

WASA DAILY

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Korsholm Music Festival

Cybersecurity also in summer

Vaasa Future Festival

Butterfly-Exhibition

Not everything goes like in Strömsö

Bilingualism: Defence against Dementia

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DAILY**



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Finland's Bilingual Advantage: A Natural Defense Against Dementia

AS FINLAND NAVIGATES the challenges of an aging population, research continues to reveal an unexpected ally in the fight against cognitive decline: bilingualism. What was once considered merely a cultural advantage has now emerged as a powerful neurological protective factor, and Finland's unique linguistic landscape positions its citizens to naturally harness this cognitive shield.

The groundbreaking work by Ellen Bialystok and her colleagues in 2007 first demonstrated that bilingualism serves as protection against the onset of dementia symptoms. Their research revealed that bilingual individuals developed dementia symptoms approximately 4.5 years later than their monolingual counterparts. This finding has not only stood the test of time but has been reinforced by an ever-growing body of evidence.

Recent studies have strengthened these conclusions dramatically. Research shows that bilingual patients developed dementia 4.5 years later than monolingual ones, with significant differences observed across Alzheimer disease dementia as well as frontotemporal dementia and vascular dementia. Even more compelling, new findings reveal that actively speaking more than one language provides protection against cognitive impairment in linguistically diverse communities with enriched language interactions.

The mechanism behind this protection lies in what researchers call "cognitive reserve." Bilinguals are more resilient in dealing with neurodegeneration than monolinguals, operating at a higher level of functioning because of the cognitive reserve. This mental

flexibility, developed through constant language switching and cognitive control, creates a buffer against age-related cognitive decline.

Finland presents a particularly fascinating case study for bilingual cognitive protection. As an officially bilingual nation where Swedish and Finnish co-exist, Finland offers its citizens natural pathways to multilingual proficiency. Unlike many countries where bilingualism requires significant effort or specialized education, Finland's institutional bilingualism makes second-language acquisition accessible and practical.

The Finnish education system makes it possible that all students learn both national languages, creating a foundation for lifelong bilingual competence. This isn't merely academic exercise – it's preventive medicine for the brain. Speaking more than one language, especially in the case of people who use two languages daily, can represent a protective factor against the onset of dementia. Finland's bilingual infrastructure enables exactly this kind of daily multilingual engagement.

Moreover, Finland's geographic position and cultural connections provide additional linguistic opportunities. Swedish proficiency opens doors to German, English, Norwegian and Danish comprehension.

The practical implications are profound. Mental stimulation, such as bilingualism, along with a healthy diet, regular exercise, good sleep and good sensory health are believed to help protect the brain from deteriorating. Finland already excels in many of these areas – now it's time to fully leverage its bilingual advantage.

This research suggests that Finland's language policies aren't just about cultural preservation or international

competitiveness – they're about public health. Every Finnish citizen who maintains active bilingualism is essentially engaging in a form of cognitive exercise that could delay dementia onset by years.

The evidence is clear: bilingualism builds cognitive resilience. Finland's unique position as a bilingual nation, combined with its citizens' multilingual capabilities, represents an untapped resource in the fight against dementia. As we face an aging population, perhaps the most powerful tool we possess isn't found in a pharmacy – it's found in our ability to speak more than one language.

The question isn't whether Finns can afford to be bilingual. The question is whether we can afford not to be.

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NEWS

MUSIC

The Power of Music Unites at This Year's Korsholm Music Festival



THE KORSHOLM, Music Festival is celebrating its 43rd edition this year, bringing together over a hundred artists from around the world for a week filled with music, connection, and diversity. The theme of this year's festival is "Bridges", with the subtitle "Journey Together", aiming to build cultural and human bridges through music.

The festival's program is

wide-ranging and varied — from classical music to tango, folk music, children's performances, and, for the first time, Balkan music. Among this year's participants are violinist Elina Vähälä, conductor Arvid Engegård, cellist Aleksei Kiseliiov, soprano Mari Palo, and ensembles such as Opus13, folk group FRIGG, and the colorful Amélie goes to Belgrad.

"A bridge doesn't have to be physical — it can be a connection between cultu-

res, generations, or people. Music can unite what may initially seem different," says artistic director Jan-Erik Gustafsson.

This year's featured composer is the legendary Finnish composer Aulis Sallinen, recognized as the country's first operatic composer of international stature. The festival seeks to highlight his significant contributions to Finland's musical culture.

The festival opens with a concert by the Helsinki-based Wegelius Chamber

Strings. Over the weekend, FRIGG will deliver vibrant folk music at the Doo-Bop Club. On Sunday, audiences will experience an innovative concert combining classical works by Shostakovich and Prokofiev, followed by lively Balkan music in the city hall's festive hall — with childcare provided to make the event more accessible to families.

The festival culminates in a grand final concert. Soprano Aurora Marthens will perform Sibelius songs alongside the Vaasa City Orchestra, followed by the orchestral classic Elgar's Enigma Variations.

"We've succeeded in crafting a powerful and cohesive program. This could be one of our strongest years yet," says a proud Jan-Erik Gustafsson.

In addition, the festival emphasizes accessibility and sustainability — all bus transportation to concerts is included in the ticket price. It also continues its investment in young talent with masterclasses, featuring five teachers and space for forty students, aiming to give more emerging musicians the chance to experience the unifying power of music.

BLOG WRITERS

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HUNTING

Over 2,000 Elk Hunting Licenses Granted in Coastal Ostrobothnia

The Finnish Wildlife Agency has granted a total of 2,138 hunting licenses for elk in the Coastal Ostrobothnia region for the upcoming hunting season. In addition, 259 licenses have been issued for the hunting of white-tailed deer. The hunting season for cervids begins on September 1 with stand hunting.

One hunting license allows the hunter to harvest either one adult animal or two calves. The number of licenses is based on population targets set by the regional wildlife council of Coastal Ostrobothnia. These targets are defined per elk management area and are valid for three years.

There are three elk management areas in the region. The target density for elk is 3–4 animals per 1,000 hectares, while the target for white-tailed deer ranges from 1 to 7 animals per 1,000 hectares.

Hunting associations have prepared harvest plans in collaboration with wildlife researchers. These plans are based on estimated cervid populations in spring 2025 and aim to ensure sustainable hunting that helps maintain populations at the target levels.

The Finnish Wildlife Agency emphasizes that carefully planned and regulated hunting is a key tool in modern



wildlife management. The goal is to keep cervid populations at levels that are both

ecologically and socially sustainable.

NEWS

VAASA FUTURE FESTIVAL

International Art Exhibition Makes Digital Butterfly Effects Visible in Vaasa



An exceptional art exhibition opening in Vaasa this August combines art and science to examine the real environmental impacts of digitalization. The Butterfly exhibition asks what happens to the planet when every click and ChatGPT search consumes natural resources.

The exhibition, running August 12-31, 2025 in the "Catacombs" at Wasa Innovation Center, is a joint international project between the University of Vaasa, Deakin University, Umeå University, and the University of Tampere's Games Research Lab. It is part of the Wasa Future Festival program and critically examines the development between humans and nature globally.

Technology Critiques Itself

The exhibition's central idea is paradoxical: it utilizes the same

technology it problematizes. Artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and audio data technology function both as medium and object of critique. The exhibition demonstrates how these technologies define our lives and how art can use technology to critique itself.

"The more digital we become in one area, the more significant digitalization's impact may become in another area," describes producer Elina Melgin from the University of Vaasa regarding the exhibition's starting point.

The exhibition's philosophical foundation is "ecosophy" – philosophy about the interconnection between ecological systems and human values. The concept combines "eco" (ecology) and "sophy" (wisdom) to reflect on how technological development affects the environment and people.

International Artist Group The Butterfly exhibition presents internationally recognized artists from around the world. Participants include Moa Cederberg from Finland, Jurgis

Peters from Latvia and Finland, Samuel Kujala from Finland, and a broad Australian artist group from Cameron Bishop to Spencer Rose.

Particularly interesting is the collaboration between award-winning Jack Manning Bancroft and Tyson Yunkaporta, who contribute new vocabulary to the rapidly developing digital landscape through Australian Indigenous knowledge systems.

The artists address questions about artificial intelligence, sustainability, and ecosophy, and their impacts on culture, language, society, environment, human agency, and human relationships.

Smart Industry Requires Sustainable Energy Solutions

The exhibition highlights a current challenge: industry is becoming not only digital but presumably "smart" as well. The challenge is finding sustainable energy solutions to maintain the technology that drives this intelligence. Every small click and search on

Google or ChatGPT consumes natural resources. The exhibition makes these hidden environmental impacts visible and reflects on how we can develop technology more sustainably.

Curatorial Team and Side Programming

The exhibition has been curated by an international team including Associate Professor Rebekah Rousi from the University of Vaasa, Associate Professor Toija Cinque from Deakin University in Australia, Dr. Anne Scott Wilson from Deakin University, Aska Mayer from the University of Tampere, and Associate Professor Esteban Guerrero Rosero from Umeå University in Sweden. The exhibition's architecture is handled by Lyndsey Morley from Britain and Finland together with the curatorial group.

The exhibition's side programming includes the Butterfly symposium on August 12, 2025, and programs for school children. The exhibition opening for invited guests is arranged on August 11 at 5:30-7:30 PM.

Catalog and Additional Information

An approximately 80-page art exhibition catalog will be published in July. It contains 18 artist presentations and five scientific articles. The catalog's editors are Rebekah Rousi, Toija Cinque, and Katey O'Sullivan.

The exhibition has emerged through grants and partnerships, with Wasa Innovation Center being the most significant. The exhibition is open to the public August 12-31, 2025, as part of the Wasa Future Festival at Gerbynvägen 16 in Pukinkulma, Vaasa.

NEWS

BEACHES

Vaasa Beaches Shine in Quality – All 13 Beaches Met Safety Requirements



YOU CAN fully enjoy the joy of summer swimming at the beaches of Vaasa and Laihia: all 13 monitored beaches met the water quality requirements in the latest inspection. No impurities affecting health were detected in the samples taken last week, and the water temperature was refreshingly cool, between 19 and 24 degrees Celsius.

