

HS compared: Differences in party stances on climate change

– Great climate debate at Sanomatalo today at 4pm

Political parties want to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees but most of them lack the adequate means to do so.



Vuokko Yrjänä (in the middle), Mikko Takala, Antti Takala and Anni Lappalainen participated in the School Strike for Climate in January and demonstrated in front of the Parliament House to combat climate change.

(IMAGE: KALLE KOPONEN / HS)

[Piia Elonen HS, Minttu Mikkonen HS](#)

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If you want to choose a party to vote for on the basis of their climate policy, it is not that simple to compare the parties. All parliamentary parties have some sort of a climate policy, but they vary greatly.

Therefore, HS compared party stances on climate change on the basis of five issues. Since the climate policies of the parties are not comparable, we utilised their responses to climate surveys of [HS](#) and [Yle](#) and the extensive [comparison of political parties](#) by NGOs.

HS focused on major issues. The level of ambition is illustrated by two questions: *in which year* the parties aim for carbon-neutral Finland and *how much* Finland should reduce its emissions.

In addition, we review their means and views on carbon sinks. We included parliamentary parties with at least five members of Parliament (nine parties).

In December, eight parliamentary parties included in this comparison composed a joint [statement](#) that said Finland would play its part in limiting the global average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees. Only the Finns Party did not participate.

The means of most parties are not sufficient to achieve this goal. In the extensive comparison of NGOs and development organisations, only the climate policy of the Greens and the Left Alliance came close to the 1.5 target. RKP and SDP reached the halfway of the target.

The Finns Party came in last, as they received zero points from the organisations by promoting several measures that curb the climate policy.

Schedule

How urgently should we take action to combat climate change? This is one of the major issues that divides opinions.

The issue is measured by a target year set by the parties for Finland to be completely carbon neutral. Carbon neutrality means that Finland emits only as much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere as our own forests and soil are able to sequester. The differences are shown in the graphic below.

The year in which the parliamentary parties aim for carbon-neutral Finland

Carbon neutrality means that Finland emits only as much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere as our own forests and soil are able to sequester. Groups of less than five members of parliament are not included in the comparison (Movement Now and Seven Star Movement).

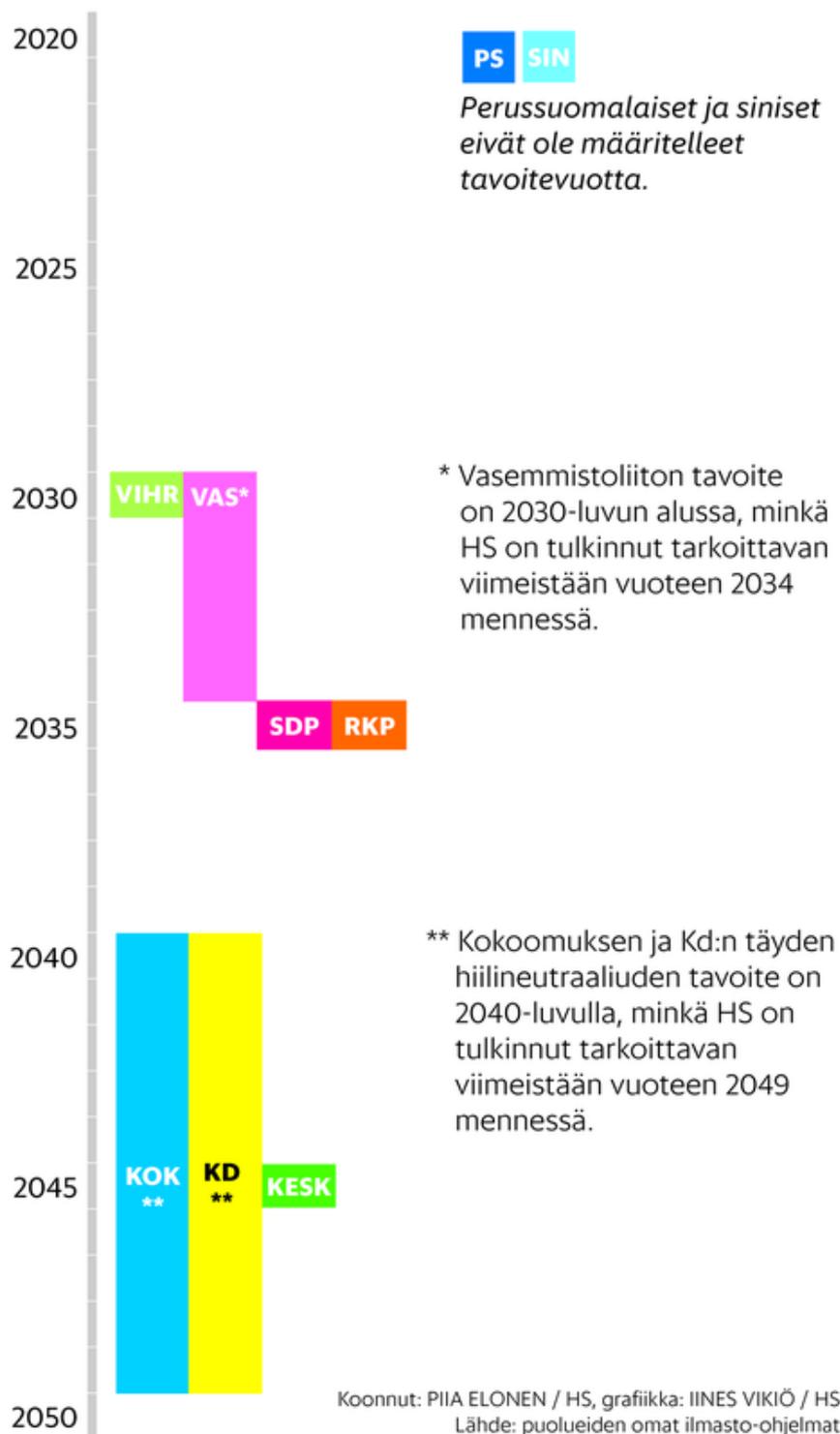
The Finns Party and the Blue Reform have not defined their target year.

