

# *The Action Plan for the Nature Step to Health Programme*



**Lahti**

URBACT



Co-funded by  
the European Union  
Interreg

**Integrated Action Plan (IAP)**



# Contents

## Introduction

<b>1. Situation overview .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Lahti and its residents .....	5
Special features of nature in Lahti.....	5
The master plan sets the direction for the development of Lahti.....	6
Climate targets in the Lahti strategy.....	7
Strategic nature goal for Lahti.....	8
State of the environment in Lahti.....	9
Health and well-being.....	11
<b>2. Nature Step to Health 2022–2032.....</b>	<b>14</b>
New goal of promoting planetary health .....	15
<b>3. Action plan for the Nature Step to Health programme for 2025–2028.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Programme objectives, tasks and actors .....	17
Cooperation priorities within the programme in 2025–2028.....	18
Task-specific focus areas of the Nature Step to Health programme 2025–2028.....	22
<b>4. The City of Lahti’s action plan for promoting the Nature Step to Health programme.....</b>	<b>24</b>
Working together for planetary health.....	25
Experiments for further development.....	25
4.1. Progress of strategic goals in the city organisation.....	26
4.2. A planetary diet promotes the well-being of people and nature	
The municipality’s role in promoting healthy and sustainable diets.....	28
4.3. Education and training play a significant role in achieving sustainability goals	
Experiences of the pilot year steering new development.....	31
<b>5. Assessment of the long-term implementation and governance model of the Nature Step to Health programme .....</b>	<b>33</b>
The programme will continue until 2032.....	34
A national nature health programme to be launched in 2026 .....	35
The impact of the Nature Step to Health programme .....	35
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>36</b>
Appendix 1. Planetary health and one health.....	36
Appendix 2: Progress of the Nature Step to Health programme 2022–2024.....	37
Appendix 3: Indicators .....	39

## Introduction

This action plan was produced within the One Health 4 Cities project, which is funded by the URBACT IV (2021–2027) Action Planning Network and in which Lahti was a partner. The URBACT Integrated Action Plan (IAP) is a city-level plan that defines the actions to be taken by the city to address challenges related to one health/planetary health. The IAP reflects the experiences collected from local stakeholders and international partners, as well as actions tested at a local level. In Lahti, the IAP process was based on the Nature Step to Health programme and the updating of its action programme, which was carried out as part of the project.

Lahti has worked ambitiously for the environment for a long time. The goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions has been part of the city's strategy for 15 years, and Lahti is very close to achieving carbon neutrality as the first of Finland's major cities. The city has created a good framework for the circular economy, and nature work has also been highlighted lately. Lahti aims to become nature positive by 2030. Nature positivity means that biodiversity increases rather than decreases.

We are also a global pioneer in the pursuit of planetary health. As a concept, planetary health is close to one health. Planetary health refers to how people's well-being and health depend on the state of the environment. Human actions affect the environment and the state of the environment affects people's well-being

and health. Environmental pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss and the overconsumption of natural resources are detrimental to human health. The planet's load-bearing capacity is deteriorating, which poses a significant threat to all life. The Lahti region set out to find shared solutions to these challenges. The 10-year Nature Step to Health programme was launched in 2022, combining both environmental and health goals. In addition to the City of Lahti, this programme is implemented by the Wellbeing services county of Päijät-Häme and the University Campus of Lahti.

### One Health 4 Cities project

The One Health 4 Cities project had nine partners: Benissa (Spain), Elefsina (Greece), Kuopio (Finland), Lahti (Finland), Loulé (Portugal), Lyon (France), Munich (Germany), the metropolitan area of Strasbourg (France) and Suceava (Romania). The project was led by the City of Lyon.

In the One Health 4 Cities project, the City of Lahti shared its own experiences of promoting planetary health and learned from other cities about their similar work and different approaches. This action plan includes the joint action plan of the three partners of the Nature Step to Health programme on pages 8–15 and the City of Lahti's own plan for promoting planetary health. The cities participating in the project had varying experi-

ences of promoting one health/planetary health, and their challenges also differed. During the project, the cities learned from each other and shared their experiences. The network developed tools to take one health/planetary health into account in urban planning and decision-making. Good experiences were shared to strengthen the participation of residents and stakeholders, and increasing participation is also the goal of many cities in their future work.



Planetary health refers to how people's well-being and health depend on the state of the environment. Human actions affect the environment and the state of the environment affects people's well-being and health.

### Contact information

**Päivi Sieppi**  
Environmental Advisory Manager  
City of Lahti  
+358 50 559 4090  
[paivi.sieppi\(at\)lahti.fi](mailto:paivi.sieppi(at)lahti.fi)



# *1. Situation overview*





## ***Lahti and its residents***

Lahti is a city with approximately 122,000 residents, and the region around Lahti has approximately 205,000 residents. The population of Lahti is growing slightly. The growth comes mainly from immigration. There will be significant changes in the population of Lahti in the coming decades as the population ages and the number of births decreases. This means that population growth will rely more and more on migration in the future. The share of young people in the population is decreasing and the number of older people is increasing.

The employment situation in Finland is weak, and Lahti is no exception. The unemployment rate was 15.8% in August 2025. The employment situation of young people and foreigners is even weaker.

Lahti is Finland's leading environmental city, the European Capital of Environment 2021 and a well-known sports city. Lahti is the newest university city in Finland, and the number of students has grown strongly. In 2025, there will be approximately 2,000 students in the eight master's programmes and three bachelor's programmes of LUT University's Lahti campus.

## ***Special features of nature in Lahti***

Parks, green areas and waterways make Lahti's nature green and pleasant. The residents appreciate Lahti for offering the services of a large city, smooth everyday life and the proximity to nature.

Lahti is located near the Salpausselkä ridges. Salpausselkä is a tall ridge formation in Finland that was created at the end of the last ice age and consist of moraine, sand, gravel and rock. The height of the ridges varies. The average height of the ridges is 20 metres from their surroundings, but the highest ridges rise to 70 metres. The Salpausselkä ridges are an example of Finland's best-known geological heritage. The first and second Salpausselkä stretch throughout southern Finland and are at their finest in the Lahti region. Because of this, Lahti and its surrounding municipalities are part of the UNESCO Global Geopark network. The Salpausselkä ridges offer a fantastic setting for outdoor activities, recreation and exercise and also contain significant groundwater reserves.

*Lahti Environmental  
Capital's 5-year report,  
in English  
and in Finnish :*

***EN***

***FI***



## *The master plan sets the direction for the development of Lahti*

Lahti Direction is an approach based on the master plan that covers the entire city and the sustainable urban mobility programme. The Lahti Direction work is continuous and based on the city's strategy, and it consists of four-year cycles for each City Council term. The latest Lahti Direction project was approved by the City Council in December 2024. The Lahti master plan 2035 was confirmed as legally valid in February 2025. No complaints were submitted about the master plan, which shows that the efforts to increase inclusiveness have been effective in Lahti.

According to the master plan, the planning and implementation of the areas must promote climate change mitigation and readiness for and adaptation to change, sustainable construction, the circular economy, diverse urban nature and the stopping of biodiversity loss, as well as solutions that increase and secure local carbon sinks and stores. Important ecosystem services and quiet areas must be preserved.

Lahti master plan 2035 includes six legally effective master plan maps with different themes. The maps steer urban planning and other land use planning. The

plans cover, among other things, natural and green environments, cultural environments, water protection, the circular economy and sustainable mobility. Salpausselkä, important ecosystem services and the significant nature network have been highlighted as strategic development areas on the nature and green environments map. The map highlights areas that are, for example, particularly important for biodiversity and potential ecological compensation areas with land use markings. Significant ecological connection labelling marks the ecological connections or connection needs between the most significant natural areas in Lahti.