Blue-Green Algae Alert at Ahvensaari Did Not Threaten Swimmers

The only exception was a small amount of blue-green algae detected on July 14th at Ahvensaari beach, which, however, disappeared the very next day. The presence of blue-green algae is typical in warm weather, but its rapid disappearance indicates good

water circulation. Authorities are closely monitoring the situation, and water quality samples are taken regularly from the beaches throughout the summer season.

"The requirements of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health were met at all beaches. Enterococci and E. coli bacteria were below the permitted limit values, and blue-green algae was not detected in an objectionable amount," says the Environmental Health Manager for the City of Vaasa.

Monitoring of Bathing Water Quality Continues Until August

The water quality of bathing beaches in the Vaasa region is actively monitored between June 15th and August 31st, 2025. The next samples will be taken on August 4th, and the results will be published promptly on the city's communication channels.

"The hottest days of summer are often the most challenging for water quality, so regular monitoring is important. So far, the situation is excellent," comments an environmental expert.

If You Encounter Problems – Report It

Although the bathing water quality is currently good, the city advises swimmers to be vigilant.

If you encounter unusual nuisances, such as a strong algal bloom or an unpleasant smell or taste in the water, it is advisable to report it using the environmental health services' electronic service:

- ☐ Report illness or a reaction caused by water: <https://ilppa.fi/kuluttajan-ilmoitukset>
- ☐ Report impurities you observe

These Beaches Are Safe to Swim

Inspected beaches:

- Ahvensaari
- Hietasaari
- Kustaanlinna
- Mansikkasaari
- Strömsö
- Isolahti
- Kronvik
- Paratiisisaari
- Viikinga
- Merikaarto South and North Beach
- Top Camping Campsite
- Säivänkangas (Laihia)

Tip for swimmers: Although the water quality is good, we recommend avoiding entering the water if you have open wounds on your skin or if there is a large amount of blue-green algae near the beach.

Further information: City of Vaasa beaches page Bathing water quality monitoring Have a good swimming summer in Vaasa's waters! Source: www.vaasa.fi

NEWS

STREETS

The Transformation of Kasarmintori Begins – Old Trees Replaced, Street Renewed



VAASA's historic Kasarmintori (Eastern Barracks Square) is facing a transformation: on Wednesday, July 30th, the renovation of the church-side section of the street will begin, renewing both the street surface and the green areas. The work will continue until the end of October, and with it, the area will gain new trees, improved water supply, and safer pedestrian areas.

Old Trees Replaced – More and Stronger Trees to Be Planted

The trees along the street have been inspected, and most of them are in poor condition. The stress caused by the groundwork would further weaken their condition, so the old trees will be

replaced with new ones.

"We decided to preemptively remove the trees in poor condition so that they don't cause hazardous situations later. More columnar maples will be planted in their place, which have better conditions to thrive," says the city's responsible person for green areas.

Only one park tree will be removed, and a new one will be planted in its place. In addition, long-lived oaks will be planted in the area, strengthening the park's vegetation for the future.

Street Works Disrupt Traffic – Parking Moves to Nearby Streets

During the work period, parking at Kasarmintori will be suspended, and motorists will be directed to use free parking spaces on nearby streets. Signs will be installed around the work area to minimize disruptions.

"We aim to complete the work as quickly and with as little disruption as possible. After the renewal, the area will be more beautiful and functional for both pedestrians and motorists," promises the project manager.

Fifth Fire Street in Renovation Cycle – Water Supply Renewed

Kasarmintori is the fifth fire street to be renovated as part of Vaasa's street network renewal project launched in recent years. This time, a key part is the improvement of water supply, which ensures a more sustainable infrastructure for the area.

"The renovation of fire streets is a long-term effort that improves the city's resilience. In the coming years, renovations will continue on other streets," says a representative of the building department.

What are the benefits of the renewal?

- Safer street – new surfaces and better maintained trees reduce risk.
- Greener environment – more trees and more diverse vegetation.
- More sustainable infrastructure – new water supply ensures longer-lasting use.

Work Schedule: □ July 30 – October 31, 2025 □ Eastern Kasarmintori (church-side section)

Parking: □ Nearby streets offer temporary parking options.

More information: City's construction pages Map of the work area

The new Square will soon be ready – welcome to enjoy the renewed environment!

Source: www.vaasa.fi

NEWS

PHARMACIES

Major Pharmacy Reform Coming – Prescription Drugs to Get Cheaper, Common Medicines to Be Sold in Stores



FINLAND'S pharmacy system is set for a major overhaul that will make prescription medications more affordable and allow select over-the-counter medicines to be sold in grocery stores. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has released a proposal for changes aimed at cutting public spending while improving medicine accessibility.

Key Changes Coming

Lower Prices for Prescription Drugs

The reform will reduce prescription medication fees, directly lowering costs for patients.

Expected to save €30 million annually in state drug reimbursement expenses.

New Tax Rules for Pharmacies

Pharmacy tax will shift from being based on revenue to profit margins.

Small pharmacies with profits under €250,000 will be exempt entirely.

Over-the-Counter Medicines in Stores

Common medications like heartburn and constipation treatments will be available outside pharmacies.

Selection will be limited to products deemed safe without pharmacist consultation.

Pharmacies Gain New Authority

Pharmacists will be allowed to correct obvious prescription errors under strict conditions.

What Happens Next?

The proposal is open for public consultation until Au-

gust 18, 2025. If approved, changes would take effect January 1, 2026.

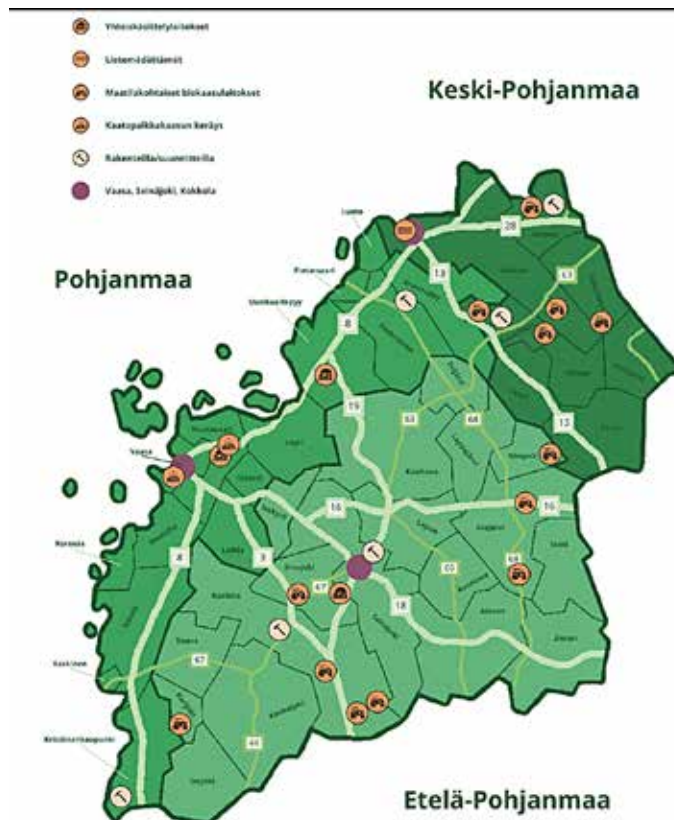
"This reform delivers on our government program while protecting nationwide pharmacy coverage. We're making better use of pharmacists' expertise in health-care," said Minister of Social Security Sanni Grahn-Laasonen.

The ministry estimates the changes will create a more efficient, accessible and cost-effective medication system while maintaining safety standards.

NEWS

BIOGAS

Biogas Accelerates the Green Transition in Ostrobothnia – New Digital Platform Connects Stakeholders



Biogas plays a key role in advancing regional energy self-sufficiency and circular economy in Ostrobothnia, Central Ostrobothnia, and South Ostrobothnia. A joint research project by the University of Vaasa, Centria University of Applied Sciences, and Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, called DigiBiogasHubs, is developing a digital platform to connect biogas market actors and enable new collaborations.

Biogas Production Could Multiply

Regional biogas hubs have already been identified where production and usage can expand significantly. Each sub-region has unique strengths:

Ostrobothnia: Industry and maritime transport drive demand.

Central Ostrobothnia: Industrial parks provide a supportive ecosystem.

South Ostrobothnia: The food system creates favorable conditions for biogas utilization.

The region's biomethane potential is estimated at 676–1,172 GWh per year—eight times current production levels. Agricultural waste, such as manure and

straw, offers a major feedstock opportunity.

Significant Climate Impact

Biogas can drastically reduce emissions, particularly in agriculture. When produced from manure, biogas can even achieve a negative carbon footprint. For example, a plant processing 50,000 tons of manure annually could reduce emissions by 135–139% compared to fossil fuels.

"Biomethane production could exceed 1,000 GWh per year in these regions," says Sanna Hietamäki, project manager at Seinäjoki UAS.

Challenges: Logistics & Regulation

Growth is hindered by feedstock availability uncertainties, logis-

tical bottlenecks, and complex regulations. EU climate targets and national subsidy schemes also create investment uncertainties.

"We need a unified digital platform to streamline knowledge-sharing and collaboration," says Wajahat Ali, a researcher at the University of Vaasa.

A Digital Hub for Collaboration

The DigiBiogasHubs platform serves as a marketplace and networking tool, integrating:

Biogas trading

Feedstock management

Logistics solutions

Regulatory data

It also enables logistics tendering, auctions, and certification management. A pilot phase is underway, with feedback guiding further development.

DigiBiogasHubs is an EU-funded project coordinated by the University of Vaasa's VEBIC research platform, running until 2025.

Source: University of Vaasa, Centria UAS, Seinäjoki UAS

Image: Existing, planned and under construction biogas plants in the Ostrobothnian regions. Icons are indicative. Milla Hanula, University of Vaasa. Image freely available.

NEWS

EU

Important breakthrough to reduce corporate bureaucracy – Henriksson's report approved



MEP AnnaMaja Henriksson (RKP, Renew Europe) has achieved significant success in simplifying rules and bureaucracy for businesses in the EU's single market. Today, Parliament's Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) voted through her own-initiative report with strong support: 42 votes in favour and only 3 against.

