



# **Final report and compendium for technical assistance in Finland**

**Just Transition Platform Groundwork**

May 2026

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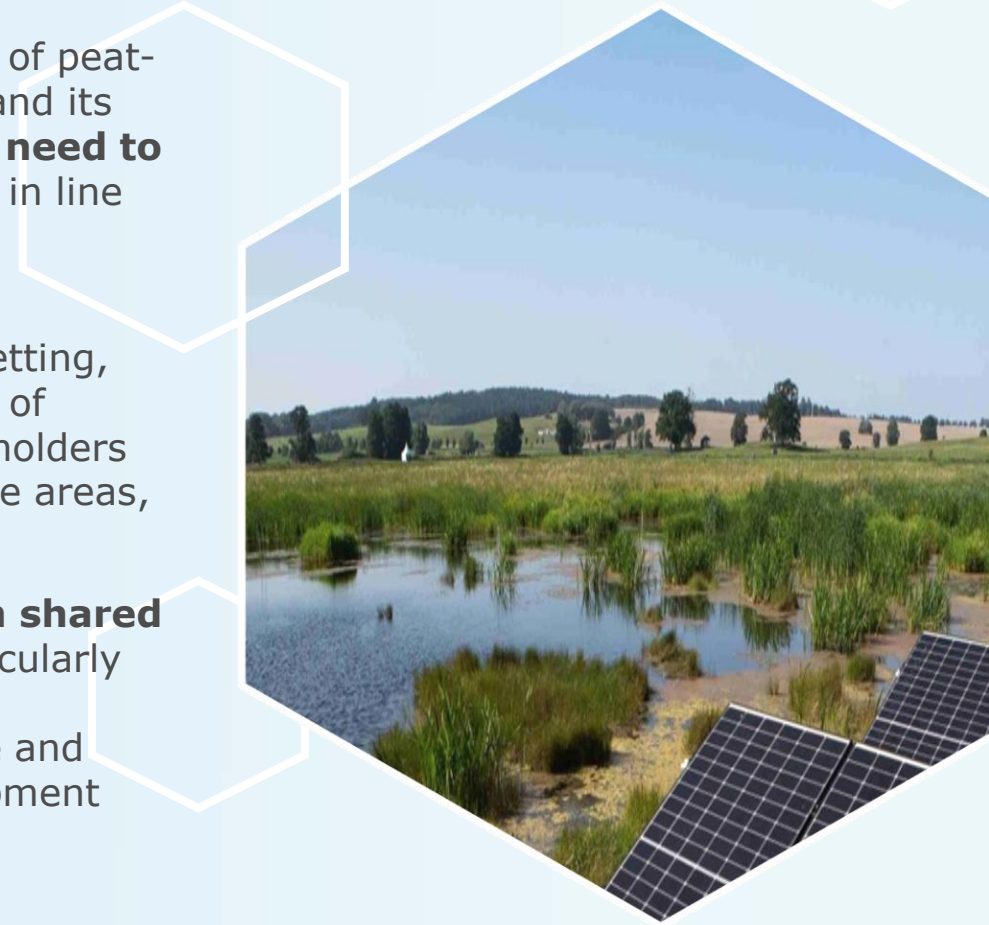
# Introduction

# Background

As part of Finland's transition towards **climate neutrality by 2035**, the use of peat-based energy is gradually phased out, reflecting the environmental impacts and its decreasing role in the national energy system. This shift is driving a growing **need to identify sustainable future uses** for extensive areas of cutover peatlands, in line with the EU's LULUCF and Nature Restoration Regulation as well as national biodiversity objectives.

Future use includes a range of land-use pathways such as afforestation, rewetting, repurposing, paludiculture, cultivation of energy crops, and the development of renewable energy infrastructure. In this context, landowners and local stakeholders are increasingly required to make complex decisions about the future of these areas, **balancing environmental, economic, and social considerations**.

However, a key obstacle is that regions continue to **face significant gaps in shared knowledge, practical capacity, and strategic coordination**. This is particularly evident in relation to restoration and repurposing approaches, stakeholder engagement, financing mechanisms, and the development of viable land-use and business models. Addressing these gaps requires strengthened skills development and more effective knowledge exchange across regions.



# Scope of the Technical assistance

**How can the transition of peatlands be designed to simultaneously advance environmental restoration, social inclusion, and economically sustainable regional development?**

- 14 Finnish TJTP regions took part in the JTP Groundwork Technical Assistance (2025–2026).
- The technical assistance was implemented by the European Commission's Joint Transition Platform in cooperation with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland and regional stakeholders.
- The focus was on strengthening skills development, peer learning, and cross-regional coordination, while supporting more effective and practical implementation of the peatland transition across Finland.

## **The Technical assistance combined four building blocks**

### **A: Need assessment**

Desk research, stakeholder mapping, survey and gap analysis

### **B: Three online thematic workshops on**

- 1) Repurposing
- 2) Renewable energy
- 3) Financing models

### **C: Regional Networking and Exchange Event** in Jyväskylä

**D: Technical Regional Forum** in Helsinki with Baltic Sea Region partners

# Purpose of the compendium

## - Building pathways for change

This compendium **distils key take-aways and good practices** from the Technical Assistance carried out for Finland's 14 Just Transition Fund (JTF) regions.