”

*No complaints were submitted about the master plan, which shows that the efforts to increase inclusiveness have been effective in Lahti.*





## Climate targets in the Lahti strategy

### Production-based emissions in the climate target

The City of Lahti has been a pioneer in its climate targets. For over 15 years, reducing greenhouse gas emissions has been part of the city's strategy. Lahti has also set an ambitious climate target of becoming a carbon-neutral city in 2025. This means reducing emissions by 80% from 1990 levels and binding or offsetting the remaining emissions in carbon sinks in the area. Emissions from transport, in particular, have decreased more slowly than expected. However, Lahti can still achieve carbon neutrality in the coming years, as the first large city in Finland. According to the scenarios, emissions from the energy sector in particular will decrease significantly in the coming years, but emissions from transport will decrease slowly.

The average annual temperature in Lahti has risen by approximately 2.5°C since 1960, and the average temperature during the winter months has risen by almost 4°C. In addition to the rise in temperature, the extreme weather phenomena and the increase in rainfall in winter challenge the city's existing infrastructure, operating models and winter sports tradition.

### Consumption emissions and excess consumption

Lahti is part of the Fisu (Finnish Sustainable Communities) network of pioneering municipalities that are committed to achieving zero emissions, zero waste and globally sustainable consumption by 2050. In 2024, greenhouse gas emissions from Lahti's consumption totalled 7.42 t CO<sub>2</sub>eq per capita. Goods and services as well as food account for more than 50% of the consumption-related emissions. Emissions can vary greatly between different years, for example, due to individual large construction projects. Sitra's international study that is based on emission reduction scenarios suggests that the target level of the carbon footprint based on consumption per capita would be 2.5 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e by 2030. So consumption in Lahti is still far from sustainable.

We consume nature faster than it can renew itself. Finland's Overshoot Day in 2025 was 6 April. Overshoot Day is the day when people's ecological footprint exceeds the planet's ability to produce renewable resources and deal with greenhouse gas emissions caused by the use of fossil fuels. Finland's Overshoot Day is about four months earlier than the global average.



”

*Lahti is part of the Fisu (Finnish Sustainable Communities) network of pioneering municipalities that are committed to achieving zero emissions, zero waste and globally sustainable consumption by 2050.*



## Strategic nature goal for Lahti

Biodiversity is declining in Finland. The decline in biodiversity is reflected in the species and the functionality and quality of habitats. Humans are part of nature, so biodiversity loss also affects human well-being and health in many ways. Services necessary for human well-being include, for example, pollination of food plants, clean drinking water, carbon sequestration and the production of fuels, fibres and medicines.

The climate goals have been part of Lahti's strategy for a long time, but the City Council set a strategic nature goal only in 2024. The aim is for Lahti to be a nature-positive city by 2030. Nature positivity means producing more benefits than harm to nature. Climate change is a major cause of nature depletion and, on the other hand, natural environments help to adapt to climate change. In other words, climate and nature work support each other.

”

*The aim is for Lahti to be  
a nature-positive city by 2030.  
Nature positivity means producing  
more benefits than harm to nature.*

One way for municipalities to prevent biodiversity loss is to establish nature reserves. Nature reserves promote the preservation and diversity of special natural features. Lahti has approximately 50 areas protected under the Nature Conservation Act. Their combined area is 1,055 hectares and they cover 2.04% of the city's total area. The protected areas include marshes, wetlands and forests. The goal of Lahti is to increase the share of protected areas to 5% of the total city area. Lahti has also promoted several other nature-related programmes in recent years. These include urban tree guidelines, forest management principles, a groundwater protection plan and a green area programme.

### Nature footprint calculation highlights the city's nature impacts

Lahti was one of the first cities in the world to calculate its nature footprint. According to the analysis, the largest nature footprint within Lahti's procurements is caused by investments, food, ICT services and equipment, and heating. With regard to the regional nature footprint, the analysis revealed that the majority of the harm to global nature is caused by greenhouse gas emissions.





## State of the environment in Lahti

### Quality of air

Air quality in the Lahti region is good or at least satisfactory the majority of the time. Air quality is particularly affected by traffic, industry and small-scale wood combustion. Occasionally, the impurity concentrations rise to above the recommendations and target values. The concentrations vary from year to year. Dust concentrations vary annually as the weather conditions change in the spring. The amount of gravel used in winter also affects the amount of dust in the spring and the length of the dust episode. In the city centre, nitrogen oxide concentrations follow the rhythm of traffic. The concentrations of inhalable particles, in particular, rise to levels that are harmful to health in certain weather situations.

### Water quality

The natural values and recreational opportunities of water bodies are particularly affected by the condition of the water body. The majority of lakes in Lahti are subject to quality classification under the EU's Water Framework Directive.

In the Lahti region, the ecological status of surface waters is often impaired by excessive nutrient content in the waters. In addition to biological factors (plant plankton, aquatic vegetation, bottom fauna and fish

stock), the ecological classification also takes into account the most important water quality characteristics, such as the amount of nutrients.

The condition of lake Vesijärvi in Lahti has been studied intensively for decades. The quality of lake Vesijärvi varies considerably from region to region, but positive development has taken place over the decades. The extensive scope of the Vesijärvi renovation process and the good results have played a role in strengthening Lahti's environmental strategy and improving its position.

Groundwater protection is important in Lahti due to the Salpausselkä groundwater formations. There are 14 groundwater areas in Lahti that are important or suitable for water intake. The domestic water distributed from the domestic water supply points is impeccable and meets all the relevant quality requirements.

The quality of the groundwater in Lahti has largely remained good, but human activity is reflected in the water quality in many ways. In sand and gravel areas, groundwater is vulnerable to changes and impurities in soil. The groundwater can contain many types of impurities that originate from various business operations and



road and railway maintenance, for example. Examples include traces of petroleum products, various solvents and pesticides. Due to pesticides, Lahti has even had to close down certain water intake points.

”

*The quality of the groundwater in Lahti has largely remained good, but human activity is reflected in the water quality in many ways.*



## Noise and quiet areas

Reports show that car traffic is the most significant source of environmental noise in Lahti. More than one fifth of Lahti residents are exposed to road traffic noise above an average noise level of 55 dB during the day. The number of residents exposed to noise caused by rail traffic is significantly lower at 1,000 (0.8%) residents.

Reducing or slowing down traffic is one of the most effective ways to reduce noise levels. Other significant ways to reduce noise in residential areas include zoning and land use, different noise barriers, shelters and technology used in construction, such as noise-insulating walls and windows.

Silence is relative and everyone experiences it differently. Areas with noise levels below 45 decibels are regarded as quiet areas. Approximately 80 quiet areas have been identified in Lahti. In most of these, noise levels are below 45 dB.

The total area of all the quiet areas is approximately 30,800 hectares. The City of Lahti has a land area of 45,947 hectares, which means that 67% of the land area are quiet areas. A significant part of the quiet areas consists of extensive lands forests in the area of the former municipality of Nastola.

”

*Reducing or slowing down traffic is one of the most effective ways to reduce noise levels.*





# Health and well-being

The responsibility for organising social and health-care services and rescue services was transferred from municipalities and joint municipal authorities to wellbeing services counties on 1 January 2023. The wellbeing services counties were formed in the reform of social welfare, health care and rescue services, which was one of the largest administrative reforms in the history of Finland. Wellbeing services counties have their own governance. Their funding is based on state funding, and the counties do not currently have the right to taxation. Lahti is part of the Wellbeing services county of Päijät-Häme.

The wellbeing services counties are responsible, among others, for primary health care, specialised care and social care.

The well-being and health of Päijät-Häme residents are described in the Well-being Report 2024 of the Wellbeing services county of Päijät-Häme. Table 1 lists common sources of joy and concerns related to the well-being of Lahti residents in 2024.