The goal: simplifying rules and digitalisation

Henriksson's report contains 40 concrete proposals. They aim to simplify EU legislation, streamline administrative processes and facilitate reporting for companies –

all without compromising the EU's fundamental goals such as climate, consumer protection and digital transformation ALDE Party. One of the clearest proposals is to introduce a digital "one-stop shop", where companies can handle all administrative matters in one place – instead of having to navigate between different platforms and occasionally submit papers to different member countries ALDE Party.

Henriksson points out that the EU's internal market with about 450 million inhabitants has great potential, but that it is currently hampered by bureaucratic obstacles. By simplifying and digitalising

systems, businesses can focus on innovation, growth, jobs and tax revenues – as well as strengthening the EU's competitiveness globally.

Challenges and next steps

The decision of the IMCO Committee is just the beginning. The report will now be voted on in the parliament's chamber this autumn. First, even more members must be convinced – but with 423 members of the committee, it has got off to a strong start. Henriksson has led the negotiations intensively and describes the process as demanding, but determined. The result is one result: a report with concrete points to cut

unnecessary administration and simplify the everyday life of companies x.com+3e-taf.tax+3x.com+3.

The report also supports the European Commission's goal of reducing administrative costs for businesses by up to 25% in general and 35% for SMEs – the so-called SMEs. The goal is for companies to put their resources into work and growth, not on paper exercises.

AnnaMaja Henriksson's message

Henriksson emphasizes clearly:

"If we are to cope with global competition, companies must be able to focus on their core business – not on filling in forms or deciphering fine print."

She further stresses that the EU needs a regulatory environment that is clear, predictable, proportionate and practicable – an environment where rules support growth, innovation and growth without compromising common values.

What is an INI report?

The report is a so-called INI report – an initiative by MEPs to influence the European Commission's legislative work. Such reports send clear signals about what Parliament wants to see in terms of reforms and are important tools for driving EU policies forward.

Source; SFP

Image: EU

NEWS

THL

Rising Cases of Avian Influenza in Finland: Authorities Urge Caution Around Sick or Dead Birds



Finnish health and veterinary authorities are urging the public to take extra caution after a notable increase this year in sightings of wild birds infected or killed by avian influenza. While transmission to humans remains rare, experts warn that the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain currently circulating in wild birds can cause severe illness if exposure occurs.

Recent findings show that instances of avian flu in Finland are on the rise compared to the previous year. The virus has also been detected sporadically in mammals—including otters and foxes—underlining its potential to cross species barriers. Previous outbreaks on fur farms (notably in 2023) and across European poultry farms have demonstrated the virus's

capacity to infect a variety of animal hosts

Transmission and Human Health Risk

THL (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare) infectious disease specialist Erika Lindh explains that while person-to-person transmission of H5N1 is very unlikely, the virus poses a serious health risk if humans are directly exposed through contact with infected animals. This could occur via contaminated hands touching the mouth, eyes, or nose, or in enclosed spaces such as vehicles. Although rare, such cases can lead to severe respiratory illness or even death.

Protect Yourself and

Your Pets

Authorities strongly advise avoiding all direct contact with sick or dead wild animals. If it's absolutely necessary to handle one—for example, for removal or safe disposal—protective measures are critical:

Wear disposable gloves.

Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately afterward.

Use alcohol-based sanitiser if water isn't available.

If handling takes more than a brief moment, wear a respirator-style mask to reduce inhalation risk.

Pet owners should be vigilant: cats or dogs that bring home deceased birds can spread the virus. If your pet shows signs of illness within a week—such as lethargy or respiratory symptoms—seek veterinary advice and mention the bird incident.

What to Do If You Spot a Single Suspect Animal

Symptoms in wild animals may include apathy, respiratory distress, diarrhea, or neurological signs like abnormal posture or movement. Some animals may die suddenly without apparent symptoms. Authorities instruct that:

Report any sick or dead wild animal to your nearest licensed veterinarian.

Never bring the animal into places with other people or animals.

You can leave a dead bird in its natural habitat or, for hygiene, bury it or place it securely in a

sealed plastic bag for disposal.

If further analysis is needed, samples can be sent for post-mortem and disease testing according to Finnish Food Mass Die-Offs Require Immediate Action

Finding a group of dead or sick waterfowl—more than one swan, over five gulls or ducks, or ten other birds—constitutes an outbreak. Similarly, discovering a single large raptor that has died unexpectedly should be reported. Local veterinarians will collect specimens for laboratory testing.

Vaccine Protection for High-Risk Groups

In anticipation of heightened risk, Finland began offering H5 bird flu vaccinations to high-risk groups—such as poultry or fur farm workers, veterinarians, wildlife handlers, and laboratory staff—during March 2025. The European-authorized CSL Seqirus vaccine is provided free through local wellbeing-services counties, complementing existing biosafety protocols

Current Outlook in Europe

According to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), between March and June 2025, Europe saw 365 outbreaks of HPAI H5, mostly in wild waterfowl and poultry. Spillover into mammals—including cats, foxes, otters, seals, and even a sheep in the UK—has been confirmed. There were 20 reported human cases across six countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Mexico, and Vietnam) during this period, including four deaths. However, no sustained transmission to or within humans has occurred

NEWS

CYBERSECURITY

Telia's Five Tips for Safe Summer Remote Work



SUMMER IS HERE, and many knowledge workers are relocating their offices to lakeside docks, hammocks, or café terraces. While mobile networks provide plenty of bandwidth, cybersecurity never takes a vacation.

Henry Kylänlahti, Chief Security Officer at Telia Cygate, encourages everyone to enjoy the flexibility of remote work—as long as they remember the basics of safe

digital practices. "Cybersecurity isn't just about firewalls and passwords—it's about how we act. Sometimes, this means holding a remote meeting from your kitchen table is smarter than joining from a rowboat," he says.

Kylänlahti shares five tips to stay secure while working remotely this summer:

1. Keep Your Devices Updated

Before heading to the summer cabin, make sure all

software on your work devices is up to date. Cybercriminals don't take breaks, and an outdated browser can be an open invitation to malware. Don't forget to update your mobile hotspot and home router regularly too.

2. Think Twice Before Using Public USB Ports

If your phone is running out of battery, charging it via a public USB port could expose it to a juice jacking attack—where data is stolen or

malware is installed. Always use your own charger or a power bank instead. A dead battery is safer than an infected device.

3. Be Mindful of Conversations on the Dock

Summer breezes carry sound far, and a meeting on the dock might unintentionally reach the neighbors' ears. Keep confidential discussions indoors or ensure no outsiders are within earshot to protect sensitive business information.

4. Use Work Devices for Work—Personal Devices Should Stay on Vacation

When working from a summer cottage or café, it might be tempting to use personal devices or public cloud services. But work-related files belong only on company-approved devices and systems—this keeps data secure and backups up to date.

5. Cybersecurity Never Takes a Break—Scammers Certainly Don't

Summer is prime time for scammers, with workplaces relying on substitutes and remote employees being more mobile. Stay alert: don't click suspicious links, ignore strange requests, and save IT support contacts somewhere other than just your work device.

With these tips, summer remote work can be both enjoyable and secure—for employees and businesses alike.

NEWS

ROADS

Rare Event in Finland: Road Embankment Collapse at Haapamäki



A highly unusual incident occurred today on Highway 23 in Haapamäki, where part of the road embankment collapsed during subsurface investigations. The event, confirmed by the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centre) for Central Finland, is exceedingly rare in Finland's road network .

The collapse happened west of the Katajamäki overpass, at approximately 9:00 AM on July 15. Subsurface drilling (borings) intended to support earlier repair work triggered the southern traffic

lane to collapse, forming a deep cavity . Last autumn, in October 2024, the northern lane in the same area collapsed during resurfacing, prompting immediate repair efforts and stabilization work .

One construction worker sustained injuries during the collapse, but the ELY Centre has confirmed that the person's condition is not life-threatening . As a safety precaution, Highway 23 has been completely closed at the affected site. The collapse exposed a severely undermined stretch of asphalt, prompting instant road closure and barricades to restrict access .

All through-traffic is being

diverted via municipal roads 346 and 3481. ELY officials are assessing the possibility of a temporary single-lane, traffic signal-controlled route that could be reopened once deemed safe STT Info

Why Did the Embankment Collapse?

Embankment failures like this can result from water saturation, poor soil bearing capacity, or structural destabilization under load. The subsurface investigations—particularly core drilling—help assess soil stability and are meant to guide permanent stabilization plans. However, unexpected subsurface conditions may have rendered the embankment

vulnerable to collapse once disturbed .

Significance of Highway 23 and Next Steps

Highway 23 is a major regional artery, vital for local and through traffic. Its closure has disrupted transport and logistics across the region. The ELY Centre and associated contractors are closely coordinating to identify a swift yet safe solution. This includes a potential interim single-lane operation and planning longer-term remedies, such as reinforcement, piling, or even a structural redesign to fortify the road foundation.

IMAGE: Ely-centre

NEWS

Dmitry Medvedev's strange diplomatic language

FORMER President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev in Telegram July 18, 2025

"European idiots have agreed on the 18th package of sanctions against our country.

It is useless to write that it is capable of changing Russia's position exactly as much as the previous seventeen did. Our economy will surely survive, and the loss of the Bandera regime will continue. Attacks on so-called Ukrainian targets, including Kyiv, are being carried out with increasing intensity.

We should also promote the greatest possible distance from the EU and the most despicable EU Member States, which now include not only the miserable Balts, the arrogant Chukhonts, the indivisible Poles and the British, who have grown up with their own, but also Germany and France, whose leaders are persecuted by the laurels of the Third Reich and the Vichy regime.

We know how this will end for Europe.

We just need to keep the memory of their disgusting Russophobia for as long as possible and learn to hate them as much as our ancestors could. Hate is the most important weapon that most effectively allows us to move towards its opposite—love. Of course, in relation to those who deserve it.