It encompasses peatland repurposing, financing models, renewable energy deployment and skills development, with the overarching aim of supporting a **just and fair transition** away from peat.

The compendium is structured around the main technical activities:

- A: Need assessment and stakeholder analysis
- B: Three online thematic workshops
- C: Regional Networking and Exchange Event
- D: Technical Regional Forum.

Each section summarises the **main messages, lessons learned, and good practices**

Overall, the document serves both as **a record of the Technical Assistance process** and as **a practical tool to support the shift from learning to implementation**. It is intended for regional authorities, municipalities, landowners, businesses, NGOs, research and education institutions, and national policymakers involved in developing, funding, and delivering projects under the Territorial Just Transition Plans and related programmes.



# **A: Need assessment**

Desk research, stakeholder mapping, survey and gap analysis

# A: Identification of needs and stakeholders

**An initial stakeholder survey captured 80 responses** across organisation types, including regional authorities, municipalities, companies, RDI actors and education providers, ensuring a broad view of peatland transition needs.

The survey was used to design the following knowledge sharing activities.

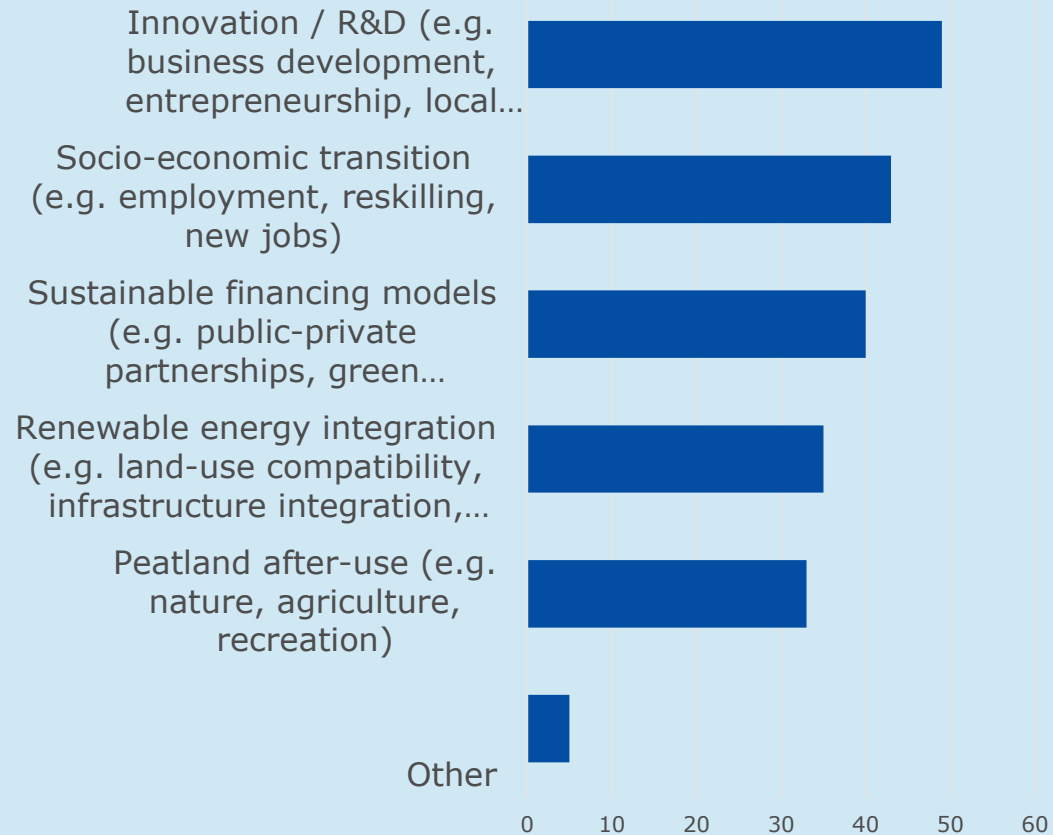
Questions covered both **technical and socio-economic aspects** of the transition from restoration practices, land-use planning and renewable energy options to workforce impacts, financing challenges and cooperation needs.

The survey provided a solid basis for shaping the subsequent TA activities.