Sources of joy in Lahti	Concerns in Lahti
<p><b>Sources of joy in well-being and health work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multidisciplinary well-being work</li><li>• Progressive youth work</li><li>• Cooperation with organisations and associations</li></ul> <p><b>Sources of joy in the well-being of local residents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lahti has grown in popularity as a student and university city</li><li>• The number of long-term unemployed has decreased</li><li>• A large proportion of Lahti residents are well</li></ul> <p><b>Sources of joy from the perspective of sustainable well-being and lifestyle</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased exercise among adults, both women and men</li><li>• Residents have diverse opportunities to participate and influence</li></ul>	<p><b>Concerns about the municipality's well-being and health work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lahti carries out multidisciplinary well-being work, and there is a multidisciplinary Hyvinvoiva Lahti working group operating in the city. How to ensure the multidisciplinary development of well-being work and city-level management also during and after an organisational change.</li></ul> <p><b>Concerns about the well-being of local residents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Difficult employment situation and livelihood challenges</li><li>• Little participation, although there are many opportunities for participation</li><li>• Mental well-being challenges and substance abuse</li></ul> <p><b>Concerns from the perspective of sustainable well-being and lifestyle</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unemployment remains high</li><li>• Global uncertainty (pandemics, wars, climate change)</li></ul>

Table 1. Sources of joy and concerns in the well-being of Lahti residents in 2024.



### Exercise and school meals for children and young people in Lahti

Asthma, diabetes, obesity and depression have increased in Finland in the 2000s. These diseases are largely caused by lifestyle and environmental factors, which can be influenced to prevent and alleviate diseases. The municipality can influence some lifestyle choices by encouraging and providing a good framework for sustainable and healthy lifestyles. Providing safe and smooth walking and cycling routes can support the active movement of children and young people. In daycare centres and schools, children and young people receive a free hot meal, which can be used to support familiarisation with new tastes and foods and getting used to them. Plant-based food is not only health-promoting, but also environmentally sustainable.

The latest results for the physical activity of children and youth in Finland are from 2024. Pedestrian and bicycle paths are important places for mobility. According to the study, voluntary exercise was by far the most common form of exercise among children, adolescents and young adults. The most commonly used sports facilities among children, adolescents and young adults were walking and cycling routes and their own or a friend's yard, which they used on a weekly basis. Approximately half of the respondents participated in training, competitions or matches organised by sports clubs, and more than one third participated in sports events organised by sports companies.

Move! is a national measurement and feedback system for physical functional capacity, aimed at pupils in basic education in 5th and 8th grades. The latest results are from autumn 2024. The overall physical functional capacity score reveals the percentage of pupils whose capacity is at a level that potentially consumes or impairs their health and well-being. This share is 35.3% for Lahti's 5th grade students and 41.6% for 8th grade students. Of these, the results for 5th grade students are weaker for boys and for 8th grade students for girls.

Class	Boys	Girls	Total
5th grade	36.2 %	34.1 %	35.3 %
8th grade	40.9 %	42.3 %	41.6 %
both classes	38.6 %	38.7 %	38.7 %

Table 2. Move! results in 2024, physical functional capacity, Lahti. The result indicates the percentage of pupils whose physical functional capacity is at a level that potentially consumes or impairs their health and well-being.





According to the results of the school health survey, 44% of 4th–5th grade students in Lahti spend at least one hour a day on physical activity. As the children get older, the amount of active exercise decreases. 29% of 8th–9th grade students, 21% of upper secondary school students and 21% of vocational school students spend at least one hour a day on physical activity. The majority of young people spend time outdoors at least one day per week, 90% of 8th–9th graders and upper secondary school students and 86% of vocational school students.



*The majority of young people spend time outdoors at least one day per week*

According to the results of the school health survey, 4th–5th grade students think that the quality of school lunch is good (60% of respondents) and it tastes good (55%). Less than half of 8th–9th graders eat school lunch every day (46%), compared to 65% of upper secondary school students. Of the respondents on 8th–9th grades, 35% agree that school lunch is of good quality. 62% of upper secondary school students consider the quality of their school lunch to be good. The results are similar for the question of the taste of school lunch. 38% of 8th–9th grade students and 63% of upper secondary school students think the school lunch tastes good. Lahti offers very similar food in primary schools and the city’s own upper secondary schools. There is no major difference between the meals, according to the producer.

Topic	Respondents	Boys	Girls	Total
School lunch is of good quality, %	Primary school 4th and 5th grades	61	57	60
	Primary school 8th and 9th grades	34	37	35
	Upper secondary school	56	66	62
School lunch tastes good, %	Primary school 4th and 5th grades	59	50	55
	Primary school 8th and 9th grades	38	38	38
	Upper secondary school	60	65	63
Eat school lunch daily, %	Primary school 8th and 9th grades	51	41	46
	Upper secondary school	75	59	65

Table 3. School health survey results on school food in 2025, Lahti



## ***2. Nature Step to Health 2022–2032***





## ***New goal of promoting planetary health***

Nature Step to Health is the Lahti region's health and environmental programme for 2022–2032. The programme continues the City of Lahti's ambitious sustainability work following its year as the European Green Capital in 2021. The Nature Step to Health programme document was completed and introduced at the beginning of 2022. Below is the joint action plan for the three organisations of the Nature Step to Health programme for 2025–2028, pages 16–23. After this, the City of Lahti will specify its own action plan for promoting planetary health for the next few years.

***The Nature Step to Health  
programme document***





### ***3. Action plan for the Nature Step to Health programme for 2025–2028***





# Programme objectives, tasks and actors

Nature Step to Health – Lahti Regional Health and Environment Programme for 2022–2032 is a joint programme of the Wellbeing services county of Päijät-Häme, the City of Lahti and the University Campus of Lahti that combines the health and environmental objectives of the Päijät-Häme region and the City of Lahti. Nature Step to Health Programme is unique and therefore of national and international interest. This “umbrella programme” includes the climate, nature and health goals of the organisations.

Nature Step to Health Programme is based on the concept of planetary health. Planetary health describes the dependence of human health on the balance of natural systems: public health, climate change and biodiversity loss are linked in many ways. Unsustainable lifestyle choices put a strain on public health and deteriorate the environment. On the other hand, choices that support environmental sustainability are often also health-promoting.

The programme has five goals and four tasks that cut across the five goals (Figure 1). The health and environmental sector operators carry out the tasks in cooperation.

Practical measures and their impact on public health, biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation to change are the main goals.

Nature Step to Health Programme increases understanding of the interdependence between human health

and the state of the environment, promotes cooperation and working together between health and environmental operators and accelerates concrete measures to promote planetary health. The programme allocates resources from the three organisations to promoting planetary health comprehensively in the region.

