



Helsinki

Discover leisure time activities in Helsinki

The City of Helsinki provides plenty of affordable and free-of-charge leisure time activities. Learn about the City's libraries, cultural centres, sports facilities, youth centres, the City Museum and other leisure time opportunities!



Image: Jussi Hellsten / City of Helsinki



Image: Maarit Hohteri / City of Helsinki



Image: Suvi-Tuuli Kankaappää / City of Helsinki



This is our first leisure guide produced in seven different languages. How did we do? Please respond to the feedback survey. response.questback.com/kulttuurinjavapaaajantoimiala/vapaa-ajanesite2024

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The library is open to everyone. In the library, you can engage in activities such as reading books and magazines in different languages and learn Finnish. You can also borrow books to take home from the library. Spending time in the library and borrowing books is free of charge. Helsinki has a total of 38 libraries and two mobile libraries.

Spend time at the library

The majority of the City's libraries are open on weekdays from morning to evening and on Saturdays. Some of the libraries of Helsinki are also open on Sundays. You can spend time however you wish in the libraries. For example, you can study, reserve facilities for personal use and use the computers of the library. The libraries always have staff members present, and you can ask them for advice regarding all sorts of matters. You are not required to know Finnish or Swedish. The libraries have plenty of language-proficient workers. Even if you do not speak the same language, the staff will help you forward to the best of their ability.

Borrowing

You will need a library card to borrow books. In addition to books, you can use your library card to borrow magazines, music, movies and items. You can get your own library card from any Helmet library. Your first library card will be free of charge. Bring your ID with you when coming to get a library card. The ID document can be an identity card issued by an EU Member State, a passport, a Finnish driving licence, a KELA card with a photograph (people under the age of 18 can use a KELA card without a photograph), a residence card issued by a reception centre located in Finland, or a residence permit card issued by the Finnish Immigration Service. You must have a Finnish address in order to get a library card.



Helmet libraries

Helmet is the joint library service of the cities of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. It consists of the city libraries of Helsinki, Espoo, Kauniainen and Vantaa. If you have a Helmet library card, you can use it to borrow books from all Helmet libraries. Returning books is easy, as you can return them to any Helmet library.



→ Helmet online library: helmet.fi



Image: Suvi-Tuuli Kancaanpää / City of Helsinki

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Seven tips for the library

1. Language cafés

Do you already know some Finnish? Take part in a language café at a library! The language café will give you an opportunity to develop your Finnish skills by talking with other participants.

2. Easy language books

You can borrow easy language books from the library or read easy language magazines. Easy language refers to simple Finnish.



3. Books in different languages

Every library has books in different languages. The libraries have different selections: for example, one might have more books in Arabic, while another one might have more books in Russian. Multilingual Library is located in Pasila Library. Its selection features books in more than 80 languages, primarily non-European ones. You can come to Pasila Library to check out the diverse selection of Multilingual Library. You can also use the Helmet online library to search for books, magazines and audio recordings in different languages and order them to your local library free of charge.

4. Borrowing items and using devices

In addition to books and magazines, you can borrow games, instruments, tools and sports equipment, among other items. The library also features various machines and devices that customers can use free of charge. Every library features computers that can be used with a library card. Examples of other devices provided by the libraries include tablets, sewing machines, 3D printers and laser cutters.



5. Help with using digital devices and printing documents

The library staff will help you with using a computer, a smartphone and the internet. You can print, scan and copy documents at the library. The libraries also hold free-of-charge events at which experts will provide advice for using the devices in Finnish, Swedish and English.