P.S. Disgusting old woman

Ursula declared the EU's invasion of "the heart of Russia's war machine". I'm not sure she understands where the heart is. But she always seems to think from one point of view. What she was busy during the failed doctor's appointment."

Comment:

In this post in Telegram, Russia's former president and current Vice-President of the Security Council, Dmitry Medvedev, comments on the 18th package of sanctions from the EU with remarkably harsh and insulting wording. He writes, among other things:

"European idiots have agreed on the 18th package of sanctions against our country."

"[...] the most despicable EU countries, which now include not only the miserable Balts, the brazen Chukhontsies, the undivided Poles and the British who are overgrown with their own shit, but also Germany and France [...]"

"We just need to preserve the memory of their disgusting Russophobia for as long as possible and learn to hate them as much as our ancestors could. Hate is the most important weapon that allows us to move most effectively towards its opposite – love."

Medvedev's speech is distinguished not only by a loud tone but also by coarse language and nationalistic attacks on several European



countries. It is remarkable that a former head of state expresses himself in this way in a public forum. The language is militarized and polemical, with a clear incitement to hatred, which is in sharp contrast to the diplomatic tone traditionally expected of high-ranking representatives of a state.

In a concluding addition, he addresses the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen directly:

"The disgusting old woman Ursula explained the EU's attack on 'the heart of Russia's military machine'. I'm not sure she understands where the heart is. But she always seems to think with a single perspective. What she was busy with during her fai-

led medical practice."

Ursula van der Leyen is a gynaecologist which explains some of the above posts.

Comments of this kind have little place in the tradition of diplomatic communication, where restraint, objectivity and respect for other actors are usually emphasized. Medvedev's speech should therefore be seen as a politically charged move aimed at a domestic audience rather than as part of a diplomatic conversation.

At the same time, the statement illustrates the increasingly confrontational language that now characterizes parts of the Russian state leadership's public communication.

Дивна дипломатична мова Дмитра Медведєва

IN UKRAINIAN

своїї невдалої лікарської практики».

Експрезидент Росії Дмитро Медведєв у Telegram 18 липня 2025 року

«Європейські ідіоти погодили 18-й пакет санкцій проти нашої країни.

Марно писати, що вона здатна змінити позицію Росії рівно настільки, наскільки це зробили попередні сімнадцять. Наша економіка неодмінно вистійть, а поразка режиму Бандери триватиме. Атаки на так звані українські об'єкти, включно з Києвом, здійснюватимуться з наростаючою силою.

Ми також повинні пропагувати курс на максимальне дистанціювання від ЄС і наймерзенніших країн ЄС, до яких зараз належать не лише убогі балти, нахабні чухонці, неподільні поляки та оброслі власним лайном англійці, а й Німеччина та Франція, лідерів яких переслідують лаври Третього Рейху та режиму Віші.

Чим це закінчиться для Європи, відомо.

Нам просто потрібно якомога довше зберегти пам'ять про їхню огидну русофобію і навчитися ненавидіти їх так сильно, як це могли зробити наші предки. Ненависть — це головна зброя, яка дозволяє нам найбільш ефективно рухатися до своєї протилежності — любові. Звичайно ж, по відношенню до тих, хто цього заслуговує.

P.S. Огидна бабуся Урсула заявила про атаку ЄС на "серце російської військової машини". Я не впевнений, що вона розуміє, де серце. Але вона, здається, завжди мислить з єдиної точки зору. Чим вона займалася під час

Коментар:

Колишній президент Росії та нинішній віцепрезидент Радбезу Дмитро Медведєв у дописі в Telegram коментує 18-й пакет санкцій від ЄС напрочуд різкими та образливими формулюваннями. Він, серед іншого, пише:

«Європейські ідіоти погодили 18-й пакет санкцій проти нашої країни».

«[...] наймерзенніші країни ЄС, до яких тепер належать не лише нещасні балти, нахабні чухонці, неподільні поляки та британці, що обросли власним лайном, а й Німеччина та Франція [...]»

«Нам просто потрібно якомога довше зберегти пам'ять про їхню огидну русофобію і навчитися ненавидіти їх так сильно, як це могли зробити наші предки. Ненависть — це найважливіша зброя, яка дозволяє нам найефективніше рухатися до своєї протилежності — любові».

Виступ Медведєва відрізняється не лише гучним тоном, а й грубою лексикою та націоналістичними випадками на адресу кількох європейських країн. Примітно, що колишній глава держави висловлюється таким чином на публічному форумі.



Мова мілітаризована і полемічна, з явним розпалюванням ненависті, що різко контрастує з дипломатичним тоном, якого традиційно очікують від високопоставлених представників держави.

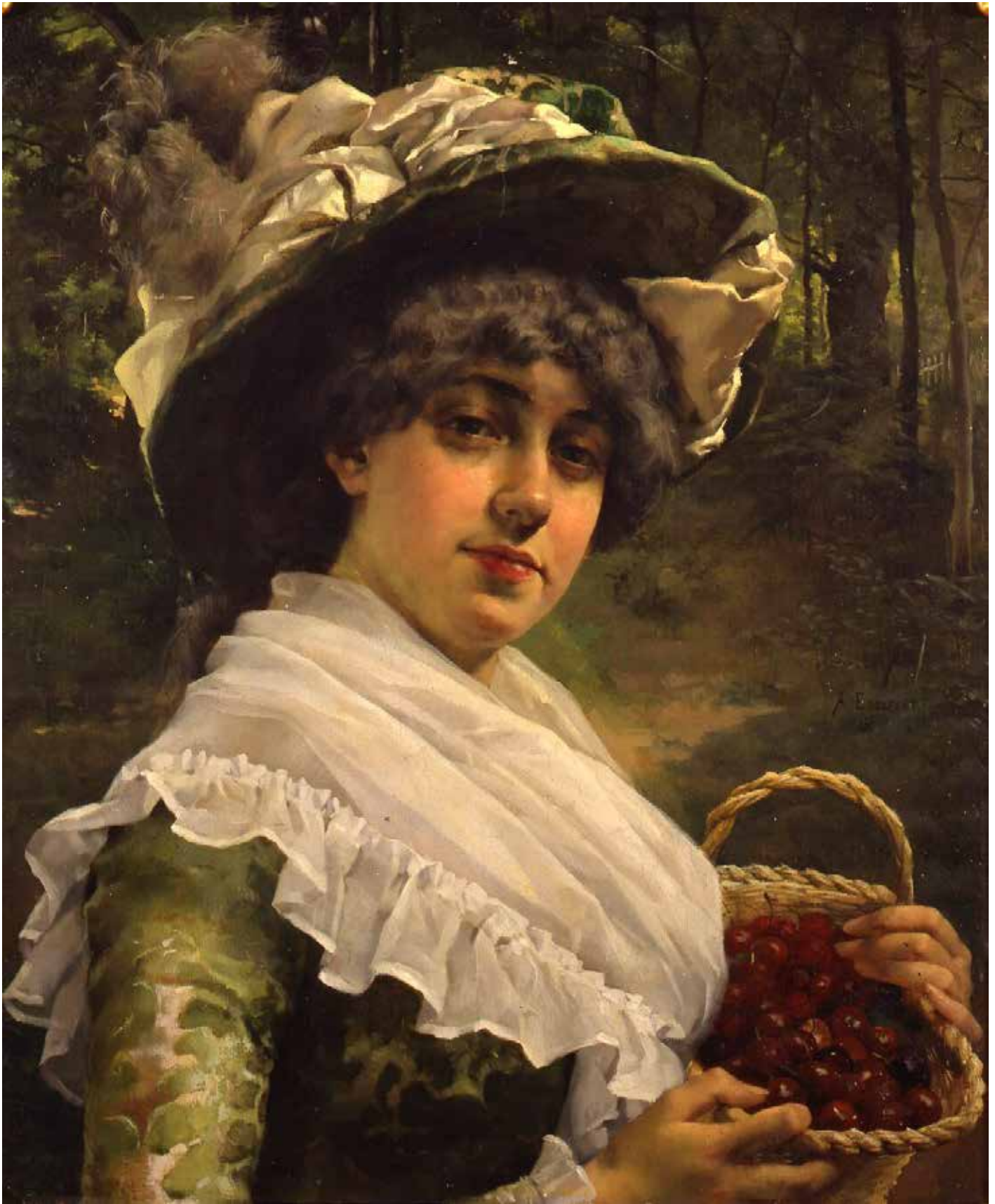
У заключному доповненні він звертається безпосередньо до президентки Європейської комісії Урсули фон дер Ляєн:

«Огидна бабуся Урсула пояснила атаку ЄС на "серце російської військової машини". Я не впевнений, що вона розуміє, де серце. Але вона, здається, завжди мислить з єдиної точки зору. Чим вона займалася під час своєї невдалої лікарської практики».

Урсула ван дер Ляєн — гінекологиня, що пояснює деякі з наведених вище дописів.

Коментарі такого роду мають мало місця в традиції дипломатичного спілкування, де зазвичай наголошують на стриманості, об'єктивності та повазі до інших суб'єктів. Тому промову Медведєва слід розглядати як політично заряджений крок, спрямований на внутрішню аудиторію, а не як частину дипломатичної розмови. У той же час ця заява ілюструє все більш конфронтаційну мову, яка зараз характеризує частини публічної комунікації російського державного керівництва.

