In May 2019, full meeting of the Helsinki City Council decided to launch city-wide participatory budgeting.

Helsinki opens up 4.4 million euros (ca. 7€ pp) of its budget annually to implement ideas of its residents.

The budget is divided between seven major districts. One fifth of the sum is reserved for plans benefiting the entire City.

Anyone can suggest ideas. Anyone aged 12 or over and living permanently in Helsinki can vote.

Money can be spent on investments as well as operational expenses.

Decidim was selected as technical solution based on a small pilot and study comparing 12 different platforms.
Helsinki PB is a multiphase process

1. Assessment of suggestions
   “The suggestion falls under the purview of the City and can be realised”

2. Plans
   Ideas are developed into plans together with the proposers and City experts
   “The plan must cost at least €35,000 and up to the amount of the budget of the major district”

3. Voting
   omastadi.hel.fi
1,273 suggestions submitted

All suggestions assessed by city, 839 accepted to the next phase

Citizens and city planning experts drafted 359 detailed plans based on proposals

Cost estimates created for the plans, 299 plans accepted to go under vote

Voting is under way, over 54,246 registered users by 30 Oct 2019 (5-10 % turnout)
Borough liaisons coordinate PB

Western: Silja Lindblad
Northern: Ella Tanskanen
North–Eastern: Outi Rissanen
South–Eastern and Vuosaari: Pauli Saloranta
Middle: Antti Sarpo
Southern: Jarkko Laaksonen
Eastern and Östersundom: Belinda Barbato
Helsinki has contributed to Decidim development by fixing bugs and publishing custom modules, e.g.

- Virus detection (Decidim Anti-Virus)
- Structured collaborative forms (Decidim Plans)
- User authentication with Finnish bank/mobile ids (Decidim Suomi.fi) and pupil id (Decidim mPass)
- Improved user experienced for budgeting phase (Combined Budgeting and Echanced budjeting).

Everything is published under an AGPL licence and v0.18 compatible Ruby gems are made available online.

Key partner: MainioTech Oy
Other partners: Open Source Politics, Futurice
How to make single task easy?

Helsinki PB also tries to attract citizens, who busy and uncommitted to participation, but perhaps willing to make a few mouse clicks once a year.

How to make a single task easy on multi-purpose platform like Decidim?

https://youtu.be/tk4QtD_02KA
Feedback on user experience has been very mixed. The website has been described both as “super easy to use” and “totally impossible to use”.

Several applauding comments regarding transparency and user rights (e.g. ability to download all data associated with own user account.)

Many inquiries from public and civil sector organizations, who are interested in adopting Decidim.

People with limited digital and/or literal skills have felt they have not been given equal change to participate because
  • process and/or software is perceived too complicated
  • strong identification (bank id or student id) is a barrier to many
  • software requires modern browsers to work properly

Assisted voting in libraries did not compensate effectively.
Who should be the target group?
User-Driven Design

Equal partnership

Inclusion

Accessibility
More information

Decidim Helsinki:
• info: [dev.hel.fi/projects/decidim-helsinki](dev.hel.fi/projects/decidim-helsinki)
• source code: [github.com/City-of-Helsinki/decidim-helsinki](github.com/City-of-Helsinki/decidim-helsinki)
• contact: Katja Henttonen, [katja.m.henttonen@hel.fi](katja.m.henttonen@hel.fi)

Helsinki Participatory Budjeting:
main website: [omastadi.hel.fi](omastadi.hel.fi)
participation model: [hel.fi/participationmodel](hel.fi/participationmodel)
contact: Kirsi Verkka, [kirsi.verkka@hel.fi](kirsi.verkka@hel.fi)