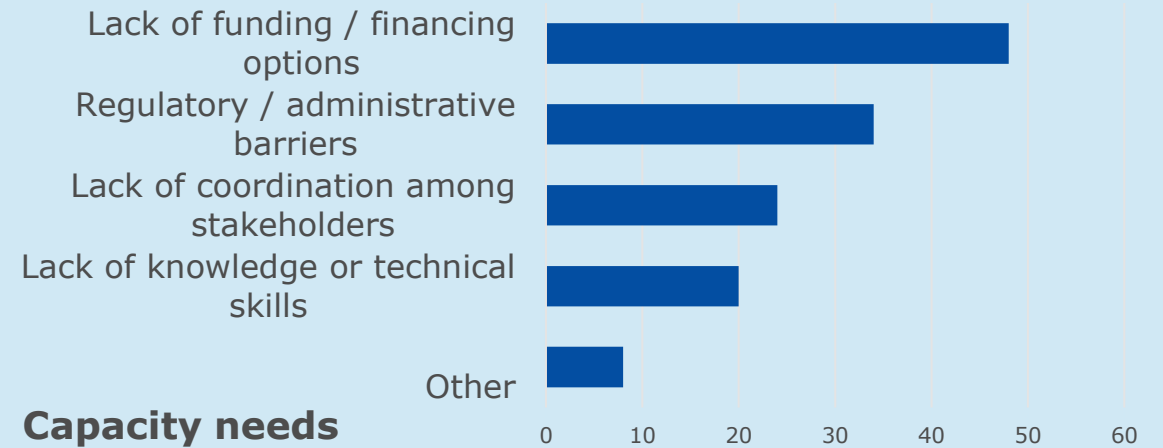


# A: Identification of needs and stakeholders

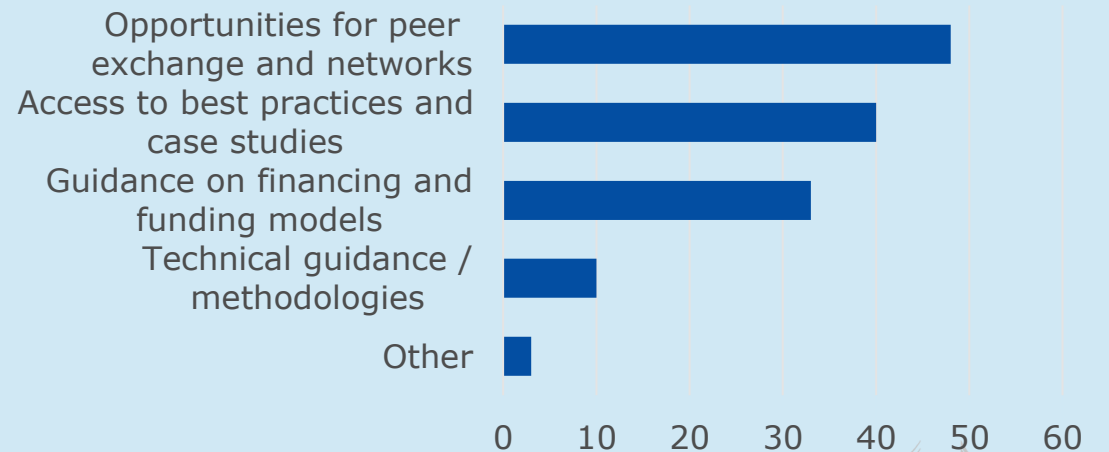
## Priority topics



## Main barriers



## Capacity needs





# **B: Online workshops**

Repurposing peatlands, renewable energy and financing models

# B: Online workshops

Building on the needs assessment: stakeholder mapping and survey results – which highlighted a strong interest in practical solutions for peatland repurposing, renewable energy and financing, **three targeted online workshops** were organised to respond to these needs and priorities:

- **repurposing peatlands**, focusing on ecological restoration, paludiculture and multi-use solutions, and on how different after-use options (rewetting, nature conservation, paludiculture and recreation) can be combined at landscape level in dialogue with landowners and local communities.
- **renewable energy integration**, exploring solar and wind deployment on former peat production areas, grid and permitting issues, and how such projects can generate local benefits through jobs, skills development and new revenue streams for municipalities and landowners.
- **peatland financing models**, addressing blended finance approaches, the design of public support instruments and emerging nature and climate value markets, with a focus on making restoration and repurposing projects investment-ready and accessible for smaller actors.



# Repurposing peatlands

## Ecological and community perspectives

### Programme



#### **Welcome & introduction**

Suvi Holm, Ecofellows Ltd.



#### **Welcome from the Ministry**

Kaisu Koivula, Senior expert, Ministry of Economy Affairs and Employment



**Keynote: The potential of peatlands in nature conservation** - Juha Siekkinen,  
Environmental Planner and Biologist, Kosteikkomaailma



#### **How to optimize the nature, climate, and water benefits of peatland restoration simultaneously**

Ari Pekka Auvinen, Conservation Officer, Finnish Natural Heritage Foundation



#### **Session 2: Carbon neutrality and new raw materials from rewetted peatlands**

Kristiina Lång, Principal Scientist & Research Manager, Natural Resources Institute  
Finland



#### **Session 3: Project experiences from the operating environment of the competence cluster for the sustainable use of peatlands, with a focus on peat fields.**

Marjastiina Teixeira, Project Manager, Seinäjoki, University of Applied Sciences and Anne  
Matilainen, Research Coordinator, Ruralia Institute, Helsinki University



#### **3 breakouts - Practical solutions and collaboration needs**



# Repurposing peatlands

## Ecological and community perspectives

### Key messages

- Peatland repurposing should **address multi-functional value**: climate mitigation, biodiversity, water regulation and local development, **rather than single-objective land use**.
- A good approach is to combine rewetting and restoration with careful planning – setting **concrete targets for biodiversity, water quality, and emissions**, and continuously adjusting efforts based on long-term monitoring data.
- **Paludiculture** and other wet-compatible agricultural uses offer climate-smart options but require **clarity on rules, subsidies and markets from the landowner/entrepreneur perspective**.
- Cultural and generational dimensions of land use are critical: approaches work better when they **respect landowner identity** and history and avoid prescriptive messaging.