The target of the Left Alliance is in the early 2030s, which the HS has interpreted to mean by 2034 at the latest.

The target for full carbon neutrality of the National Coalition Party and the KD is in the 2040s, which the HS has interpreted to mean by 2049 at the latest.

Mihin mennessä eduskuntapuolueet tavoittelevat hiilineutraalia Suomea

Hiilineutraali tarkoittaa, että Suomi päästää hiiltä ilmakehään vain sen verran kuin omat metsämme ja maaperämme kykenevät imemään. Vertailuun ei ole otettu mukaan alle viiden kansanedustajan ryhmiä eli Liike Nytä tai tähtiliikettä.



The Finns Party and the Blue Reform do not define their target year at all. The fastest schedule is set by the Greens and the Left Alliance. The Swedish People's Party (RKP), the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the Centre Party define a certain year, whereas the National Coalition Party and the Christian Democrats (KD) define more loosely "in the 2040s".

Emission target

Another major issue to divide opinions is the magnitude of emission reductions. The parties have different emission reduction targets for Finland by 2030 compared with 1990 levels.

The 2030 EU emissions reduction target is now 40%. In their climate policy, eight parties committed to increasing the EU target to at least 55%.

Some of the parties state stricter national targets, which are shown in the graphic below. RKP, the Greens and the Left Alliance are aiming for a 60% reduction in emissions. The target of the National Coalition Party and KD is 55% and the target of SDP is 49%.

CHART BELOW: Some of the parties want to reduce climate emissions faster than the current target

In the opinion of the parties, how much should Finland's greenhouse gas emissions be reduced by 2030 compared with 1990 levels. Finland's emission reduction target now: 40%*. Groups of less than five members of Parliament are not included in the comparison (Movement Now and Seven Star Movement).

Desired change

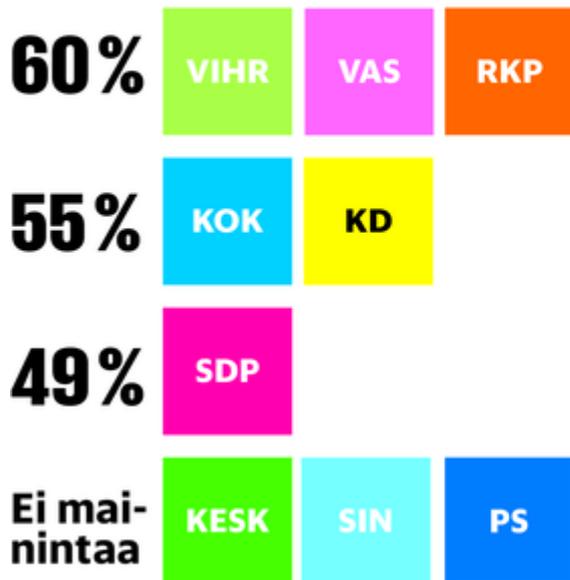
No mention

*Finland's current target is set by the EU. Some parties are ready have a stricter target on a national level.

Osa puolueista haluaa vähentää ilmasto- päästöjä nykytavoitetta nopeammin

Kuinka paljon puolueiden mielestä Suomen kasvihuonepäästöjä pitää vähentää vuoteen 2030 mennessä vuoteen 1990 verrattuna. Suomen päästövähennystavoite nyt: 40 %*. Vertailuun ei ole otettu mukaan alle viiden edustajan ryhmiä eli Liike Nytiä tai tähtiliikettä.

Haluttu muutos



*Suomen nykyinen tavoite tulee EU:sta. Osa puolueista on kansallisesti valmiita kiristämään tavoitetta.

Koonnut: PIIA ELONEN / HS, grafiikka: IINES VIKIÖ / HS,
lähde: puolueiden omat ilmasto-ohjelmat

The target year and the emission target may also be reviewed together. Perhaps the most questions are raised by the policy of SDP. The party has one of the tightest schedules for balancing emissions and sinks, but a lower reduction percentage than other parties that have announced their emission reduction target.

