
- Leveraging external funding into local needs reducing the direct financial burden on municipalities
- Community engagement, different advocacy groups, citizens, landowners and such are always core in what we do making the work more democratic and grounded.





Example our work on Climate Resilience during 2025

- Several projects where concrete climate resilience measures are being implemented such as
 - Water management and nature restoration RESIST and SpongeWorks funded SpongeEnough?
 - Climate resilience for housing companies (TALVI-project)
 - Climate resilient agriculture (ILMAKAS)
 - Resilience in horniculture (VESILIENSSI)
- In parallel CLIMAAX supported CLIVAS is drafting climate risk assessment and as a part of that the Climate Road Map for Southwest Finland will be updated with climate resilience measures
- National climate risk assessment and adaption gives ground for what is needed in the region
- As a result our region will be more prepared for climate resilience
 - Practical examples to showcase our preparedness for climate resilience
 - Strong institutional and political acceptance of the necessary measures





Looking Ahead: Future plans and Mission support

- Number of adaptation projects is growing both EU and nationally funded
- Aiming at 2030 biodiversity and 2035 climate targets
- Knowledge sharing via project cooperation especially between public partners and academia
 - Part of regional strength is the close collaboration with private landowners and companies in achieving the targets



Regional Council of
Southwest Finland

VALONIA



RESIST



CLIMAAX
climate ready regions



Precilience



sponge**works**



Regions
4Climate



GREENHOOD

Nutrient management strategies for regional ecosystems across Europe



Co-funded by
the European Union



Thank you!

Katariina Yli-Heikkilä
environmental specialist
Valonia/Regional Council of Southwest Finland
katariina.yli-heikkila@valonia.fi