### Good practices



Address fragmented land ownership through collaborative models (e.g. joint structures where costs and benefits are shared) and explore ecological compensation to make large restored wetlands economically viable.



Develop participatory land-use planning processes where landowners, municipalities and conservation actors co-design after-use visions for peat areas, ensuring that restoration, paludiculture and other options are agreed early and embedded in local plans.

# Renewable energy integration

## Clean power into peatland transitions

### Programme



#### **Welcome & introduction**

Suvi Holm, Ecofellows Ltd.



#### **Welcome from the Ministry**

Kaisu Koivula, Senior expert, Ministry of Economy Affairs and Employment



#### **Keynote: Solar and wind power generation on peatlands – considering local and lifecycle environmental impacts**

Laura Sokka, Principal researcher, the Finnish Environment Institute



#### **Session 1: Renewable energy production opportunities in old peat production areas**

Lauri Alanen, Division Director, Solar and Wind Power Development, NEOVA Ltd.



#### **Session 2: Permits and policies: renewable energy projects on former peatlands**

Jarkko Panu, Building Inspector, City of Lapua



#### **Session 3: Heinineva Solar Power Project in Lapua**

Ari Soininen, CEO of EPV Aurinkovoima



#### **3 breakouts - Practical solutions and collaboration needs**



# Renewable energy integration

## Clean power into peatland transitions

### Key messages

- Former peat production areas offer strong potential for large-scale solar and, in some locations, wind energy, but projects should be planned with full **consideration of local biodiversity, hydrology and landscape values**.
- **Municipalities and regional authorities play a key enabling role** through spatial planning, permitting and grid planning, but often lack specific know-how on renewable energy deployment on peatlands.
- Concrete cases (e.g. large solar parks on former peat sites) show that **early dialogue with local communities and clear benefit-sharing arrangements** are essential for social acceptance.
- Renewable **energy projects can act as anchors for broader transition pathways** when they are linked to skills development, local business opportunities and complementary land uses (e.g. nature recreation).

### Good practices



Align land-use planning, grid development and investment promotion so that suitable peatland sites are clearly identified and “ready” for renewable energy developers, while combining renewable energy with other compatible uses on former peatlands (e.g. biodiversity enhancement, low-intensity grazing, recreation) to maximise overall value.



Use participatory planning and transparent communication to address concerns on landscape change, biodiversity, use and to co-design benefit-sharing models building public support.

# Sustainable financing models

## Enabling investment and nature value markets

### Programme



#### **Welcome & introduction**

Suvi Holm, Ecofellows Ltd.



#### **Welcome from the Ministry**

Kaisu Koivula, Senior expert, Ministry of Economy Affairs and Employment



#### **Keynote : Cost-effective after-use of peatland surfaces from the perspective of land ownership and local communities**

Kari Laasasenaho, Senior RDI Researcher, Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences (SEAMK)



#### **Session 1: Private financing opportunities for peatland restoration**

Matti Maajärvi, Development Manager, TAPIO Oy



#### **Session 2: Financing of peat field restoration**

Johanna Helkimo, Chief Climate Specialist, National Climate Unit, ELY Centres



#### **Session 3: From peat production areas to multifunctional wetlands**

Antti Saarenmaa, Secretary, Finnish Game Foundation



#### **Session 4: The work of operational foundations to rewet former peat production areas.**

Anna Saarentaus, Head of Programme, John Nurminen Foundation



#### **3 breakouts - Practical solutions and collaboration needs**



# Sustainable financing models

## Enabling investment and nature value markets

### Key messages

- Strengthening **project preparation** and **simplifying access to existing schemes** can improve the uptake of available funding, especially among smaller actors and landowners.
- **Verification of climate and nature outcomes**, including robust **monitoring and certification**, is a prerequisite for **attracting private capital** and building credible nature value markets.
- Public support instruments are **key enablers**, but administrative demands and co-financing require additional guidance to help farmers, SMEs and municipalities.
- Emerging **nature and carbon credit schemes** offer potential **new income streams**, but actors need clearer rules, intermediaries they can trust, and simple, outcome-oriented contracts.

### Good practices



Design funding schemes that focus on clearly defined outcomes (e.g. emissions reductions, water quality, biodiversity gains) and reduce administrative burdens for applicants.



Develop blended finance approaches that combine public grants, loans, guarantees and private investment, allowing larger landscape-level projects on peatlands to move forward.



Support to intermediary organisations that can aggregate projects, provide technical assistance, handle monitoring and verification, and connect landowners with buyers in nature value and carbon markets.