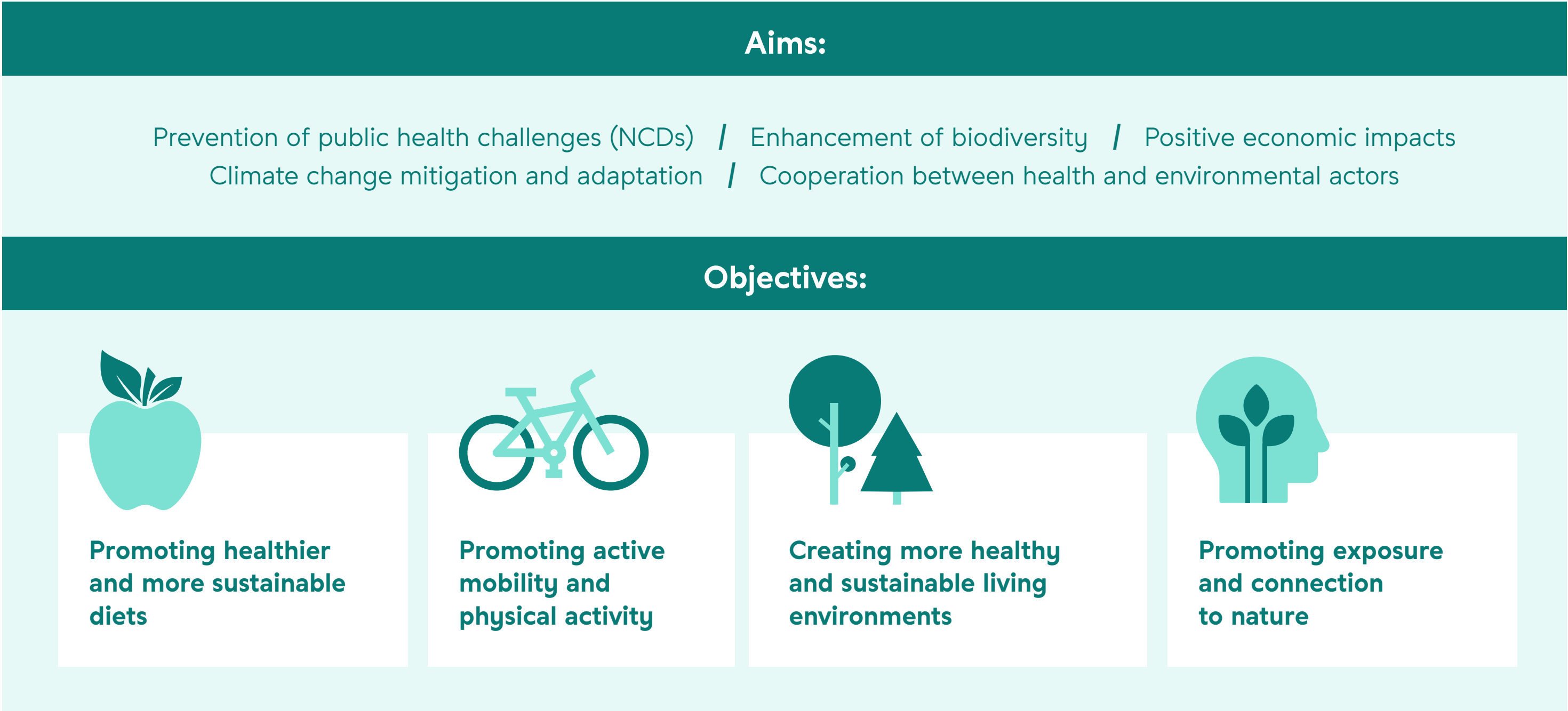


Figure 1. The goals and tasks of Nature Step to Health Programme.. →



## Cooperation priorities within the programme in 2025–2028

Nature Step to Health Programme will strengthen cooperation over the next four years through research, working together, communication and education, as follows:

1. Promoting planetary health research and utilising researched data in the promotion, implementation and operating methods of planetary health. Strengthening the application to practice, clarifying concepts and collecting new information together
2. Strengthening cooperation between organisations and companies as well as the interactive involvement of stakeholders and citizens
3. Increasing communication, advice and guidance on planetary health on different channels and in different ways
4. Systematically including planetary health perspectives in vocational training and further education
5. Integrating the Nature Step to Health programme and planetary health into strategies, programmes and plans

### 1. Promoting planetary health research and utilising researched data in the promotion, implementation and operating methods of planetary health

The themes of planetary health, holistic well-being and sustainability have been studied both in Lahti and elsewhere. Further research is needed to support the implementation of scientific knowledge, for example, on the (economic) benefits of nature for public health and physical and mental health and well-being. In addition tools like systemic research are needed to identify key leverage points towards planetary health.

The Nature Step to Health programme promotes the use and implementation of researched information:

- Promoting research into planetary health and utilising researched information in promoting planetary health, strengthening its application and implementation and clarifying the concept. The collection and application of the latest research data will be strengthened through participatory research, co-development and communication.

- Regular meetings and seminars for researchers as well as networking between different sectors and cross-sectional research fields
- Supporting the formation of project consortia
- Strengthening the communication of the latest research data, in particular, changes related to planetary health, the health benefits of nature and habitats as a result of climate change, and preparing for climate change



## 2. Strengthening cooperation between organisations and companies as well as the interactive participation of stakeholders and citizens

The programme organisations are involved in numerous different networks and projects as well as working groups, which play a key role in the sharing of information and the dissemination and application of good practices. Together, these networks cover a large number of operators in the health, well-being, environment and education sectors, researchers and professionals from municipalities and cities as well as well-being services counties, along with other operators.

”

*Working in silos remains a challenge for planetary health and holistic solutions.*

Working in silos remains a challenge for planetary health and holistic solutions. Cooperation between sectors must be supported in municipalities, regions and other communities. The Nature Step to Health programme will be more closely integrated into other plans and programmes, and cooperation between projects and operators related to the same theme will be increased.

Cooperation, working together and participation will be promoted over the four years in the following ways, among others:

Networks and supporting project cooperation:

- Promoting opportunities for partnerships between different organisations in Päijät-Häme through networks
- Continuing cooperation with other cities and regions both domestically and abroad to develop operating models for planetary health and raise awareness
- Seeking funding for shared resources and intensifying cooperation in research and communications, for example
- The programme organisations highlight the themes of the programme in their existing networks and seek new networks and partnerships in other urban regions, for example, to strengthen the environmental impact and scale up the programme in other urban areas.
- Promoting international cooperation through, for example, the People and Planet Conference 2026 and the European Planetary Health Hub.





### 3. Increasing communication, advice and guidance on different channels and in different ways

Communication is one of the key means of promoting the goals of the Nature Step for Health programme. Communications support cooperation and the implementation and application of research data. The focus of communications is on advocacy communications and citizens, not forgetting expert and organisational communications. Various campaigns or influencers can be used in the advocacy communications. Communications is positive, cross-sectional and holistic, and planetary health is at its heart. Communicating about the programme and its objectives and operating methods is important, especially with regard to networking and project cooperation.

The communications of the Nature Step to Health programme are carried out using the means, channels and resources of the programme organisations' communications work. The programme's communications take place at several different levels and to different target groups.

- Increasing awareness is aimed at residents and professionals working in the fields of the environment and health. In addition to increasing knowledge, the aim is to influence people's attitudes and encourage them to make changes.

- Increasing awareness of the phenomena, goals and operating methods that influence the programme. Communicating on planetary health and the connections between health and the environment from a new perspective, and strengthening communication on climate change and adaptation to disruptions.
- Demonstrating the effectiveness of the operations by communicating on concrete measures, projects, events and their importance.
- Increasing counselling and guidance, influencing people's attitudes and encouraging everyday changes, one step at a time.
- Increasing communication about the programme's tasks, especially workshops on different themes, the steering group's activities and climate change, the importance of nature for well-being and themes of mobility within and between the organisations.

#### The main messages of the programme:

- Local nature supports human health. Biodiversity loss threatens health.
- A nature-friendly everyday life is important. The way people live, eat, drink, breathe and touch is always in relation to nature.
- The same everyday actions benefit both humans and the environment.





#### 4. Systematically including planetary health perspectives in vocational training and further education

Planetary health themes have been integrated into education (e.g. urban greening study module and planetary health summer school) and into various events and lecture series for residents. Supplementary training has been organised on the themes of planetary health, and wellbeing services county personnel have been offered a training package on sustainable and environmentally friendly social, health and rescue services. The University of Helsinki's supplementary education company HY+ has offered an early childhood education course on nutrition with the theme of planetary health, and the University of Helsinki's Faculty of Medicine has offered a course on planetary health. The City of Lahti has developed school food education in cooperation with Päijät-Häme Food Services.

The integration of planetary health into education will be promoted over the course of four years in the following ways:

- Strengthening planetary health themes in early childhood education, basic education and secondary education
- In particular, increasing the organisations' personnel training on planetary health themes by integrating training into work tasks and industries

- Making nutrition recommendations and the significance of local nature and nature conservation for citizens and well-being more concrete
- Supporting the development of university education
- Preparing awareness training on planetary health

#### 5. Integrating the Nature Step to Health programme and planetary health into strategies, programmes and plans

Both municipal and regional elections were held in 2025. The new councils will reform the strategies of the City of Lahti, other municipalities and the wellbeing services county of Päijät-Häme. It is important to ensure that planetary health is included in the new organisational strategies and reformed programmes.