6. Group facilities and studios

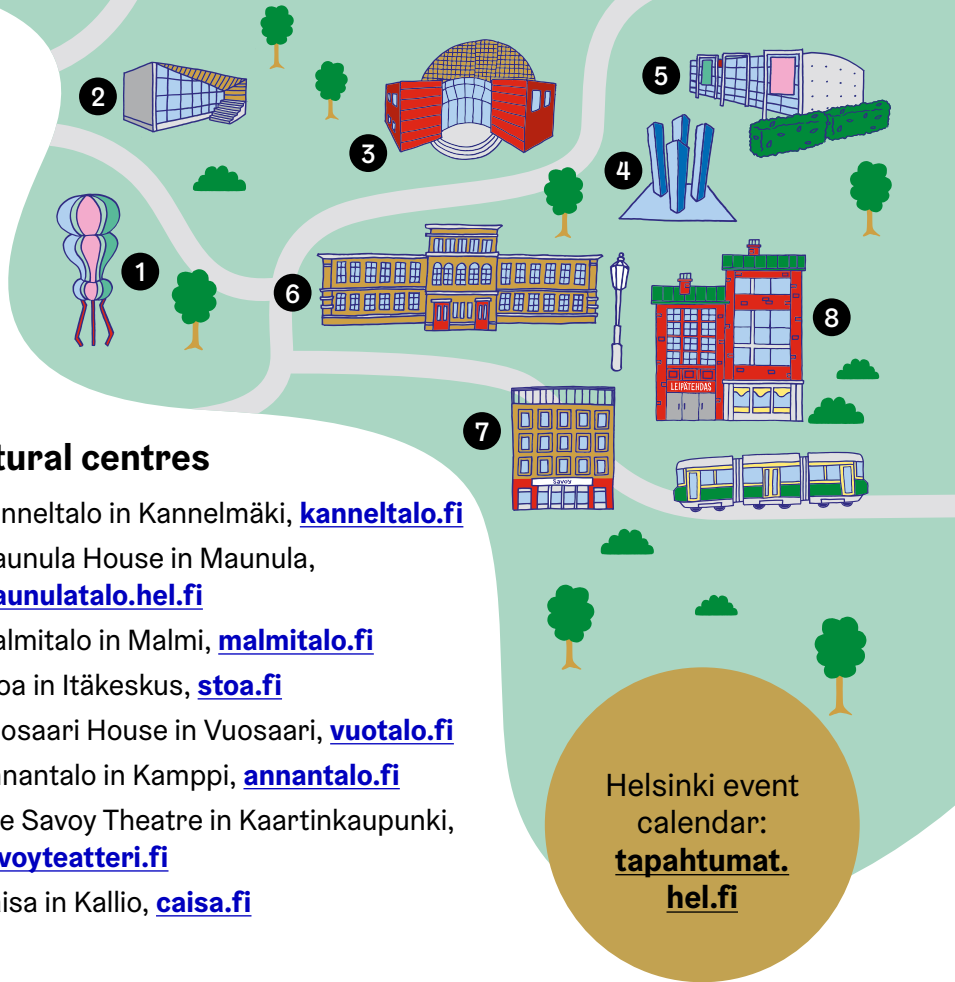
You can use the group facilities of a library to work or hold a meeting, for example. The libraries also have rooms for playing instruments, as well as studio facilities. These can be used for recording music, taking photographs and editing videos, for example. You can reserve a facility via the Varaamo service (read more on p. 22).

7. Story hours and other events

The libraries hold a wide variety of free-of-charge events, such as story hours, author visits, workshops and small performances. In addition to Finnish and Swedish, story hours are held in various languages such as English, Russian and Somali.



Image: Suvi-Tuuli Kankaanpää / City of Helsinki



Cultural centres

1. Kanneltalo in Kannelmäki, kanneltalo.fi
2. Maunula House in Maunula, maunulatalo.hel.fi
3. Malmitalo in Malmi, malmitalo.fi
4. Stoa in Itäkeskus, stoa.fi
5. Vuosaari House in Vuosaari, vuotalo.fi
6. Annantalo in Kamppi, annantalo.fi
7. The Savoy Theatre in Kaartinkaupunki, savoyteatteri.fi
8. Caisa in Kallio, caisa.fi

Helsinki event
calendar:
[tapahtumat.
hel.fi](http://tapahtumat.hel.fi)

See you at the cultural centres!

Helsingissä on kahdeksan kulttuurikeskusta. Kulttuurikeskuksissa Helsinki has eight cultural centres. The cultural centres host concerts; theatre, dance and circus performances; film screenings; children's events; communal celebrations indoors and outdoors; exhibitions and art courses. The selection features plenty of free-of-charge activities that do not require advance registration. The performances held in the hall usually require attendees to buy a ticket, but the prices are reasonable. Performances are held in different languages. There are also plenty of activities that do not require knowledge of any specific language. Every cultural centre has a café or a restaurant.