# **C: Regional networking event**

15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> of January 2026 in Jyväskylä

# Regional Networking Event

## From knowledge to collaboration

### Purpose and added value

The Regional Networking and Exchange Event functioned as a practical tool to help Finnish JTF regions move from ideas to implementation on sustainable peatland transitions.

It connected insights from the three thematic workshops with real projects, concrete actors and next steps at regional level in Finland.

### Outputs for participants and other beneficiaries

- A shared understanding of transition pathways for repurposing peatlands: restoration and rewilding, bio- and circular economy, financing mechanisms, renewable energy reuse, skills and social transition.
- A dynamic contact network of key organisations (regions, municipalities, research institutes, companies, NGOs, competence centres) that can be activated for developing and implementing joint projects.



# Making transition concrete

## Projects, pilots and cases

### Key messages when designing peatland transition projects that link restoration, bioeconomy and skills

#### Bioeconomy Campus in Saarijärvi – a replicable hub model

- Demonstrates wet-compatible crops and machinery on peat soils, showing in practice how production can continue under wetter conditions.
- Integrates research, vocational training and business development in one place, linking innovation directly to skills and new business creation.

#### How to support project implementation

- Regions can **select and adapt elements** of these project models: establishing local clusters or campuses, combining RDI with training, and testing crops, services or business concepts on former peatlands.
- The cases illustrate how to **bundle climate, biodiversity and economic benefits in single projects**, which is directly relevant when designing JTF calls, project pipelines and selection criteria.

#### Good practices/tools



Use existing campuses, competence clusters and pilot sites as “**one-stop hubs**” for piloting, training, stakeholder dialogue and communication about the transition.



Turn each pilot into a short **case sheet** (objectives, partners, financing, outcomes, lessons learned) that can be shared within and across regions and used as a template for new project ideas.



# Making transition concrete

## Projects, pilots and cases

### Project cases as blueprints for other regions

- **ArvoHiili** – shows how restored or rewilded post-peat areas can generate revenue through nature and climate value markets when monitoring and verification are in place.
- **AurinkoSuo** – tests solar power on peatlands combined with carbon sequestration and biodiversity gains, illustrating multi-benefit renewable energy solutions.
- **SuoLiike** – develops paludiculture, new crops and value chains, highlighting the business potential of wet-compatible agriculture.
- **Turvetta ja innovaatioita** – uses creative reuse, tourism and culture to build new identities and income streams on former peat production areas.



# From discussion to actionable tools

## Governance, financing and cooperation

### Key messages on how to organise, fund and cooperate around peatland transition measures

- **On governance:**
  - Clarify early who leads, who implements and who benefits (region, municipality, landowners, companies, NGOs).
  - Involve **landowners and local communities from the start** to co-design after-use options and avoid later conflicts.
- **On financing:**
  - **Pool funding from multiple sources** (e.g. EU funds, national budgets, private investors, and carbon or nature markets) and build in monitoring and outcome verification from day one. Without documented results, it becomes difficult to justify continued funding or unlock performance-based payments.
  - Seek support from intermediary organisations or competence clusters that can help with project preparation and funding applications.
- **On cooperation:**
  - Build projects around **partnerships** between research, education and businesses so that innovation, skills and market uptake are connected.
  - Look for cross-regional collaboration opportunities, for example by linking to pilots and adapting their concepts to your own region.



# From discussion to actionable tools

## Governance, financing and cooperation

### Good practices and tools

- When preparing new projects, **build on existing experience:**
  - Scan similar initiatives regionally, nationally or cross-border.
  - Extract partners, methods and financing ideas that can be replicated or adapted.

When designing new actions, **check systematically three core dimensions:**

- **Ecological integrity of peatlands:** does the action clearly improve or safeguard peatland hydrology, biodiversity and climate impact?
- **Viable business and employment opportunities:** is there a realistic pathway to income, cost savings or long-term funding beyond the initial grant?
- **Social fairness and participation in the transition:** are affected workers, landowners and communities involved early, and do they see tangible benefits?





# **D: Technical Regional Forum**

18<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> of March 2026 in Helsinki