- Strong cooperation that includes agreeing on the priorities for more effective activities
- Influencing decision-makers, senior and middle management in all organisations
- Influencing the availability of cross-sectoral financing





## ***Task-specific focus areas of the Nature Step to Health programme 2025–2028***

The four tasks of the Nature Step to Health programme include the following areas for development over the course of four years:

### **Making nutrition healthier and more sustainable**

- Influencing sustainable public catering procurement
- Increasing communications to different age groups on nutritional recommendations, as well as nutritional advice and guidance in customer work
- Developing business collaboration to increase the appreciation of sustainable and local food and to create innovative new products
- Increasing knowledge and understanding and influencing attitudes and consumption behaviour regarding sustainable nutrition
- Continuing to develop school meals and involving children and young people in them
- Supporting operators in implementing concrete nutritional measures in different operating environments and age groups by updating the plan for promoting nutritional health in Päijät-Häme

### **Increasing mobility and physical activity**

- Supporting the Moving Päijät-Häme 2030 programme, the Get Finland Moving programme and the City of Lahti's year of mobility 2025, as well as the Nature-Positive Lahti 2030 initiative
- Influencing the planning, construction and public transport routes of municipalities and cities
- Promoting sustainable commuting
- Strengthening mobility in natural environments and improving low-threshold mobility opportunities
- Strengthening the ability of professionals to identify those who move too little and recommend the necessary follow-up measures
- Promoting physical and nature-friendly hobby and club activities among children and young people, in particular
- Influencing various operators and taking care of the development of (natural) sports venues and the network of nearby sports venues, increasing and renovating outdoor sports venues, developing swimming

beaches and winter swimming opportunities as well as sports and outdoor trails

- Seeking funding for various mobility events and communication campaigns in cooperation

### **Improving the health and sustainability of the living environment**

- Influencing the planning and construction of land use and traffic, environmental monitoring and environmental protection
- Increasing the greening of living environments to increase contacts with nature, in cooperation with municipalities and city operators
- Influencing the consideration of local nature in zoning, residential area planning and construction
- Raising awareness of measures that impair the quality of the living environment and providing advice on better practices



## Promoting people's diverse connection to nature

- Increasing the awareness and understanding of natural health among social welfare, health care and early childhood education professionals
- Adding information and instructions on the benefits of nature contact to healthcare recommendations, care pathways and digital applications
- Strengthening self-care guidelines on the health benefits of the natural environment
- Increasing opportunities for health-promoting contact with nature in different care environments by securing easily accessible green environments and structures
- Adding natural health benefits to the wellbeing services county's plan for promoting welfare and health
- Increasing the use of nature environments close to schools and daycare centres in schools and early childhood education and introducing and encouraging children to spend time, play and move around in nature
- Encouraging and strengthening outdoor exercise through, for example, the Moving School and Moving Early Childhood Education programmes and the Get Finland Moving programme

- Promoting exposure to nature in working environments as part of the personnel strategy for promoting well-being at work
- Creating opportunities for RDI investments in the health impacts of natural environments and innovations in the health sector
- Promoting the ability of developers of health and well-being-related applications to utilise new research data on the health benefits of nature and supporting integration with recommendations provided by the applications

## Programme administration

The programme is led by a steering group that meets three times a year. The members of the steering group are from the following organisations:

- Wellbeing services county of Päijät-Häme, City of Lahti and Lahti University Campus
- University of Helsinki (HY)
- Lappeenranta-Lahti University of Technology (LUT)
- LAB University of Applied Sciences (LAB)
- Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL)
- Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)
- Natural Resources Institute Finland (LUKE)
- WWF Finland

The representatives of the first three organisations form the operational programme group.





## ***4. The City of Lahti's action plan for promoting the Nature Step to Health programme***





## ***Working together for planetary health***

In order to implement the Nature Step to Health programme, the three organisations – the Wellbeing services county of Päijät-Häme, the University Campus of Lahti and the City of Lahti – are working together on all the focal points of the programme. Some practices have already been established. For example, the annual Lahti Science Day brings together planetary health researchers and practical actors. In addition, international researchers and actors are invited to the People & Planet conference in Lahti in 2026. The conference is an opportunity to network with international actors on planetary health themes and share information and good practical examples.

The organisations have promoted the goals of the Nature Step to Health programme in several joint projects. Receiving project funding is necessary, because the programme itself does not have operational funding. The partners have implemented joint projects and applied for funding, for example, in the resident pilot for planetary health and the promotion of sustainable mobility, sustainable urban planning and sustainable nutrition.

## ***Experiments for further development***

As regards the City of Lahti, the Nature Step to Health programme will be implemented through the following three areas.

Lahti's progressive, long-term environmental work has become well known both nationally and internationally. However, the city's strategic sustainability goals are ambitious, more activities are needed than currently in order to achieve the goals. In order to strengthen employee participation and make sustainability work more visible, we want to offer more support and inspire development in the city organisation. This work is made possible by the new Interreg Europe project funding to promote planetary health.

One of the tasks of the Nature's Step to Health programme is to promote healthy and sustainable nutrition. The One Health 4 Cities project piloted a freshwater fish patty for children and young people. On Thursday 4 September, Finnish Food Day, the menu of Lahti schools and daycare centres included a new product: a fish patty made from local fish from Vesijärvi. The Vesijärvi fish patty was served to all children and young people in Lahti for the first time. In two schools, students were asked to give feedback on how the new food product tasted.

The children and young people liked the taste, and the feedback was very good. The good feedback means that the fish patty will stay on the school menu.

The second pilot of the One Health 4 Cities project was related to the development of the environmental education programme for basic education. The curriculum for basic education in Lahti includes a new environmental education programme from August 2025. Its aim is for every primary school pupil to get to know the local nature and adopt the values of an environmental city during their school journey. The project included developing the content of the environmental education programme, testing the implementation of outdoor teaching in different subjects and developing teaching materials to support outdoor teaching.

”

*Lahti's progressive, long-term environmental work has become well known both nationally and internationally.*



## 4.1. Progress of strategic goals in the city organisation

The City of Lahti has ambitious sustainability goals that are included in the Lahti strategy and the programmes implementing the strategy. The Nature Step to Health programme and the planetary health perspective are included in several action programmes. For example, with the help of the Lahti Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, the city steers and encourages the transition towards sustainable modes of transport. In the Lahti City Well-being Plan, residents are encouraged and guided to make health-promoting and sustainable food choices, as well as to adopt healthy lifestyles.

Several programmes and roadmaps are used to accelerate the achievement of the Nature-Positive Lahti 2030 goal. The Lahti Green Space Programme focuses in particular on adapting to climate change, mitigating biodiversity loss and on the impacts of green areas on well-being and vitality. Lahti Urban Tree Strategy, on the other hand, presents a range of objectives and measures, from zoning and planning to tree maintenance, in order to increase the perceived value of city trees.

The Nature Step to Health programme brings together the city's environmental goals, combines them with health and economic goals and cooperation between health and environmental actors. Turning the goals into practical measures on a broad scale still requires clearer operating methods within the organisation, more internal

communication and training as well as new innovations. The aim is to promote this together with the personnel. The aim is to develop an operating model that provides tools for discussing planetary health through emotions, knowledge and action. It is also important to highlight the good work already done and make it known within the organisation.

”

*The aim is to develop an operating model that provides tools for discussing planetary health through emotions, knowledge and action.*

**Lahti Sustainable Urban  
Mobility Plan (SUMP)**

**Lahti Green Space Programme**

**Lahti Urban Tree Strategy**

**Lahti City Well-being  
Plan 2022–2025**



**Focus area:**

Increasing communication, advice and guidance on planetary health on different channels and in different ways

**Goal:**

Increasing discussion, understanding and participation within the city organisation on strategic sustainability goals and planetary health.

**Measure:**

Planning the City of Lahti's model for involving employees to promote planetary health and implement strategic goals in service areas. Combining emotions, knowledge and action in the model. Using Timeout dialogue as the means for discussing emotions, in which the city's personnel have received training. In addition, the aim is to organise solution-oriented workshops - how different work units can better promote planetary health in different tasks.