ART EXPERIENCE OF THE WEEK



Albert Edelfelt

21.7.1854, Kiialan kartano, Porvoon mlk

18.8.1905, Haikko, Porvoon mlk

Cherry Girl, 1878

EVENTS

UMEÅ WOMEN'S HISTORY MUSEUM

IN THE SECRET SERVICE OF THE KINGDOM

4.5 - 20.8.2025

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

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

EVENING MUSIC

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

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

Classical evening music on Wednesdays from 4.6.25 at 19.30

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

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

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

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

LOHTAJA CHURCH MUSIC FESTIVAL

22-27.7.25

Church music from thousand-year-old traditions

www.kirkkomusiikkijuhlat.fi

KORSHOLM MUSIC FESTIVAL

23.7.–30.7.2025

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



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

RITZ

25.7.25 at 7 pm

MARI PALO – TANGO

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

Korsholm Music Festival

VAASA CITY HALL

27.7.25

CONCERT ROYAL

Amélie goes to Belgrade with her friends

Korsholm Music Festival

VAASA FESTIVAL 2025

31.7.-2.8.2025

Music, food and wine

In Vaasa's inner harbour

<https://vaasafestival.fi/>

WASA FUTURE FESTIVAL

11-16.8.2025

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

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

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

Wasa Innovation Center

Gerbyntie 18

65230 Vaasa

<https://wasafuturefestival.fi/>

Butterfly Exhibition

12-31 August 2025 as part of Wasa Future Festival

Butterfly

Symposium

12.8.2025

Butterfly is an international interactive exhibition on new media and performance art, which is a collaboration between the University of Vaasa, Deak University, Umeå University and the University of Tampere, and which is part of the program of the Wasa Future Festival (11-16.8.2025) as well as a related program (symposium and program for school children).

<https://sites.uwasa.fi/butterfly/>

NIGHT OF THE ARTS

14.8.2025

"Toivottavasti näemme taas ensi vuoden Taiteiden yössä"

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

KOKKOLA SKI CHAMBER – KOKKOLA AUTUMN CHAMBER

August 2025 & 2026

www.kokkolansyyskamari.com

VAASA CITY THEATRE

PIAF

Premiere 11.9.2025 AT 6 PM
Romeo Hall

"In September 2025, the musical play Piau – I Don't Regret Anything will premiere on the Romeo stage of the Vaasa City Theatre, which tells the unique and multi-stage life story of Édith Piaf, who rose to world fame from the streets of Paris." The role of Piaf is interpreted by theatre actress Sonja Halla-aho.

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

Jorma Panula - Conductor Course Concert

19.9.2025 at 6 pm

Vaasa City Hall

In cooperation with Panula Academy.

Vaasa City Orchestra cond. Students of the conducting course

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

Las Vegas

2.10.2025 at 6 pm

Vaasa City Orchestra

cond. Antti Rissanen

sol. Juki Välipakka & Chiara Orlandi

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

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/tarpe-ettomia-ihmisia-vaasa>

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/ikui-sesti-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

HISTORY

VAASA CITY FIRE ON AUG 3, 1852

Pali-Maja and the poem about the fire in the city of Wasa

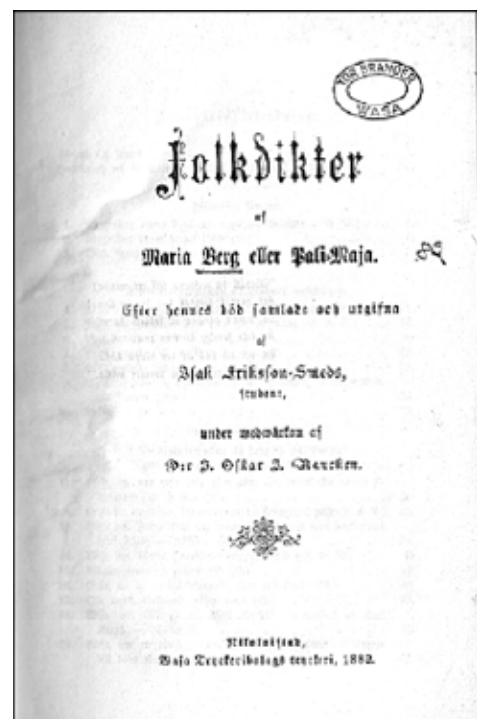


According to hER, fire was God's punishment for the sins of humanity—and many of his contemporaries, including priests, probably agreed.

Marie Johansdotter Berg, known by her pseudonym Pali-Maja, was born on 10 December 1784 in Pali, a farm group on Österlandsvägen in Pörtom. Her father, Johan Hansson Uppgård, had moved to Pörtom from Pjelax in Närpes, after he married Maria Greta Uppgård and thus became the owner of half of a homestead called Uppgård. When the homestead was changed, the family had to move to a meadow called Pala or Pali, a name that lives on to this day. The family had 14 children, 9 of whom survived to adulthood. Isak Smeds tells about the family in the book of poems published in 1882: "All the children were endowed with a wise head and a happy disposition to learn everything that came to their minds."

She died on 11 October 1867 in Närpes. In her time, she was the most prolific female poet in our country.

In her time, she was one of the most respected people in the Närpes area. In 1882 a book was published con-



taining the poems that had been found and in the preface to it, lecturer Isak Smeds from Petalax writes: "The poetess, whose songs are undoubtedly most commonly sung throughout Ostrobothnia and whom I heard in my childhood in my homeland with such great admiration and respect."

Pali-Maj must have been very talented, because already at the age of 18 she became a "schoolmaster" and in that role she was responsible for the education of children in many villages in Närpes. Already at the age of 18 she started writing poems. As a 20-year-old, she visited Stockholm, a trip that went by boat from Närpes. Her fellow travellers are said to have described her as a "songbird".

Vaasa fire and the people's lamentation

One of Palis-Maja's most famous poems is about the great Vasa fire on 3 August 1852, when almost the entire city was destroyed by fire. The fire is one of Finland's largest city fires, and over 2500 people were left homeless. Several died, entire neighborhoods were reduced to ashes and churches and schools were destroyed. She wrote the poem to comfort all those who have been left homeless because of the terrible fire

Palis-Maja's poem about this event, "The Fire of Wasa City", is a unique document of the time. In strong religious images, she describes the despair of people, children fleeing from the fire, church bells falling, and a city punished by an angry God. Pali-Maja was deeply aware of the sinful life that was led in Vaasa before the fire. Entertainment flourished, taverns were plentiful, dances were arranged one after another, travelling theatre companies delighted the townspeople. According to her, the fire was God's punishment for the sins of mankind – and many of her contemporaries, including the clergy, were probably of the same opinion.

At the same time, she appeals to God's mercy, calls for repentance and solidarity with those in need. It is a poem that both mourns and exhorts – it is as much intercession as the collective lament of the people.

Here is Pali-Maja's poem about the fire in the city of Vaasa:

My God, the source of all that's good,
I fall with humble heart to you.
Let all my sighs be understood—
I pray in Jesus' name, so true.
O Holy Spirit, plead for me,
That I in prayer heard may be.

I pray for those, so crushed and poor,
In Vasa's city, burned and lost.

O Father, show your grace once more,
And turn their grief to joy, no cost.
Your stream of mercy flows again,
From heaven's heights to broken men.

I seem to hear the bitter cries,
The weeping rising from each soul.
As flames devoured the darkened skies,
Despair took hold and stole control.
No time remained for prayer or flight,
As hope was lost in fire and night.

The little ones who just could walk
Were snatched from fire's fierce advance.
The sleeping babes no time to talk—
They fled in fear with not a chance.
Their cribs replaced by earth and sky,
The only shelter left nearby.

Wasa stads brand.

Rönnämlikast efter Smeds' uppteckning. I Rändens samling finnas två varianter, som sakna någon strof: den ena upptecknad af rektor A. G. J. Hallström, den andra af dåvarande kyrkoisten J. Dahlb.

Utgjutes som No 288 i gila hv. psalmb.: "Min hjärt och sinne" m. m.

Min Gud, min Gud, all godhetskälla,
jag faller ödmjukt i din famn;
låt mina suckar för dig gälla,
dem jag frambär i Jesu namn!
o, Helge Ande, för mig be',
Så vinner jag bönhörelse.

Jag beder för de usla, arma
i nys förbrända Wasa stad.
O, Fader, nådigt dig förbarma,
gör dessa sorgsna åter glad!
Din godhets källa flödar än
af nåde ifrån himmelen.

Älsk tycks, jag hör den bittra qvida,
den gråt och låt af hvarje man,
hur mången der fick händer wrida,
när staden stod i eld och brand,
när godsats frälsning war förment
och rop till Herren war för sent.

The old with silver in their hair
Had never seen such dreadful pain.
The fire consumed without a care—
And many lives it sought to claim.
Those who would save both wealth and breath
Were taken by the fire to death.

There rose a cry on every side—
From human lips and creatures' moan.
In helpless grief they testified,
Though guilt was not the beasts' alone.



They suffered for the sins of man
Against the holy, just God's plan.

No force could stop the fire's spread,
It raced with fury, none could tame.
All human effort fell and bled—
A day of loss, of ash and flame.
How wretched was that fate and day
When all they had was swept away.

To see one's home in ashes lie,
To watch the walls collapse in dust,
And not to know where one might cry,
Or find a place to sleep or trust—
What pain, what sorrow words can't bear,
To know no haven anywhere.

How mournful was the ringing sound
When church bells fell and broke apart.
As if the angels wept around,
When God, in wrath, withdrew His heart.
The temple burned before their eyes,
Unshielded from the stormy skies.

O Vasa, crown of this proud land,
Who stood in beauty just before—
Have you let go of God's command,
And lived in pride He can't ignore?
For God who will not suffer pride,

Poured out His wrath, no place to hide.

Were there not five who still were just,
Whose prayers might turn the flame away?
The prayers of righteous ones are trust—
They calm the fire, they light the way.
Yes, even greater grief can bend,
When holy hearts to heaven send.

What heart does not in sorrow break
To see the children roam alone?
O God, You weep for mercy's sake—
Give them a roof, a bed, a home.
Bring shelter to the ones who weep,
And food for those who none can keep.