# Technical Regional Forum

## Skill development, governance and financing

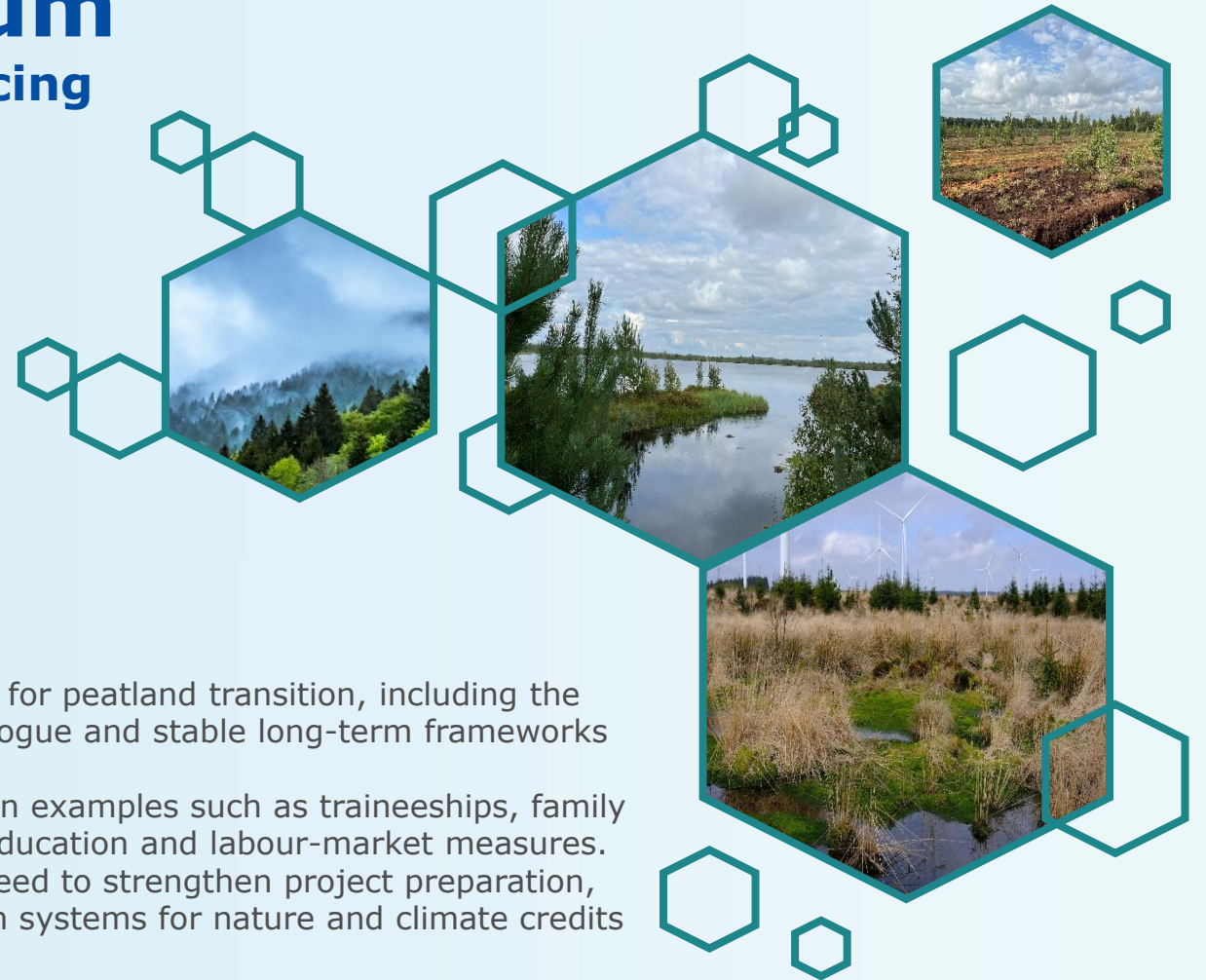
### Purpose and added value

The Technical Regional Forum connected Finland's experience with wider European and Baltic Sea Region debates on just transition, skills and peatland repurposing.

It brought together Finnish stakeholders, EU institutions and international experts to reflect on what works in practice, discuss governance and financing solutions, and position Finnish peatland transition within broader just transition and bioeconomy trends.

### Outcomes for stakeholders

- A shared understanding of **governance and coordination** needs for peatland transition, including the importance of cross-ministerial cooperation, regional–national dialogue and stable long-term frameworks for investors and communities.
- Concrete insights on **skills and workforce transition**, drawing on examples such as traineeships, family farm programmes and mobile training, which can inform Finnish education and labour-market measures.
- Clear messages on **financing and nature value markets**: the need to strengthen project preparation, simplify access to existing schemes and develop robust verification systems for nature and climate credits to attract private capital.
- An expanded **network of international contacts** and reference points (e.g. from Ireland, Denmark and other Baltic Sea Region countries) that Finnish regions and ministries can draw on when designing policies, programmes and new projects.



# People-centered governance and skills for just transition

## Key messages

- Governance needs to be **collaborative and long-term**, where as an example the Danish “Green Tripartite” showed that structured, time-bound negotiations among ministries and key organisations unlocking land-use change and provide stability for over 1,000 local conversion projects.
- Local transition fora **give the transition a face**. Municipal land-conversion fora in Denmark and local partnership structures in Ireland demonstrated that municipalities, farmers, landowners and citizens can co-design projects using a standing platform to meet, rather than ad hoc consultations.
- Transition is also **social and emotional, not just technical**. In Ireland, peat workers faced loss of identity and uncertainty as extraction declined. Training bodies and local institutions focused on trust and “psychological security” before reskilling or relocation discussions.
- **Skills systems** can pivot when given a clear mandate, as many projects redirected vocational services toward restoration, construction, bioeconomy, and renewable energy, designing tailored offers such as rehabilitation traineeships and family farm programmes.
- **Youth and education** are strategic assets. Involving young people in peatland restoration, tourism, and innovation projects builds future capacity and keeps regions attractive.