**Progress and schedule of the measure:**

The measures proceed in stages, and the plan is to pilot the model with some group(s) during 2026. The model includes:

- Timeout discussions with personnel
- Training/communication materials and internal trainings
- Workshops that deepen the links between planetary health goals and the employees' own work.

**Responsible party:**

The main responsibility for planning and implementation lies with the Business and Environmental Development Unit.

**Cost:**

The majority of the costs come from the use of the personnel's working time and the potential purchase of expert services.

**Funding:**

The purchase of expert services is funded by the One Health Gov project.

**Measurement:**

The planning of the model is carried out (yes/no), Timeout discussions are held (yes/no; number; number of participants), the number of participants in the workshops (number of persons), feedback from the participants (evaluation scale 1–5).

**Risks:**

Due to the city's poor financial situation and the reduction in the number of personnel, the personnel cannot participate in the training, Timeout discussions or workshops.

**Link to planetary health:**

Content fully linked to planetary health.



## 4.2. A planetary diet promotes the well-being of people and nature

Finland received new national nutrition recommendations at the end of 2024. The main objective of the nutrition recommendations is to improve the health of Finns. According to the nutrition recommendations, people should add more vegetables, berries and fruit should to their diet. Red meat and meat products should not be consumed more than 350 grammes per week. Finnish men, in particular, eat more red meat and processed meat products than would be beneficial for their health.

According to studies, nutritional challenges linked to environmental impacts in children are the too low consumption of vegetables, especially legumes, and too high consumption of animal-derived foods, compared to the recommendations, and lifestyle choices that lead to obesity. The EAT-Lancet research group prepared a recommendation of a so-called planetary diet in 2019. Compared to the planetary diet, Finnish children aged 3–6 years consumed up to five times too much red meat and dairy products.

The food theme is strongly linked not only to Lahti but also to the development of Päijät-Häme as a whole. Food Campus Finland is a food ecosystem and food system focused on sustainable plant-based products, and its strengths are the circular bioeconomy and innovations.

This cooperation platform was established by the Päijät-Häme Grain Cluster – an association of leading companies and farmers – together with the educational institutions in the area, the City of Lahti, and Lahti Region Development LADEC Ltd. Päijät-Häme, one of Finland's largest food industry hubs, creates a favourable operating environment for developing sustainable food production.

The goal of Food Campus Finland is to significantly increase the refined value of the Finnish food industry and RDI activities, thereby generating new international growth in the industry. The platform focuses particularly on food production using plant-based raw materials and new solutions for the future of food and beverage production. This development work promotes the achievement of the goals of the Nature Step to Health programme throughout the region.





## The municipality's role in promoting healthy and sustainable diets

Municipalities can influence people's eating habits through the public food services. Through the meals offered in early childhood education and schools, children and young people get used to new tastes and healthy options. Early childhood education and basic education play a major role in children's and young people's eating habits, which can also be influenced by education and training. The goal of Päijät-Häme Food Services is to increase the proportion of plant-based foods in the diet of children and young people. This is also socially sustainable, as not all families have the financial or other resources to change their diet.

Since the beginning, one of the four measures in the Nature Step to Health programme has been promoting healthier and more sustainable nutrition. Increasing plant-based food in day-care centres and schools has also been one of the key measures in Lahti's strategy. Various pilots have been carried out in schools to push this goal. Children and young people have been encouraged to discuss food, give feedback on it and develop recipes as part of home economics teaching. Students participate in food panels that regularly try out new dishes and give feedback on them.

Eating habits do not change quickly, so continuous development is needed. To achieve change, it is not enough to just develop new dishes. It requires more involvement of children and young people, education and training, a new kind of food talk, peaceful meal-times and enough time to eat. This development work will also be continued within the Nature Step to Health programme. One of the measures is included in the Lahti Environmental Education Programme for 1st grade students and the further development of this curriculum. The aim is to continue various food education pilots in cooperation with schools and early childhood education in the future. Successful pilot projects can become effective practices. One example of a successful pilot project is the development of a fish patty made from fish caught in Vesijärvi as a tasty meal for children and young people.





**Task-specific focus:**

Making nutrition healthier and more sustainable.

**Measurements:**

- Influencing sustainable public catering procurement.
- Continuing to develop school meals and involving children and young people in them.

**Responsible party:**

Päijät-Häme Food Services is responsible for developing school meals. The Business and Environmental Development Unit is responsible for the co-development and coordination.

**Cost:**

The work is part of the basic operations, so there are no special costs.

**Progress and schedule of the measure:**

The City of Lahti and Päijät-Häme Food Services continue to discuss and plan the development of school meals together. The aim is to apply for project funding for the development. If project funding is received, it provides the framework for the planned development work.

The basic work continues with agreeing on the tasting panels and their practical arrangements. During the academic year, the aim is to organise three tasting panels for students throughout the city. In the tasting panels, the students get to assess foods cooked with new recipes.

The teachers responsible for environmental education, who started in schools in autumn 2025, will discuss and reflect on the opportunities for promoting food education in schools in a joint meeting. The teachers' development ideas are grouped together and, if necessary, measures are planned based on them.

**Funding:**

Basic funding and possible project funding.

**Measurement:**

Amount of new project funding (€), number of new innovations (pcs), results of the school health survey.

**Risks:**

The city's difficult financial situation and the reduction in the number of personnel may weaken the personnel's opportunities to participate in development and apply for project funding.

**Links to planetary health:**

Nutrition is one of the focus areas of the Nature Step to Health programme.



### 4.3. Education and training play a significant role in achieving sustainability goals

The City of Lahti's new strategy was approved in October 2025. The city's vision for 2035 is: Lahti - Made sustainable. The new strategic goal is to achieve thriving businesses and meaningful life in a modern university and environmental city. Environmental goals are strongly at the forefront of the strategy. In addition to the city, all other actors - universities, educational institutions, companies and other communities as well as residents - must be involved in achieving the goals of the strategy. There are many operators. The city can influence the knowledge, skills and attitudes of residents, in particular, through education services.

Lahti decided in spring 2024 to start developing an environmental education programme for basic education under the Lahti, leading environmental city theme as part of the local implementation of the basic education curriculum. The environmental education programme is part of the "Lahti as a learning environment" section in primary education, which offers all primary school pupils equal opportunities to get to know their own home city. The section offers environmental education content for almost all school grades. The section is based on the perspective of planetary health. The aim was to include a lot of teaching taking place outdoors in a forest, in wetlands on the shore of a lake.

Being in nature promotes health and supports the development of a good relationship with nature. In addition, the programme included a package related to sustainable nutrition for one school grade.

Positive nature experiences in childhood help to increase the number of people who care about environmental values and promote them actively. Through the environmental education programme, the strategy and planetary health will also be implemented extensively in basic education.

#### Experiences of the pilot year steering new development

The environmental education programme will be implemented for the first time in autumn 2025. In order to implement and establish the goals of planetary health, the development of the environmental education programme will continue. The experiences gained during the first year provide feedback and development ideas that can be further utilised in the development of teaching modules. During the year, we also monitor how well the teaching modules have been implemented in all schools.



Each grade should be able to complete the entire content designed for it, as the programme is part of the local curriculum.

Future development targets are still related to sustainable nutrition, deepening the relationship with nature, climate expertise and sustainable consumption. In addition to curriculum work, school recycling systems are being developed with two pilot schools. Based on the experience and lessons learned from these, a model will be created to improve the efficiency of waste management and recycling in all schools in Lahti and to integrate the theme into the school's daily, sustainable operations.



**Focus area:**

Integrating the Nature Step to Health programme and planetary health into strategies, programmes and plans.

**Measures:**

Continuing to implement and establish the environmental education programme as part of the local curriculum for basic education.

**Responsible party:**

Education Services is responsible for basic education. In the development, the Business and Environmental Development unit cooperates with Education Services and various parties implementing the programmes.

**Cost:**

The work is mainly carried out as part of the city's basic operations. Some of the programmes are implemented by the city's service units and external organisations at their own expense and with a special financial contribution.