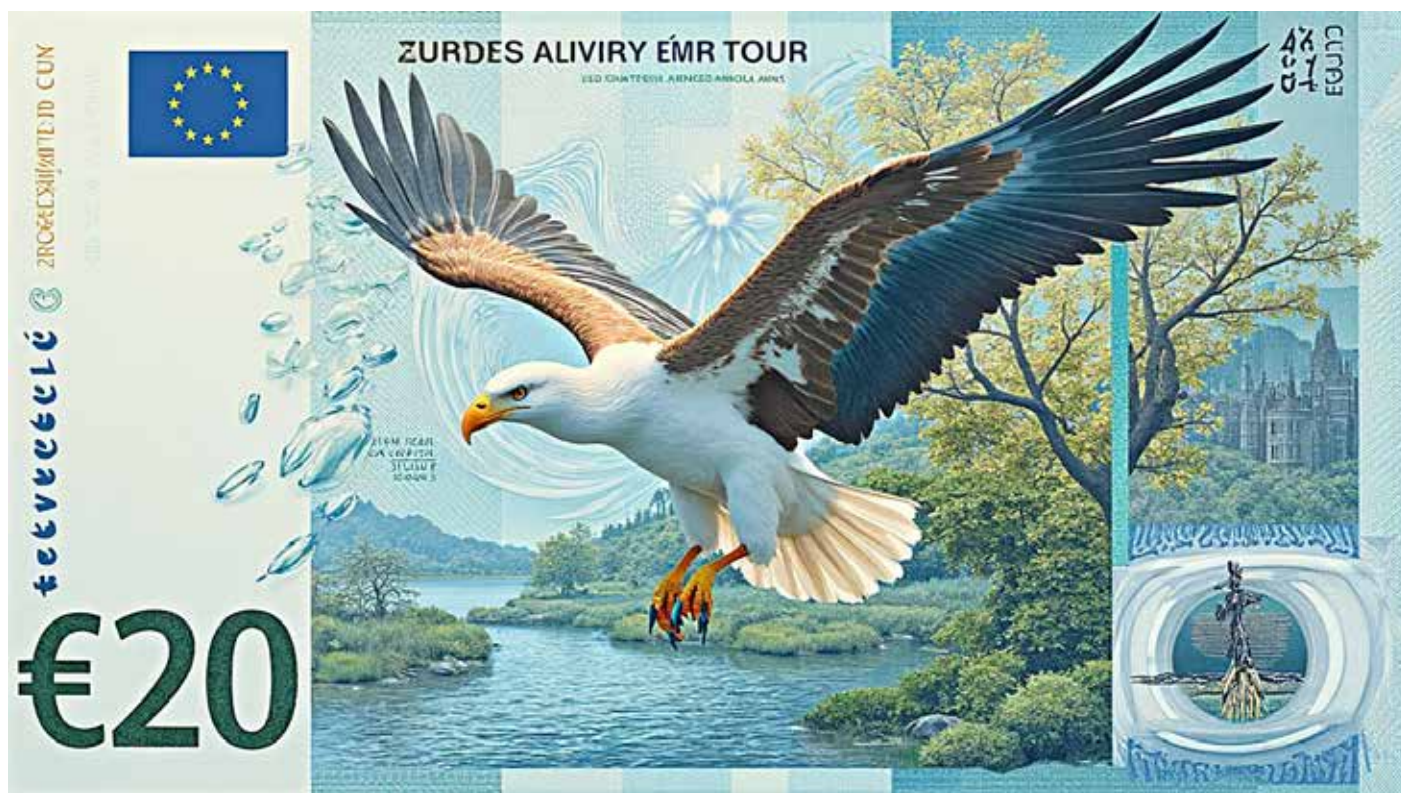
The heart that feels no pity here,
Nor lifts a hand to heal this pain,
Deserves no comfort, help, or cheer
When faced with hardship's own domain.
For God will meet each soul in turn—
No wealth can make His justice burn.

Now I shall end these mournful lines,
Written in tears that cloud my sight.
With heartfelt prayer my hope aligns—
To God, whose wealth is endless light:
Help all who suffer, cold and poor,
And grant them daily bread once more.

NEWS

NEW EURO-NOTES

ECB Launches Design Competition for New Euro Banknotes - Here Are Our Editorial Suggestions



THE EUROPEAN Central Bank (ECB) announced today that it's launching an open design competition for the appearance of a new series of euro banknotes. The news has sent our editorial team into a mild state of euphoria, and we've already tossed around our own, admittedly completely impartial and expert suggestions. Because who better to know what kind of long-haired rocker or swan choir should really be on a euro banknote than us?

According to the ECB, de-

signers can apply to participate in the competition starting July 15, 2025, with the registration period closing on August 18, 2025. The final appearance of the banknotes will be decided based on a public survey by the end of 2026. This means we still have plenty of time to refine our proposals and perhaps even launch a small-scale lobbying campaign within the newsroom.

The theme options chosen for the new banknote series are "European Culture" and "Rivers and Birds." The first presents common cultural spaces and prominent European figures, while the latter focuses on the resilience and diversity of European natural ecosystems. Frankly, we're wondering why "Europe-

an Kebab Culture" or "Rivers Without Fish Thanks to Dams" weren't selected. But we understand that the ECB has its own, somewhat more conservative guidelines.

Our Hot Takes for the New Euro Banknotes:

We don't settle for mere abstract concepts; we've already visualized the future of banknote art:

ECB President Christine Lagarde stated that "The euro is more than just a currency: it is a symbol of European unity and diversity." Our editorial team wholeheartedly agrees with this. And we believe our proposals reflect this unity and diversity in a completely new, humorous, and memorable way. Who would want a boring bridge

when you can have a banknote featuring someone trying to assemble IKEA furniture?

Designers are encouraged to submit their applications by August 18 at 12:00 PM Central European Time. Unfortunately, we can't participate in the competition ourselves, as we're busy with newspaper work.

But if any brave designer dares to adopt one of our suggestions, we certainly wouldn't mind – on the contrary, we'd demand a small share of the royalties. Or at least eternal glory at the coffee table!

Source: Bank of Finland



TRAFFIC

VAASA

Traffic Lights Coming to Busy Vaasa Intersection



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

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

Smoother Public Transport and Safer Crossings

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

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

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

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

Source: Vaasa.fi



WELFARE REGION

SFP

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



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

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

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

Mahdi says.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ministry must take responsibility
Mahdi calls on the Ministry of

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

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

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

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

Source; SFP

CLIMATE CHANGE

CLIMATE CHANGE

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



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

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

The Fundamentals of Earth's Rotation

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

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

Climate Change as a Modern Influence

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

figure skater extends their arms to slow their spin.

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

Atmospheric and Ocean Circulation Changes

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

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

Measuring the Unmeasurable

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

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

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

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

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

INDUSTRY

WÄRTSILÄ

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



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

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

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

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

"Wärtsilä's technical expertise and strong local presence in

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wärtsilä – Leading the Energy Transition

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

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY

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



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

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

Demand for groundwater in the city is disproportionately

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

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

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

"Kabul has some 400 hectares of greenhouses that consume

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

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

'Having To Choose Between Water And Food'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Potential Solutions

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

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

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

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

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CLIMATE CHANGE

CLIMATE CHANGE

C3S: June was hot - but not in Finland



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

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

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

Finland and Fennoscandia Buck the Trend

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

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

Climate Expert Warns of Future Trends

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

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

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

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

SCIENCE

BILINGUALISM

Being Bilingual Is Good for Your Brain

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

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

The ability to speak more than one language has long been associated with cognitive, social, and professional advantages. However, recent neuroscientific research has revealed that bilingualism also confers significant neurological benefits, enhancing brain function, delaying cognitive decline, and even protecting against neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's (Bialystok 2011, 229). This article examines the cognitive advantages of bilingualism, drawing on empirical studies in psychology, neuroscience, and linguistics to demonstrate how speaking multiple languages reshapes the brain and improves mental resilience.

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country, where many people have the opportunity to be actively bilingual.

Cognitive Benefits of Bilingualism

1. Enhanced Executive Function

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

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

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

2. Delayed Cognitive Decline and Dementia

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

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

3. Improved Memory

and Learning Abilities

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

Neurological Adaptations in Bilingual Brains

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



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

2. Enhanced Neuroplasticity

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

Social and Psychological Benefits

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

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

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

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SHORT STORY

STRÖMSÖ

Not everything goes like in Strömsö



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IMAGE: Reality is not all here in the world.

SHOPS

SUNDOM

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



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

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

A Long-Planned Project

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

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

Experienced Staff and Diverse Selection

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

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

A Welcome Addition

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

Flexible Opening Hours

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

Tuesday–Thursday: 10 AM–5 PM

Friday: 10 AM–6 PM

Saturday: 10 AM–3 PM

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

TRAFFIC

SUNDOM

The Sundom cycle path is ready



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

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

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

This is an important project, especially for school-

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

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

Making school journeys safer

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

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

walking in traffic.

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

Good parking for bicycles

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

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

Cooperation ensures continuous maintenance

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

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

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

An investment that makes everyday life easier

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

Source: Vaasa.fi

FOOD

SUNDOM

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



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

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

Preserving a Sustainable Fishing Tradition

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

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

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

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

A Century of Unchanged Technique: Birch Wood and Eyeless Herring

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

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

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

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

A Lengthy Process With Historic Potential

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

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

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

What PGI Means for Consumers

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

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

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

CULTURE

VAASA LITTFEST

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



Pajtim Statovci. Foto: Ano Kurki / Otava

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

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

Among the first confirmed

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

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

nal family saga set in the far north.

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

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

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

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

poetry and nonfiction about the Finnish landscape and environment.

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

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

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

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

VAASA UNIVERSITY

VAASA UNIVERSITY AND VAMK

University of Vaasa and VAMK - Stronger and More Competitive Together



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

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

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

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

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

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

sizes Hannu Vahtera, Managing Director of VAMK.

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

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

WASA FUTURE FESTIVAL

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

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

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

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

Sustainable development, science and art meet

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

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



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

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

Space, youth and lightless experiences

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

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

Towards northern innovation

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

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

Culture and well-being

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

The University is building a more sustainable future

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

The up-to-date programme and further information can be found on the Wasa Future Festival website: wasafuturefestival.fi

PHOTO: Vaasa Futurefestival 2023

SOURCE: University of Vaasa

ONLINE COURSES

AI-COURSE

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



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

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

AI Isn't the Future—It's Here Now

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

"Companies need concrete

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

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

How AI is Reshaping Business

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

The course covers AI from three perspectives:

Business – How can AI create competitive advantages?

Technology – What applications exist?

Design – How to develop user-friendly AI solutions?

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

Real-World Examples: How Businesses Use AI Today

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

Document processing – Automated data extraction and report generation.