Is it possible to be carbon neutral in 2035 by halving emissions by 2030? This is of course possible if emissions are reduced rapidly in the early 2030s or if we manage to strengthen forest and soil carbon sinks.

Fossil fuels

Three quarters of Finland's greenhouse gas emissions are caused by the energy sector, which also includes transport. We should forsake fossil fuels by 2030 in order to reach the 1.5 degree target.

Today, less than half of Finland's emissions are part of the EU's emissions trading system. Almost all parties are ready for stricter emissions trading.

The goal of emissions trading is to guide the market to forsake fossil fuels. The real effectiveness of emissions trading depends on the price of emissions and the extent of emissions trading. Finland also dilutes the efficiency of emissions trading by allocating emission allowances to industry for free and compensating for the increase in the price of electricity caused by emissions trading.

RKP, the Left Alliance and the Greens would discontinue the free allocation of emission units. In addition to these three parties, the Centre Party could also discontinue emissions trading compensation for industry.

Current emissions trading does not reduce emissions fast enough and further action is needed.



Ellen Forström and Axel Broman require decision-makers to take climate action in front of the Parliament House in January. (IMAGE: KALLE KOPONEN / HS)

In March, the Parliament decided that the burning of coal will end in Finland by 2029 at the latest. This is a significant decision but achieving the 1.5 degree target also requires giving up peat and fuel oil in heating. Peat pollutes more than coal and its use is supported by taxation.

The Greens have the strictest target. The party wants to discontinue the use of energy peat in 2025. The deadline of the Left Alliance for the use of peat is the early 2030s and the National Coalition Party has set the target for the year 2035. SDP does not specify a precise target.

The Centre Party believes that an increase in the price of emission allowances will automatically lead to the phaseout of peat at some point in the 2030s.

Transport

TRANSPORT causes about a fifth of Finland's greenhouse gas emissions. If Finland wants to be carbon neutral in the 2040s, transport emissions must be practically nullified.

According to the Finnish Climate Change panel, the sale of new fossil fuel cars should be banned by 2027. Only the Greens support this timeline. In the election debates, the Left Alliance also supported a ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030.

The Greens and the Left Alliance are the only ones to support a national flight tax. The expansion of aviation emissions trading is supported by several parties. Currently, airlines purchase at auction 15% of emissions caused by flights within the EU.

The National Coalition Party, RKP, the Blue Reform, SDP, the Left Alliance and the Greens would reform commuting subsidies to encourage the use of light and public transport as well as electric and biogas cars.

The Centre Party, RKP, the Blue Reform, SDP, the Left Alliance and the Greens would favour fully electric and biogas cars in public car procurement.

NGOs criticise the parties for believing too much in biofuels. The amount of biofuels cannot be increased infinitely, as their production may reduce carbon sinks and take up space from food crops.

Carbon sinks

Reducing emissions is the most important way to combat global warming. We can also have effect on the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by creating and intensifying carbon sinks.

The Greens have one of the toughest suggestions. The party would add a climate impact assessment to environmental permitting. The intention is to limit the number of factories that use forest as raw material.

The Blue Reform and KD have the least opinions on carbon sinks. The Blue Reform has no opinion other than to carry out forestry "in a sustainable manner". KD relies on the "intergenerational thinking" of forest owners.

RKP would mainly take care of the matter financially by creating compensation for forest owners who maintain carbon storage and carbon sinks. SDP, the Left Alliance and the Greens have a compensation or incentive system in their range of means.

Of the three major parties, SDP has the strictest views on carbon sinks. In its policy, SDP would increase sinks already by 2030. It is difficult to reach the timeline if harvest volumes are not reduced from the current situation.

SDP outlines that from now on "the sustainability of the forest sector should be reviewed specifically through the size of the carbon sink". The party also wants to include the carbon sink target as a *binding* part of the national climate strategy. The policy does not include legislative changes that would lead to less logging. Instead, SDP would reform forest management *recommendations*.

The carbon sink mentions of the Centre Party are very different. In terms of carbon sinks, the party places particular emphasis on forestry.

Of the major parties, the policy of the National Coalition Party is somewhere in between. Targets for carbon sinks are taken seriously but their means are quite soft.

The National Coalition Party, the Left Alliance, SDP and the Greens mention the reduction of logging on state-owned land as one way. Roughly about one third of the forests in Finland are owned by the state.

A practical way would be to reduce the revenue target of Metsähallitus. None of the four parties determine how big the change on state-owned land should be.

Several policies support forest densification as a means of strengthening carbon sinks and storage. In other words, regeneration felling would be done in older forests than in the current situation. This goal is mentioned by the National Coalition Party, SDP, the Left Alliance and the Greens.

The means of parties to delay logging vary. The National Coalition Party wants to "clarify balanced steering instruments". In addition, the National Coalition Party and SDP would reform the forestry management guidelines regarding the timing of logging.

The Greens, SDP, the Left Alliance and RKP would pay for delayed logging. The Left Alliance has developed the most detailed incentive fund model.

The parties do not propose binding amendments to the definition of logging ages.