**Progress and schedule of the measure:**

Implementing the environmental education programme from autumn 2025. Feedback on the implementation of the programmes and their success is collected during the academic year. The feedback and experiences of the implementing parties participating in the programmes are also collected after the implementation. The programmes will be developed before the next academic year based on experience and feedback.

**Funding:**

The city's basic funding and separate funding for some programmes. Ensuring the continuation of funding with all implementing actors. Appropriate project funding is also sought for the implementation and development of the programme.

**Measurement:**

Implementation of the programmes (% of grades participated), feedback summaries (done/not done), amount of new project funding (€)

**Risks:**

The city's difficult financial situation and the reduction in the number of personnel may weaken the personnel's opportunities to participate in development and apply for project funding. The implementing organisations do not commit to implementing the programme in the coming years.

**Links to planetary health:**

The programmes include sustainable lifestyles, such as sustainable diet and exercise, as well as contact with nature. In addition, people will have the opportunity to deepen their relationship with nature.



# ***5. Assessment of the long-term implementation and governance model of the Nature Step to Health programme***





## *The programme will continue until 2032*

The duration of the Nature Step to Health programme is ten years, because difficult problems cannot be solved easily and quickly. The programme is still active for several years, and the operational part of the programme was updated in 2025.

Regarding the management of the implementation of the Nature Step to Health programme, it has been agreed that the wellbeing services county of Päijät-Häme owns the programme, and the City of Lahti and the University Campus of Lahti participate in implementing it. The programme has an officially appointed steering group, which includes representatives of these three organisations as well as representatives of several stakeholders. There are representatives from several national organisations in the steering group, which strengthens cooperation at the national level. A smaller programme group is responsible for the practical promotion of the Nature Step to Health programme. In addition to representatives of three organisations, it includes visiting specialists. The programme group meets regularly on a weekly basis. In addition to regular weekly meetings, the programme work is deepened in workshops, which involve planning long-term cooperation, task prioritisation and securing funding, for example. The City of Lahti's strategy includes goals for planetary health, so there will be a strong foundation for this work within the city. A new four-year term of the City Council began in 2025 with a council

agreement between the political parties, committing the council to several planetary health goals. The city's strategic programmes and related roadmaps have interfaces with the Nature Step to Health programme, so there are future guidelines for measures supporting the programme's objectives. From the perspective of planetary health, the well-being plan that is currently under preparation is also important. It is a statutory document prepared by the municipality for each parliamentary term. The well-being plan serves as a tool for planning, monitoring, assessing and reporting on the promotion of well-being and health in the city. The plan defines common goals, measures and indicators to ensure that Lahti is doing well now and in the future. Different programmes, plans and implementations must ensure that all residents, regardless of gender, age, background or income level, can benefit from planetary health measures.

Through the URBACT-funded One Health 4 Cities project, Lahti has built an international network for promoting planetary health. Niko Kyynäräinen, Lahti Mayor, also invited other cities to actively work to promote planetary health at the ICLEI International Conference in Aalborg, Denmark, in October 2024. The City of Lahti continues international cooperation to promote planetary health in the One Health Gov project funded by the EU's Interreg Europe programme.





## ***A national nature health programme to be launched in 2026***

Finland is preparing a national nature health programme, which is scheduled to start in early 2026. The programme will be coordinated by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL).

The aim of the programme is to increase Finns' exposure to nature and thereby reduce the burden caused by public diseases, and to increase well-being. In practice, this means that Finns would be more exposed to the positive health effects of nature in their everyday lives, such as in the yards of daycare centres and schools, workplaces and care environments. The national nature health programme work will strongly support the Nature Step to Health programme work carried out in Lahti and the Wellbeing services county of Päijät-Häme. Possibly, the national programme will also open up funding opportunities for nature health work in municipalities and regions in the future.

## ***The impact of the Nature Step to Health programme***

Many issues related to public health and the environment are linked to our values and lifestyles, which are particularly difficult to influence. Public organisations have little direct influence on promoting planetary health. An example of direct influence is public food services, which allows the municipality to promote healthy and environmentally sustainable eating habits. Education and training are particularly important in the learning and adoption of attitudes, knowledge and skills, and the municipality plays a significant role in this. Both of these have made a good start in Lahti, so progress can be expected in the near future.

The municipality cannot solve complex problems alone, but it needs partners in the work. The Nature Step to Health programme is the result of cooperation between three organisations. This offers the opportunity for a wide range of cooperation with different customer groups. This deepening of cooperation should be intensified in the coming years.

The challenge of implementing the Nature Step to Health programme is that there is no basic funding for the measures. Funding has been obtained through various project applications, in which case the practical implementation is largely based on the project funding received.

It is necessary to assess the impact of the Nature Step to Health programme in the near future. There are many factors affecting people's health, so it can be difficult to prove the effectiveness of one program. In Finland, a lot of data is collected on people's health, mobility, nutrition, the state of the environment, and so on, so analysing this data makes it possible to draw conclusions about the situation in Päijät-Häme and Lahti and the progress of planetary health. The national nature health programme will contribute to the production of impact assessments for the whole of Finland, which means that we will also receive comparable data from our own region.



# Appendices

## ***Appendix 1. Planetary health and one health***

The Nature Step to Health programme is based on the concept of planetary health, which emphasises the interdependence of human health and well-being and the balance of natural systems. One health is a similar and commonly used concept that emphasises the links between human, animal and ecosystem health.

Both concepts emphasise a systemic, interdisciplinary and solution-oriented approach and cooperation between different actors in society. Due to historical reasons, the concepts emphasise somewhat different problems. For example, when it comes to human health, the one health approach focuses on infectious diseases (e.g. zoonoses, antibiotic resistance), while planetary health focuses more on the prevention of non-infectious diseases (e.g. allergies, asthma). The concepts are somewhat overlapping and complement each other.



## Appendix 2: Progress of the Nature Step to Health programme 2022–2024

Several projects have been launched on the themes of the Nature Step to Health programme in the Lahti region. The programme’s tasks have given a lot of attention to nature contacts and the well-being impacts of nature. In particular, several research projects and projects aimed at the application of research have emerged and are ongoing, such as NATUREWELL, GoGreenRoutes, GoGreenNext, One Health Gov, BIWE, Business in nearby nature and Nature Prescription projects. Concrete measures include the preparation of the Lahti Health Forest route and instructions and the planned activities, such as training for health forest guides. Many of these projects are also closely linked to the health and sustainability of living environments. Concrete measures in residential environments are related to the expansion of nature reserves, the Lahti City Centre Vision 2040 programme and programmes and plans related to air quality and environmental health.

In terms of increasing physical activity and sustainable mobility, projects are underway in cooperation with several organisations, such as promoting commuting (Sycla), drawing up regional walking programmes (Step Up), Active ID, which promotes the innovative growth and competitiveness of sports and leisure companies, I3-INSHAPE, which develops new products and services for companies, including solutions for mobility and rehabilitation, and Renewing cities, which support regional sustainable urban mobility (SUMP) and Moving Päijät-Häme programmes.