Culture in city districts

Kanneltalo, Malmitalo, Maunula House, Stoa and Vuosaari House are located in busy residential areas away from the city centre. The cultural centres are important local meeting places where people spend time and see friends and acquaintances. They serve as venues for a wide variety of activities. You can attend cultural events, visit a library and learn subjects such as Finnish or handicrafts on Adult Education Centre courses (read more: tyovaenopisto.hel.fi) under the same roof. Kanneltalo, Malmitalo, Maunula House and Stoa also feature a youth centre where young people can spend leisure time safely with trained adults (read more on p. 16).

Caisa and the Savoy Theatre

Cultural Centre Kaisa's duty is to contribute to developing Helsinki into an even more diverse city through art and culture. For example, this means that events held at Caisa are produced by artists belonging in different minorities, and the events take the diversity of the city's residents into account. The Savoy Theatre is an international concert house. The Savoy Theatre is also responsible for the Espa Stage, which is located in Esplanadi Park in the city centre. The Espa Stage is used to host free-of-charge open air concerts and other events in summer.

For children and young people

Annantalo Arts Centre for Children and Young People is the heart of children's culture in Helsinki. Annantalo teaches visitors how to make art and hosts performances, events and exhibitions for children. The majority of the events are free of charge. Other cultural centres also provide plenty of activities for children and families.



Five tips for activities at the cultural centres



1. Summer events

In summer, the cultural centres hold plenty of free-of-charge events outdoors in their yard and square areas. Among the most important dates are Helsinki Day on 12 June and the Night of the Arts in mid-August. Annantalo holds plenty of summertime activities for families with children that people can attend at their own leisure.

2. Annual cycle and public holidays

The cultural centres provide plenty of activities related to key calendar events and celebrations important to Helsinki residents. Here are a few important times at which the cultural centres often hold events:

- May Day Eve: a celebration of the working class, graduates and spring on 30 April
- Halloween at the turn of October and November
- Children's Rights Week in November
- Independence Day on 6 December
- Schools' autumn break and winter break
- Christian celebrations, such as Christmas and Easter
- Different religions' and cultures' important celebrations, such as the Islamic Eid al-Fitr, Russian New Year, and the national days of Romani and Sámi people. The cultural centres often collaborate with organisations to organise these celebrations. The cultural centres are taking the celebrations of different cultures into account more and more.



3. Exhibitions

The galleries of the cultural centres are always holding exhibitions with no entrance fee. They are always open when the cultural centre itself is open. There are also plenty of exhibitions for children, at which children get to explore things, play and learn something new.

4. Performances, film screenings and concerts

The cultural centres hold performances in different languages. You can always check the language of the performance on the cultural centre's website. In particular, wordless circus and dance performances are suitable for people who do not know Finnish yet. The concerts held at the cultural centres feature a wide variety of musical cultures. All of the cultural centres screen films from all over the world. There are also performances for children with affordable tickets. In addition to performances subject to a fee, the cultural centres hold plenty of free-of-charge performances.

5. Courses and workshops

Want to learn new skills and meet people? The cultural centres hold a wide variety of workshops and courses for children and adults alike. The activities are instructed in different languages, and the instructor can often also guide attendees non-verbally. The selection features plenty of workshops and courses that are free of charge and do not require advance registration. Stoa holds Opi Suomea laulaen ('Learn Finnish by Singing') singing workshops for immigrants. The singing workshops are free of charge but require advance registration.

Did you know?

Art, culture and creativity have a positive impact on a person's quality of life and health. Research shows that experiencing and making art can prevent physical and psychological illnesses and reduce symptoms. Artistic and cultural hobbies support children's and young people's wellbeing, growth and learning in a multitude of ways.



Engaging in physical activity maintains health and provides refreshing activities alone or together with others.

In Helsinki, you can be physically active in many ways.

Outdoor activities

Enjoy the outdoor activity opportunities provided by Helsinki's parks, islands and forests! Have you heard of everyman's rights? For example, everyone has the right to pick berries and mushrooms in forests in Finland. Making an open fire in nature is prohibited, but Helsinki has plenty of public cooking shelters and barbecue sites that can be used freely the year round. Remember that littering is prohibited.