Price prediction – Dynamic pricing models based on market conditions.

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

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

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

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

Participation is simple:

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

Study at your own pace – 24/7 access.

Receive a certificate upon completion.

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

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

AI is the Future—Start Learning Now

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

Ready to future-proof your business? Enroll now!

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

HEALTHCARE

SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE

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

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

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

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

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

Permanent treatment relationship as a solution

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



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

Long waiting times undermine trust

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

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

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

Personal encounters must be preserved

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

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

A universal system would strengthen trust

Professor Heikki Hiilamo from

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

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

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

ASTRONOMY

ASTRONOMY

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

The comet's naming follows established astronomical con-

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

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

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

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

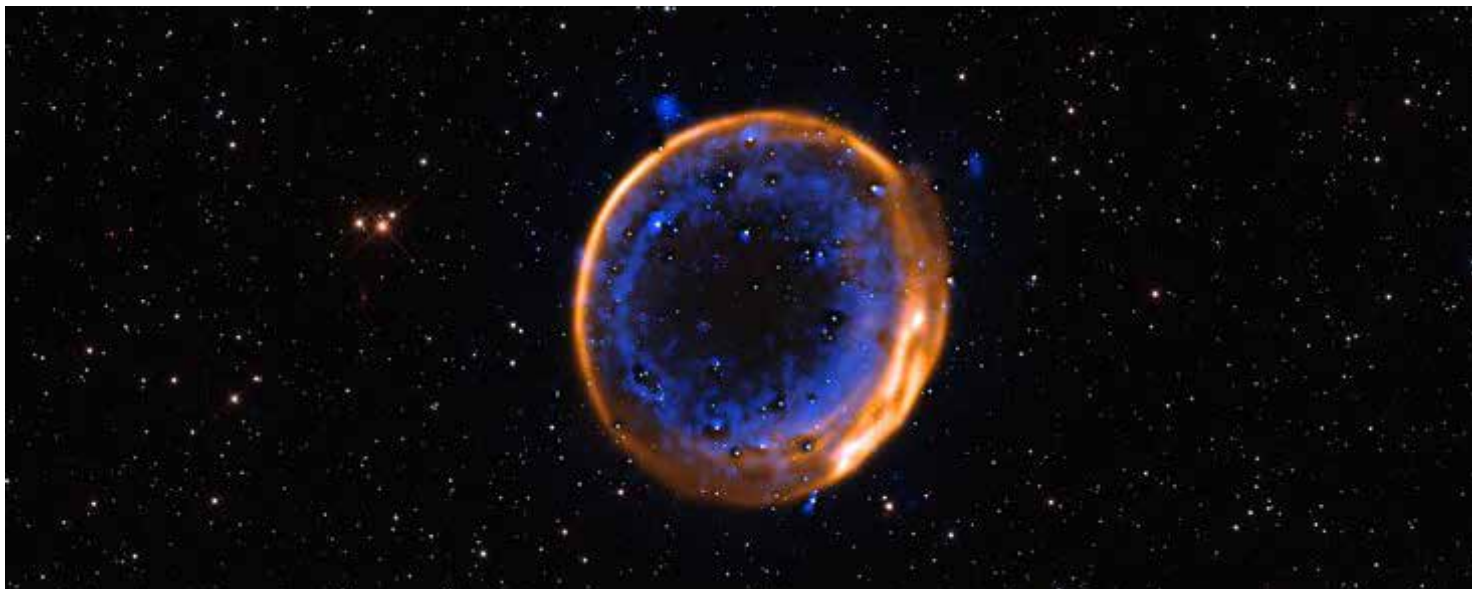
Scientists are particularly interested in analyzing the comet's composition, which could provide insights into the formation processes of other star systems. The chemical signature of 3I/ATLAS may reveal details about its original stellar neighborhood and the conditions that ejected it into interstellar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

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

ASTRONOMY

ASTRONOMY

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



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

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

A Stellar Mystery Solved

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

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

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

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

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

Here's how it happened:

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

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

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

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

measurements—might need re-evaluation.

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

A Celestial Spectacle

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

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

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

Image and Text Credit: ESO/VLT/MUSE

DISEASES

CELIAC DISEASE

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



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

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

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

The Current Diagnos-

tic Dilemma

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

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

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

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

A New Approach: Targeting T Cells

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

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

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

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

Breaking Down the Science

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

Unlike previous T-cell-



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

Real-World Impact

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

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

People with ongoing symptoms despite following what they believe

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

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

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

Moving Forward

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

celiac disease.

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

Hope on the Horizon

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

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

Reference:

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

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HEALTHCARE

HEALTHCARE

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



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

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

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

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

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

Clear prices, no unexpected costs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOURCE: KELA, press release

LEISURE TIME

VAASA

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



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

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

Three New Rowboats Available for Free Use

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

Saaristoravintola Ukkokari
(in Gerby)

Café Kanttorila (in Vähäkyrö)

Café Onkilahti (boat rental available starting Week 33)

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

How to Rent a Boat?

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

Opening Hours for Rental Points:

Saaristoravintola Ukkokari – Check the restaurant's website for hours

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

Café Onkilahti – Boat rental available starting Week 33

Participatory Budgeting Brings Residents' Ideas to Life

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

Previous participatory budgeting projects have included:

A cherry tree park

A wildflower meadow

A winter swimming spot

Additional benches and trash bins along waterfront trails

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

Comment:

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

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

CREDIT: vaasa.fi

LEISURE TIME

VACATION

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



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

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

Bigger Budgets – Especially for Families

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

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

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

Safety First: Finns Choose Cautiously

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

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

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

Cost Hikes? No Problem

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

Salaries and savings cover most vacations. While credit card use

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

Survey Snapshot

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

Key Takeaways:

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

Domestic dominance: 52% staying in Finland

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

Source: nordea.fi

STATISTICS

STATISTICS FINLAND

Number of Foreign-Language Speakers Has Doubled in Ten Years



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

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

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

Russian Still the Largest Language Group

Russian remains the largest foreign

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

Population Growth, Unevenly Distributed

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

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

Kainuu's Population Falls Below 70,000

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

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

Foreign-Born Population Concentrated in the South

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

Regionally, the highest proportions of foreign-background residents

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

1990 Cohort Now the Largest Age Group

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

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

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

AI

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



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

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

The Major Players and Their Strengths

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

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

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

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

Image Generation Capabilities

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

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

Best for Different Use Cases

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

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

Performance and Accessibility

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

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

Looking Forward

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

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

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

PRESS FREEDOM

GOVERNMENT

Finland leads international coalition to promote media freedom



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

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

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

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

sponse to the growing threats to the media.

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

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

The work of the coalition is

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

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

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

policy in international politics.

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

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

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

ATTRACTION

GOVERNMENT PALACE

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Inside the Seat of Power

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

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

Last Chance Before Renovation

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

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

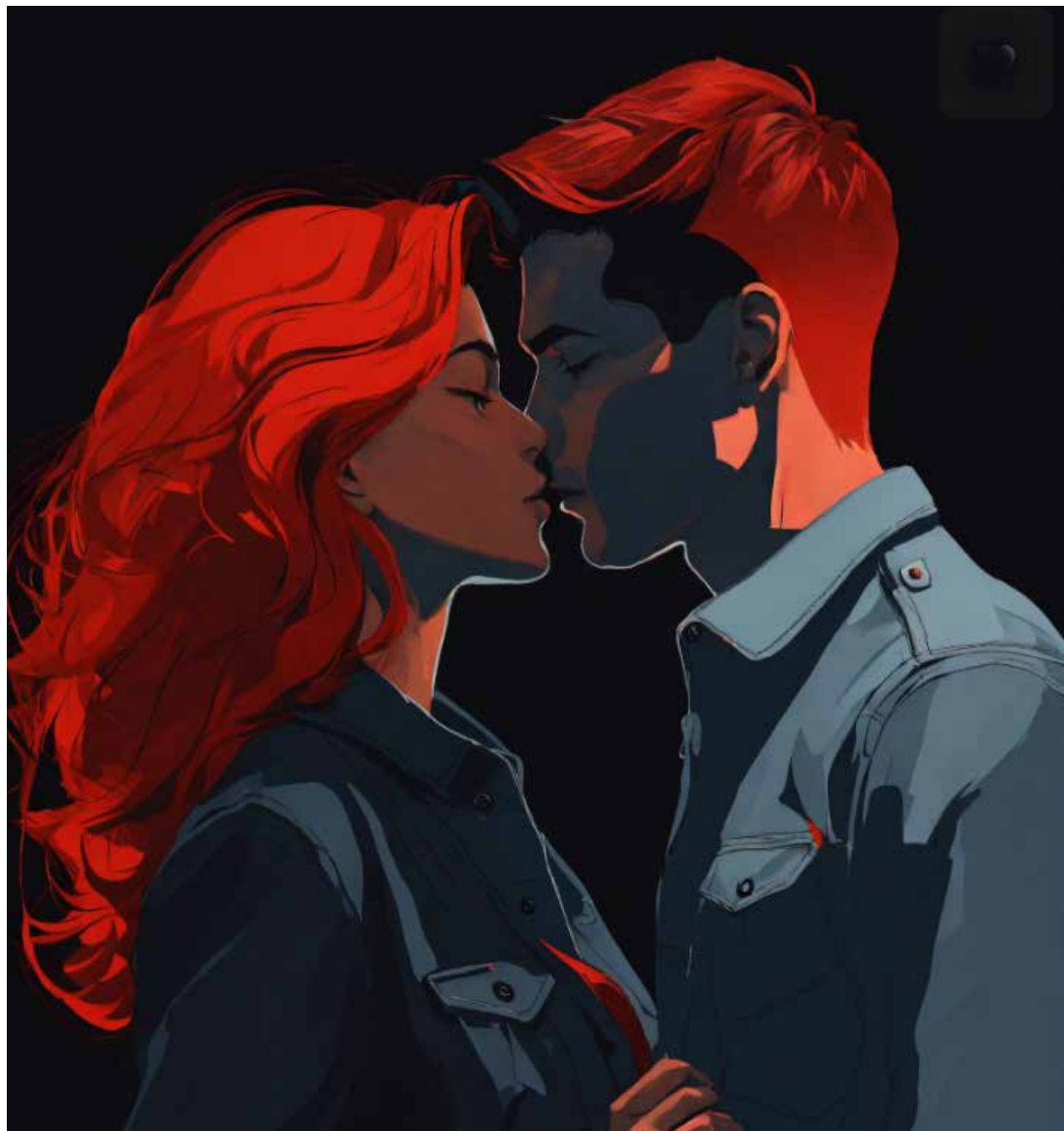
Practical Information

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

HEALTH

COELIAC DISEASE

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



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

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

Thankfully, science has

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

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

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

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

"Hold on, honey, I need to hydrate for science."