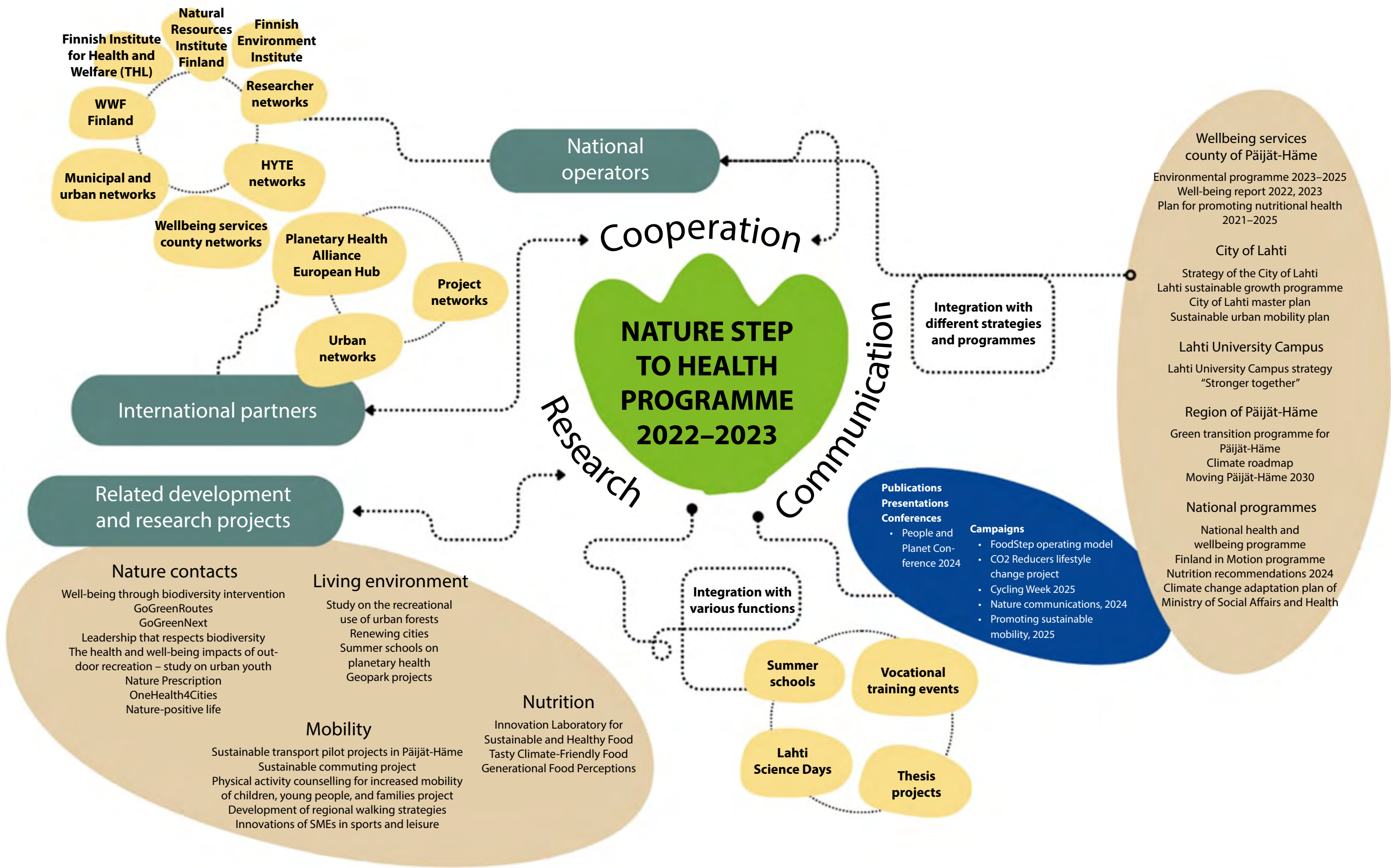


Figure 1: Actors and projects of the Nature Step to Health programme



Healthy and sustainable nutrition has also been promoted through research projects such as Food-Step and BIODIFUL, which researches the biodiversity impacts of food. Sustainable nutrition has also been taken into account in programmes and plans.

Planetary and one health approaches are increasingly included in programmes and goals both globally and in Finland. Health perspectives are included in the UN's climate and biodiversity conferences, and many of the EU's programmes include thinking that takes into account the links between the environment and health. In Finland, many parties supporting environmental well-being (Sitra, Finnish Nature Conservation Association) or public health (e.g. Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Skin, Allergy and Asthma Associations, Brain Association, well-being coordinators of wellbeing services counties and municipalities) have put planetary health on their agendas. All three program organisations have included planetary health in their strategies.

The People and Planet Conference on Planetary Health was held in Lahti on 13–15 February 2024. There were 200 participants, 40% of whom were international. The conference brought together environmental and health researchers and other actors. The themes of the Nature Step to Health programme have also been strongly featured at Lahti Science Day, an annual science event that is open to all.

The organisations implementing the programme have communicated about the programme in their own channels. The Wellbeing services county of Päijät-Häme maintains the website of the Nature Step to Health programme, which contains basic information about the programme as well as projects, blog posts and articles related to the themes of the programme. In addition, the Nature Step to Health programme has been visible in the wellbeing services county's personnel and stakeholder communications, social media and presentations to external Finnish and international actors. The City of Lahti has included the themes of the programme in its work on citizen participation and linked the programme to other city documents. The Nature Step to Health programme is featured in the communications of Lahti University Campus in a monthly researcher letter on research funding and events as well as in social media highlights.

The organisations implementing the programme are involved in several networks and stakeholders in which the themes of the programme have been highlighted.

Wellbeing services county of Päijät-Häme: municipal welfare coordinators, the wellbeing services counties' sustainable development network, responsibility network, environmental network, climate working group, environmental partners, eco-support network and Planetary Health Alliance Europe.

Lahti University Campus: dean discussions HY and LUT, HELSUS, HOH, Helsinki Planetary Health, Planetary Health Alliance Europe, LuontoTerVe researcher network.

City of Lahti: The Nature Step to Health programme as a model in the One Health 4 Cities project, the Nature-positive Life project network, food-themed networks, ICLEI Europe (municipal field network), 100 climate-neutral and smart cities.

Training has been organised for many professional groups in Lahti, such as the Urban Greening study module (100 participants), the Joy of Food early childhood education course (HY+), the Planetary Health Summer School (70–80 participants, 80% international), Junnu University's "At the Mercy of the Storm" upper secondary school course, Wellamo University courses/excursions/lectures on the themes of the programme (over 10), Sustainable and environmentally friendly service training package for the wellbeing services county's personnel and Planetary Health supplementary training day. HY+ has offered an early childhood education course on nutrition with the theme of planetary health. The City of Lahti has also developed food teaching in schools. The Faculty of Medicine at the University of Helsinki has offered the five-credit course 'Introduction to planetary health'.



## Appendix 3: Indicators

The wellbeing services county produces an annual report on the promotion of well-being and health and a report every four years based on the data of the municipalities of Päijät-Häme.

### Public health indicators

- Children: exercise, nutrition, nature (School Health Survey)
- Adults: Asthma, diabetes (types I and II), obesity and depression (Sotkanet)
- Adults: Sickness absences (KELA)
- Adult lifestyles (Healthy Finland)

### Nature contact/biodiversity indicators

- Area of nature reserves, number of green areas, connections between green areas, invasive species (City of Lahti)
- Percentage of people with significant psychological stress per wellbeing services county in a year (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare)

### Mobility indicators

- Adults: Distribution of modes of transport
- Upper secondary school children (Move study)
- CO2 emissions/traffic
- Sports facility construction: Skiing trail (km), bicycle paths (km) (city of Lahti)
- Bike usage, % of children; City bike usage, % km; Pedestrian counters/bicycle counters
- According to fitness, commuting, physical strain at work and health exercise recommendations; Sports and leisure activities (FinTerveys)
- Achieving health exercise recommendations in different age groups and by gender (FinTerveys)

### Nutrition indicators

- Vegetables, berries and fruit are eaten as recommended (FinRuoka)
- Use of red and processed meat (FinRuoka)
- Beverage consumption (FinRuoka)
- Proportions of overweight (including obese) boys and girls by age group (FinRuoka)

### Indicators for climate change mitigation and adaptation

- Production-based carbon dioxide emissions in Päijät-Häme will be reduced by 80% (Finnish Environment Institute)
- Reduction of consumption-based carbon dioxide emissions in households (Finnish Environment Institute)
- Carbon neutrality will be achieved in Lahti in the coming years (Lahti)

### Cooperation between health and environmental actors in areas such as education, research and communications

- Training packages on planetary health will begin in cooperation with, for example, LUT University, the University of Helsinki and LAB University of Applied Sciences (Lahti University Campus)
- Interdisciplinary cooperation structures and mechanisms work, and a research network is created around the theme of the programme (Lahti University Campus)



# Lahti

URBACT



Co-funded by  
the European Union  
Interreg