Instructed exercise

You can take part in swimming schools, group exercise, gym and water sport classes and outdoor exercise. The City's exercise courses are affordable and available for all ages. Registration for autumn courses begins in August, for spring courses in December and for summer courses in March. The courses are popular, so registering in good time is recommended.

In addition to the courses, the City also provides plenty of instructed exercise that does not require registration or commitment. Learn about the City's free-of-charge and affordable exercise offerings, such as Vimma sports for young people and local exercise services for working-age and elderly residents. In summer, people of all ages can take part in free-of-charge fitness classes in parks, which are held across the city. People with reduced functional capacity, such as people with long-term illnesses or disabilities, are provided with a form of exercise called adapted exercise.

Facilities for different sports

During snowy winters, there are regularly maintained ski trails across Helsinki. You can try skiing in Paloheinä, where you can also rent the equipment needed. Helsinki has 11 artificial ice rinks where you can skate free of charge. The Brahe sports field artificial ice rink features a skate rental service.

The city also has various indoor exercise facilities, such as skate halls, indoor game halls and gyms. Helsinki's gyms are suited for users of all levels of fitness. They are affordable and do not require the purchase of a membership. Helsinki has also more than 50 free-of-charge outdoor gyms that are open 24/7.

Reserve exercise facilities

You can apply for a fixed time slot in a specific season for your sports group. Check out the reservable facilities and their application periods on the Sports website. You can also reserve single slots via the Liikuntakauppa online store or the Varaamo reservation service (read more about Varaamo on p. 22).

Beaches

When coming to an unfamiliar beach, check the water depth on the map on the bulletin board. Be particularly careful in places with steep drop-offs and strong currents. You can also see on the bulletin board if swimming at the beach is not recommended due to poor water quality. Guardians are always responsible for their children. Always keep any children in the water in your sight and those who cannot swim within arm's length. During school breaks, the most popular beaches also feature lifeguards who can give you advice. In summer, potentially toxic blue-green algae often occurs at the beaches of Helsinki. Check the up-to-date blue-green algae situation online in advance. Do not swim at a beach where blue-green algae has been detected.

Swimming halls and outdoor swimming pools

Swimming is a popular hobby for the whole family in Finland. Swimming halls are places where you can swim, exercise in the water, relax in a warm pool, play in a children's pool, enjoy the sauna and have a wash. Frequenting a swimming hall supports wellbeing in a diverse manner.

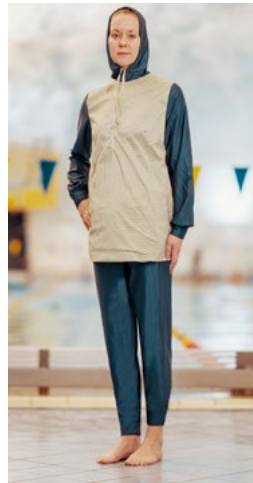
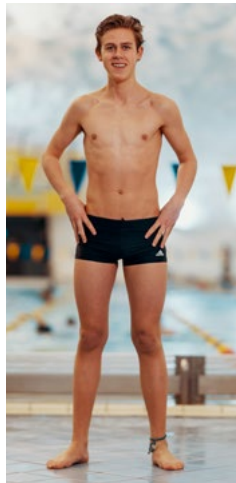
What to do in a swimming hall

Everyone should know the rules of the swimming halls. Their purpose is to ensure that everyone can feel as safe and comfortable as possible.



1. Washing yourself and wearing appropriate swimwear are important for maintaining water purity in the pools. Wash yourself without your swimwear on before going into the pool. Wet your hair as well or wear a swimming cap. If you have long hair, keep it tied up when swimming.
2. Leave your swimwear in the shower room when you go into the sauna. Finnish people are usually naked in the sauna. If you want to, you can wear a towel. The swimming halls of Helsinki always have separate sauna and washing facilities for women and men.
3. Guardians are responsible for children who cannot swim. One adult who can swim can take care of up to three children who cannot swim. People who cannot swim are only allowed to use shallow pools. Only people capable of swimming at least 25 metres are allowed to use large pools and diving pools.

The following types of swimwear are acceptable:



Swimsuits, swimming trunks, swimming shorts and short burkinis.



Did you know?