# People-centered governance and skills for just transition

## Good practices and tools

- Establish formal but **flexible coordination structures** (e.g., inter-ministerial groups + regional fora) with clear roles, regular meetings, and explicit links to budgets and JTF implementation.
- Treat training providers and local colleges as **strategic transition partners**; involve them in governance and co-design:
  - Targeted vocational modules in restoration, paludiculture, renewable energy, tourism, and construction
  - Outreach and mobile training in peat regions
- Create or strengthen **local/regional transition platforms** where landowners, workers, municipalities, NGOs, youth, and businesses meet regularly to:
  - Discuss after-use options and surface conflicts early
  - Identify synergies across projects (e.g., restoration + tourism + skills)
- When **polarisation risk is high**, use collaborative governance to foster cooperation: shared fact-finding, joint scenario work, and co-authored recommendations rather than adversarial debate.
- Use **narrative and creative approaches** (arts, storytelling, youth projects) to shift mindsets, framing the transition as an opportunity rather than only a loss.



# Financing, new business models and nature value markets

## Key messages

- **Funding is increasingly available**, creating strong opportunities for peatland projects that are investment-ready. Experiences from NABU Climate Fund, SEGES, TAPIO, Hofer and Pautz highlight the importance of **solid feasibility work, strong partnerships and clear business models** to unlock this potential and turn peatland repurposing into viable, scalable business cases.
  - **Public instruments and national schemes** provide a strong foundation for financing. While they can be complex, there is clear potential to improve access through simpler, more outcome-oriented approaches that better support municipalities, farmers and SMEs.
  - Rewetting, restoration and paludiculture offer significant climate benefits and growing opportunities for innovation. By **developing new revenue streams** and combining public support with **risk-sharing mechanisms**, long-term incentives and integrated value chains, these solutions can become increasingly competitive and scalable.
- **Nature and climate credits can complement funding**, but trust depends on clear rules, robust verification and long-term guarantees. Finland's early steps highlight both potential and the need for solid frameworks.
  - Examples from regenerative tourism and wellbeing projects (e.g. Digi Carbonless 2.0, RUOTI, LISÄ, RegenT) show that peatland regions can create value through services, tourism and culture if models respect ecological limits and engage local communities. Cross-border exchange in the Baltic Sea Region highlights shared challenges in verification, financing and market development.
  - Rewetting/restoration is only the starting point—the real potential lies in sustainable business models on rewetted land, from biomass and paludiculture to tourism and ecosystem services.



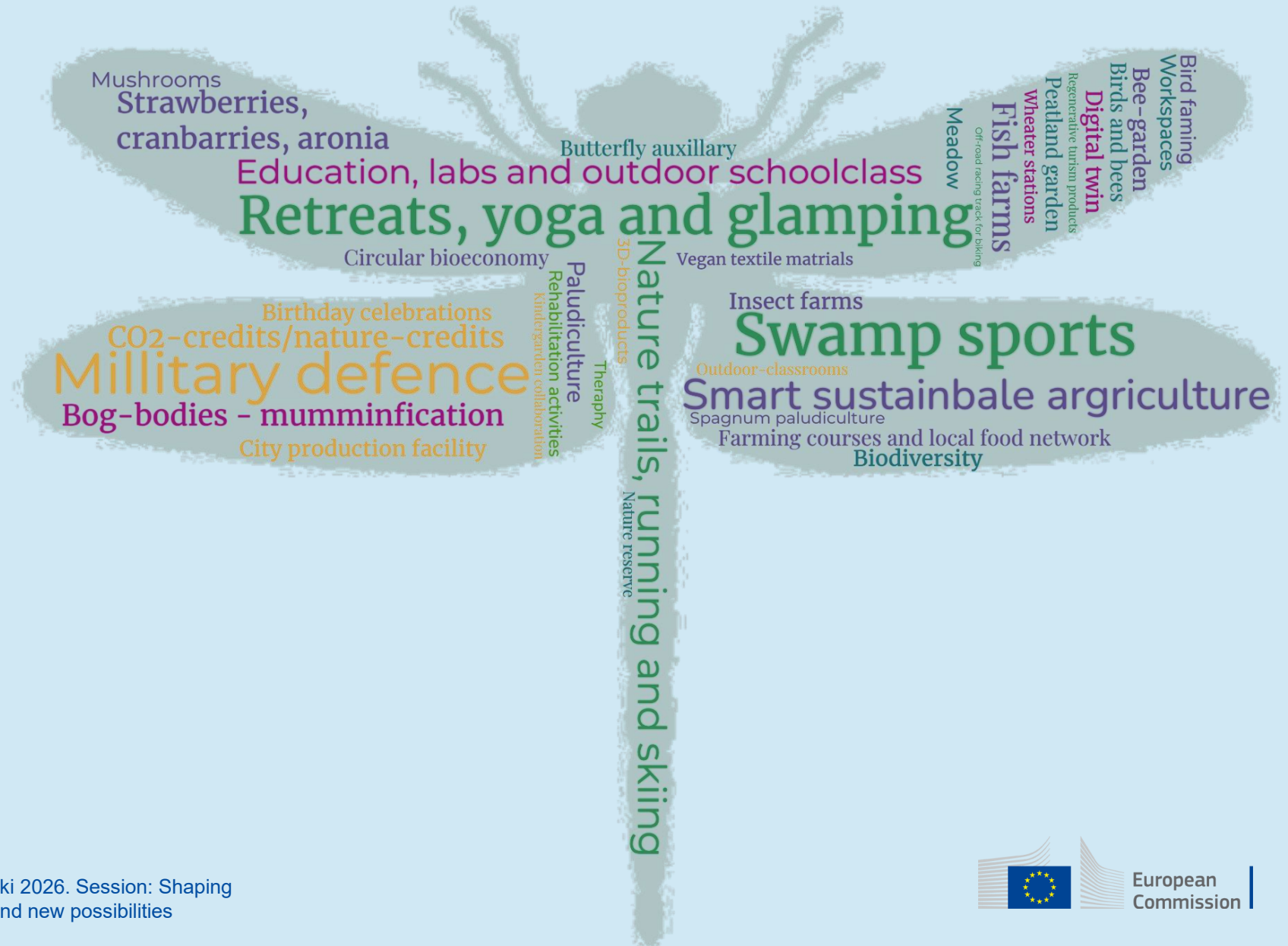
# Financing, new business models and nature value markets