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

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

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

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

HEALTH

COELIAC DISEASE

Should I consider getting a celiac disease test?

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

Celiac disease is not such a disease!

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

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

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

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

SYMPTOMS:

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

DISEASES OF YOUR RELATIVES:

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

PAST DISEASES:

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



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

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

HEALTH

HEATH

University of Jyväskylä: Waist obesity increases urinary incontinence



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

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

More than half of women have pelvic floor problems

An alarming finding in the

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

Waist fat as a special risk factor

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

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

Lifestyle affects pelvic floor health

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

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

Prevention is the key to managing the problem

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

HEALTH

A SHORT STORY

"A New Era in Weight Loss "



Image: HFIF-bild

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

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

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

And that made it dangerous.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He nodded slowly. "Just curious."

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

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

FACTS;

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

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

But there were cracks in the miracle.

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

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

He thought about justice.

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

Because something big was coming.

And he'd be ready.

HEALTH

TEEN HEALTH

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



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

Youth Health Shows Improvement

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

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

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

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

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

Anxiety Persists, Especially Among Girls

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

34% of girls experience moderate/severe anxiety

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

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

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

Bullying: 8% Face Weekly Harassment

Tracking since 1996, the survey reveals:

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

Rates remain within the historical 5–10% range

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

Full Dataset Coming September 2025

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

Complete statistical report launches 17 September at thl.fi/schoolhealth-survey/results

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

Key Takeaways:

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

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

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

Prevention focus: Daily routines and early intervention prove critical

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

TOWN PLANNING

MARKET SQUARE

Market Square to Become Our Shared Living Room!



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

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

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

Green, Playful, and Accessible

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

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

For Everyone, Year-Round

Accessibility is at the heart of

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

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

The Esplanade as an Art Axis

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

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

What Happens Next?

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

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

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

□ www.vaasa.fi/

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

NEWS

STREET ART

Street Art Transforms Vaasa Into a Vibrant Open-Air Gallery



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

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

Art for Everyone

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

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

tu 14)

Additional murals will soon decorate pedestrian underpasses throughout the summer.

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

Global Art Comes to Vaasa

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

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

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





ART

GRAFFITI

Youth Co-Create Stunning Street Art Mural at Care Home



Young artists collaborate with graffiti pro to transform Vaasa service building

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

First-Ever Graffiti Camp Inspires Participants

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

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

Art With Purpose

The new artwork now adorns the

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

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

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

More Than Just Paint

The camp served multiple important purposes:

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

Vandalism prevention: Providing legal outlets reduces destructive graffiti

Skill transfer: Professional artist shared techniques and ethical guidelines

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

Future Plans

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

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

For young participants, the experience proved transformative:

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

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



PRESS

PRESS

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

PRESS

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

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

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

Retirement as a new beginning

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

"Retirement can be the start of something new."

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

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The need to reassess age in working life

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

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

Lifelong learning as a key to meaningful old age

For Hans Björknäs, the search for knowledge has always

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

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

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

12 Nyheter



Hans, 79, vill inte vara pensionär

Hans Björknäs är en 79-årig man som inte vill vara pensionär. Han har arbetat som läkare i över 40 år och har alltid varit intresserad av att lära sig nya saker. Han har nu börjat studera journalistik vid Svenska Skolan för Socialvetenskap i Stockholm. Hans motivation är att fortsätta utvecklas och bidra till samhället. Han ser pensioneringen som en chans att börja på nytt och inte som en begränsning. Hans historia illustrerar den potential som finns i att se åldern som en fördel snarare än ett hinder.

A positive vision of the future

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

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

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

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

ASTRONOMY

ASTRONOMY

Astronomers Unveil Unprecedented Thousand-Color Image of the Sculptor Galaxy



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

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

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

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

A Galactic Masterpiece

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

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

A Monumental Observational Effort

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

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

Discoveries Hidden in the Data

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

dent at Heidelberg University and study co-author.

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

Unlocking Galactic Mysteries

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

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

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SUMMER FLOWERS

VAASA

Summer Blooms Return – Vibrant Flower Displays Ready for Midsummer



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

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

From Easter Bulbs to Midsummer Blooms – An Annual Floral Journey

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

"Preparations start in May with gre-

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

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

Flower Walk – Discover Vaasa in Full Bloom

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

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

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

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

More Than Just Decoration – Flowers at Work

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

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

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

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

This year, extra attention has been

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

A Growing Tradition

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

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

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

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

SOURCE: vaasa.fi



AI-NEWS

CLAUDE OPUS 4 , a review



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

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

Breaking New Ground in AI Performance

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

just a quick-response tool.

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

What Makes Opus 4 Different?

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

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

A Writer's New Companion

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

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

Internet Access and Real-Time Information

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

across various tasks.

The Coding Revolution

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

Looking Forward

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

WASA DAILY
Nr 23 Sunday, June 8, 2025
ISSN 2965-2456
The year of the City Theatre
Korsholm cheapest in Finland
Prostate Cancer
Inkeri Julkunen
A new era in weight loss
A New Dwarf Planet

WASA
DAILY

Wasa Daily



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

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

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

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

UKRAINE

UKRAINE PRESIDENT

Strengthening Air Defense, Sanctions Against Russia, and Energy Support: The President of Ukraine Holds a Call with the Prime Minister of Norway



PRESIDENT of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy held a phone call with Prime Minister of Norway Jonas Gahr Støre.

The leaders coordinated further joint steps as well as cooperation within broader formats in Europe and with the United States.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy thanked Norway for its decision to strengthen Ukraine's air defense and its readiness to work together for protection against Russian terror. There is currently a good pace in preparing to enhance air defense.

The President also emphasized the importance of coordinated sanctions

pressure on Russia with partners — including the European Union's sanctions packages and decisions by other G7 members. Norway holds a very principled stance, which is important for everyone in Europe.

Additionally, the President and the Prime Minister discussed Ukraine's energy resilience:

specific agreements on preparations for the upcoming winter and Norway's readiness to continue providing assistance.

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AI

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

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



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

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

The Emergence of AI-Generated Podcasts

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Wasa Daily

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

The magazine contains quotations from old daily newspapers taken from the National Archives (digikansalliskirjasto.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!

Editorial office: Wasa Daily, Koulukatu 37 B 7, 65100 Vaasa, tel. +358-40-5462455.

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

Email: wasadagblad@gmail.com



HOROSCOPE FOR JULY 2025

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Or do, it's summer.

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

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

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

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



HUMOUR ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

LUNDBERG

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

NOT HOME

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

FISHING LUCK

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

TWO STREET LAMPS

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

APPENDIX

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

COMMUNISM

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

IN THE BEST FAMILIES

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

Difficult to choose maid

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

To complain to a newspaper

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

CHILD MAIDEN

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

IN COURT

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

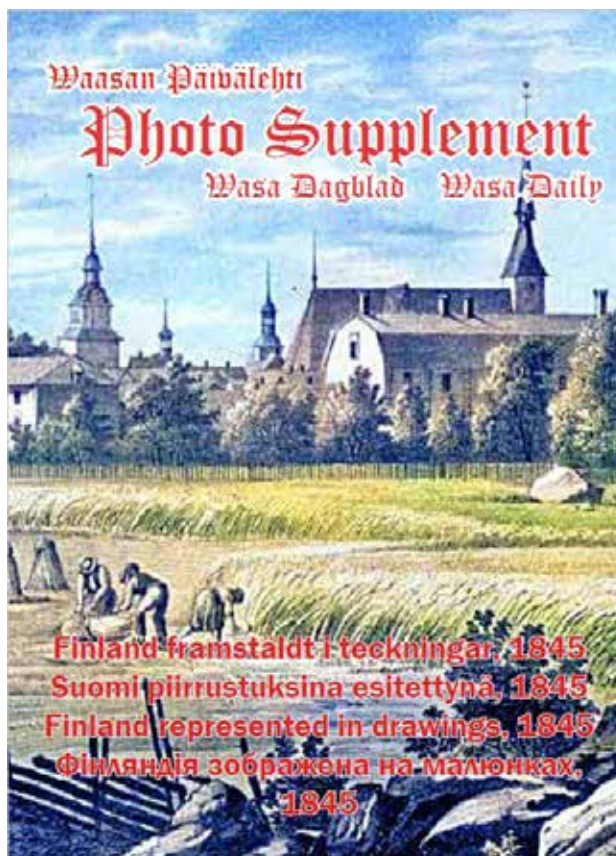
Astronomic picture of the week:



A reproduction of a composite colour image of the Horsehead Nebula and its immediate surroundings. It is based on three exposures in the visual part of the spectrum with the FORS2 multi-mode instrument at the 8.2-m KUEYEN telescope, part of ESO's Very Large Telescope, at Paranal. It was produced from three images, obtained on February 1, 2000, with the FORS2 multi-mode instrument at the 8.2-m KUEYEN Unit Telescope and extracted from the VLT Science Archive Facility. The frames were obtained in the B-band (600 sec exposure; wavelength 429 nm; FWHM 88 nm; here rendered as blue), V-band (300 sec; 554 nm; 112 nm; green) and R-band (120 sec; 655 nm; 165 nm; red). The original pixel size is 0.2 arcsec.

Credit:ESO

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

Advertise in Wasa Daily

Being among the first to advertise in this historic and hyper-modern daily may have some PR value.

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