1. The Jakomäki swimming hall has an exclusive time slot for women every week. Only women are working at the swimming hall during the women's slot.
2. Some swimming halls, such as the one in Itäkeskus, have a unisex dressing room open to all. In the unisex dressing room, visitors such as families with children, people with reduced mobility and members of gender minorities can use a private booth to get undressed and dressed and take a shower.
3. Want to learn to swim? The City provides swimming schools subject to a fee for children and adults. Adults can take part in mixed groups for women and men or groups exclusively for women. Lower secondary school-aged young people can attend a free-of-charge swimming school via Vimma sports.
4. If you have purchased a season card for water sports at the Pirkkola, Itäkeskus, Jakomäki or Yrjönkatu swimming hall, you can use the same card at all of the City of Helsinki's gyms. You can also use the gym at the Pirkkola, Itäkeskus and Jakomäki swimming halls for the price of the swimming ticket.



Image: Aki Rask / City of Helsinki

- Find your favourite forms of exercise: liikunta.hel.fi
- Liikuntakauppa online store: liikuntakauppa.hel.fi
- Outdoor activities: hel.fi/ulkoilu

Things to do for young people

Helsinki has more than 60 venues for young people: youth centres, summer places and facilities for different hobbies, such as skate halls, music studios and handicraft shops. For example, young people can enjoy different sports at Malminkartano Recreation Hall, try their hand at animal care at the Fallkulla domestic animal farm and organise events in the Tiivistämö event facility in Suvilahti. Every young person can find fun and suitable activities from the range available.

Youth centres

Youth centres are places where children and young people aged 9–17 can spend leisure time. Some youth centres also provide more limited hobby activities for people aged under 9 and over 18. There are youth centres in different residential areas across Helsinki. At a youth centre, young people get to meet with friends, spend time, play games and receive help with various aspects of life, such as friendships, school and job seeking. They can take part in group activities, such as a cooking club, a painting course, a nature hike, gaming activities or a football tournament. The youth centres listen to young people's wishes. The workers plan and implement activities together with young people.



Image: Maanit Hohteri / City of Helsinki

Join with a membership card

The activities, hobbies and events of youth centres can be joined with a membership card. The membership card is free of charge and valid for one year at a time. The membership card is digital, meaning that it is used via an online browser or phone application. The guardian of a young person under the age of 18 can submit a membership card application online and confirm the information by using strong authentication. If the guardian is unable to use strong authentication, they can also fill out a paper form. The guardian must provide their own information for the membership card so that the youth centre workers can provide information about the youth centre's activities and discuss matters related to the young person's participation if needed. The City of Helsinki will not disclose the contact details of the young people or their guardians to anyone. You can find more detailed instructions for applying for a membership card on the Youth Helsinki website: nuorten.hel.fi/jassari.

Come for a visit

Every young person is welcome at the youth centres. It is not a problem if the young person does not speak Finnish or Swedish yet. The youth centres always have professional youth workers present to make the young person feel welcome and provide information about the youth centre. The youth workers speak different languages and are sure to find a shared way to communicate. Some of the youth centres provide exclusive group activities for girls. Young people aged 13–29 who belong in sexual and gender minorities and are thinking about LGBTQIA+ themes can take part in related activities.

Opening hours online

Most of the youth centres have designated opening hours for primary school and lower secondary school-aged young people. You can see the opening hours for different groups on the youth centre's website. Young people can come to the youth centre at any time and for as long as they want within the opening hours. There is no need for registration.



Five reasons for a young person to go to a youth centre

1. The young person will get to take part in enjoyable activities, supporting their wellbeing.
2. The young person can find new friends and spend time with them in a safe environment. They will learn valuable social skills.
3. The youth centre has trained adults working there. The youth workers organise activities for and with young people, talk with them about matters such as their plans for the future, and intervene in any problem situations.
4. At the youth centre, the young person can try different hobbies, primarily free of charge. They get to find their strengths and develop their skills in accordance with their interests.
5. The youth centres are substance-free facilities and do not allow any kind of discrimination, such as racism.



Image: Sakari Röyskö / City of Helsinki

You can also influence things

Young people have plenty of influencing opportunities. The City allocates a budget for young people, the use of which they negotiate and vote on every year. Previous years' youth budget money has been used to organise activities such as football tournaments and theatre trips. A young person can apply for the Youth Council, which exerts influence over matters important to young people across the city. Young people can also submit an initiative to the City regarding something that they would like to change.