## Good practices and tools

- Provide **project preparation support** (e.g. feasibility, partnerships, permitting, landowner agreements) so more projects become bankable and can access LIFE, JTF, RRF or private capital.
- Design **funding schemes** and JTF measures that are **outcome-oriented** (e.g. hectares rewetted, emissions reduced, biodiversity improved, jobs created) and proportionate in co-financing and administrative burden.
- Work with clusters and intermediaries to **bundle smaller sites into portfolios** attractive to investors and nature-credit buyers.
- Develop and test simple, standardised methods for **measuring climate and biodiversity gains** and issuing nature credits, in cooperation across the Baltic Sea Region.
- Explore **diversified business models** by combining rewetting/restoration with tourism, wellbeing, education and paludiculture to create multiple revenue streams.



# JTP Groundwork - Technical assistance to Finland



Pictures and word cloud from Technical Region Forum in Helsinki 2026. Session: Shaping common narratives - collaborative art making for development and new possibilities



# Summary





# TA impressions



Images from Regional Networking and Exchange Event in Jyväskylä, January 2026 and Technical Regional Forum in Helsinki, March 2026



# List of materials

# List of materials

## Literature

- European Commission / Finland (2022): Innovation and skills in Finland 2021–2027 – Just Transition Fund (JTF) / “Renewing and knowledgeable Finland 2021–2027
- European Investment Bank (EIB) (2025): Riga Forest Peatland Restoration and PV
- Finnish Government (2022): Just Transition Fund to mitigate effects of reduced peat energy use in Finland – Proposed programme now out for comments.
- Helena Mälkki, Pertti Frilander (1997): Life cycle assessment of peat utilisation in Finland. VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland.
- Kull, A. & Küttim, M. (2024): Implementing circular economy principles in the use of horticultural peat products produced in Estonia and reducing related greenhouse gas emissions in the LULUCF sector.
- Lempinen, H. & Vainio, A. (2023): Lost in transition: Peat workers’ experiences of Finland’s low carbon transition policies. *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 15, 101312.
- Maa- ja metsätalousministeriö (2022): Climate Plan for the Land Use Sector. Government report, Finland.
- Martens, H. R. et al. (2023): Paludiculture can support biodiversity conservation in rewetted fen peatlands. *Scientific Reports*, 13:18091.
- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (2025): Growth package for bioeconomy boosts growth of added value and improves security of supply. News item, 21 March 2025.
- Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (2021): Working group on peat proposes ways to help the sector in transition and to increase role of peat in security of supply. Finnish Government.
- Nordic Council of Ministers (2024): Exploring Rewetting Efforts in the Nordic Countries – Policy Tools and Measures for Success.

- Satu Helynen and Martti Flyktman (2022): Demand and supply of energy peat in Finland. VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland.
- Silpola, J. (2017): Current situation in peat industry in Finland. Presentation, Bioenergy Association of Finland.
- Sitra (2020): A just transition for the peat industry can speed Finland towards carbon neutrality. Working paper / news article, 23 June 2020.
- Sitra (2020): Turpeen käytöstä luopuminen – Keinoja Suomelle reilun siirtymän tukemiseen [Giving up peat fuel – means for supporting a just transition in Finland]. Working paper, 23 June 2020.
- Virtanen, K. (14th International Peat Congress): Peatland resources and the use of energy peat in Finland. Extended abstract No. 303.

## The following presentations are available on the [webpage](#) of the Ministry of Economic affairs and Employment:

- JTP Groundwork – Workshop 1: Peatland restoration
- JTP Groundwork – Workshop 2: Renewable energy integration
- JTP Groundwork – Workshop 3: Financing models
- JTP Groundwork – Regional Networking and Exchange Event
- JTP Groundwork – Technical Regional Forum