- Details about the youth centres and other youth services provided by Helsinki can be found on the Youth Helsinki website: nuorten.hel.fi

Free-of-charge hobbies for children and young people

The Finnish Model for Leisure Activities provides free-of-charge hobby activities for 3rd–9th-grade pupils, i.e. children and young people aged roughly 9–15. The activities are provided at all comprehensive schools in Helsinki. The activities are held after the school day in school facilities or their surroundings.

- Free-of-charge hobbies for children: harrastukset.hel.fi/suomenmalli



Image: Maija Astikainen / City of Helsinki

Helsinki City Museum

Helsinki City Museum is located in the city centre, at a corner of Senate Square, in the city's oldest block area. The museum is open every day and entry is always free of charge. You are welcome to spend time and hang out in the pleasant lobby area, at exhibitions, at events and in the museum shop.

Helsinki City Museum is the only museum in the world focusing on Helsinki. In the museum, you can learn about the city's history, everyday life and local phenomena. Children and families can delve into the history of Helsinki and play in the Children's Town.

If you have a group in which you are studying Finnish together, you can reserve a free guided tour of the City Museum's exhibitions for your group. In addition to exhibitions, the City Museum provides various events, such as guided walking tours, lectures, concerts, children's events, film screenings and holiday market events.

→ Learn more about Helsinki City Museum: helsinginkaupunginmuseo.fi



Image: Jussi Hellsten / City of Helsinki

Other museum locations to see in Helsinki

Villa Hakasalmi

Villa Hakasalmi is located near Musiikkitalo, Finlandia Hall and Oodi in Töölönlahti. The museum has rotating Helsinki-themed exhibitions and plenty of events. The entrance fee is 16 euros. People under the age of 18 can enter free of charge. Entry is free to all on the last Friday of every month.

Burgher's House in Kruununhaka

Come see what kind of a home a family in Helsinki would have in the 1860s. The Burgher's House is open in the summer season and at Christmas. Entry to the museum is always free of charge.

Worker Housing Museum in Vallila

Come take a peek into the different kinds of homes of working-class families in the 1900s. The Worker Housing Museum will open in 2025. Entry to the museum is always free of charge.

Tram Museum in Töölö

The Tram Museum provides fun activities for children and everyone interested in trams. The museum is open every day and entry is always free of charge.



Check out these leisure time opportunities as well



Volunteer activities

The City provides a wide range of volunteer activities through which you can help Helsinki residents of different ages or take care of our shared environment. For example, you can spend time with elderly residents or help out at a multicultural family café. Many of the tasks do not require knowledge of Finnish or Swedish. If you have any questions, you can send email to vapaaehtoistoiminta@hel.fi. We are looking forward to seeing you, your help is needed!

→ Read more and find volunteer activities suitable for you:

vapaaehtoistoiminta.hel.fi

Varaamo

Want to hold a meeting, celebrate with your loved ones, organise an event, record music, play an instrument or enjoy activities together with others? You can reserve the City's facilities or equipment free of charge or at an affordable price via Varaamo. The Varaamo website is available in Finnish, Swedish and English.

→ Reserve facilities and equipment: varaamo.hel.fi



Image: Maija Astikainen / City of Helsinki

Culture Kids



All children born in Helsinki after 2020 are invited to become Culture Kids. The kids are invited to two events each year until they start school. The events are free of charge. You can have fun experiencing culture, together with your child. The events will support your child's development and wellbeing. They are organised by operators such as museums, theatres and orchestras.

→ Read more and register your child as a Culture Kid: kummilapset.hel.fi

Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra

Come hear more than a hundred musicians play at the same time! Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra is a classical music orchestra that performs at Musiikkitalo in the city centre. You can buy affordable tickets to see the orchestra's dress rehearsals early in the day. A dress rehearsal means the final rehearsal before the performance in the evening.

→ See the offerings of Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra: helsinginkaupunginorkesteri.fi



Helsinki



Events: tapahtumat.hel.fi

Library: helmet.fi

Activities: liikunta.hel.fi

Youth: nuorten.hel.fi

Helsinki City Museum: helsinginkaupunginmuseo.fi

City of Helsinki (in English): hel.fi/en