

Conclusions and recommendations of the National Audit Office

Implementation of the Government's cleantech strategy

The global cleantech business is growing rapidly and the sector is one of the priority areas in Finland's business policy. The purpose of cleantech solutions is to reduce harmful environmental impacts and to promote sustainable use of natural resources.

The audit covered the implementation of the Government Strategy to Promote Cleantech Business in Finland (the "cleantech strategy", published in 2014) in 2014 and 2015. The audit report also covers measures that were implemented after the actual implementation of the cleantech strategy. The purpose of the audit was to determine whether the strategy has been consistently and thoroughly implemented and whether achieving cost-effectiveness has been a guiding principle in the implementation process. Effectiveness of the strategy or the cost-effectiveness itself were not assessed in this audit.

Implementation of the cleantech strategy was concluded at the end of 2015. In the strategic implementation programme of the next Government, the Government of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä, cleantech topics were included in the strategic objective "Bioeconomy and clean solutions".

The cleantech strategy was closely connected to the strategic cleantech programme. The programme was carried out under the auspices of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment in 2015²⁰¹⁵, but it had its own organisation outside the ministry's organisational structure. A strategic director, who was in charge of the programme, was assisted by 1–4 public officials who were responsible for the practical aspects of the work. A programme management team and an advisory committee also took part in the process of steering the strategy preparation. No separate organisation was established for the implementation of the strategy as the parties that had drawn up the strategy were also responsible for the work. The responsibility for the implementation was shared by several ministries.

Not enough documents associated with the implementation of the strategy were available to compile representative written audit materials, partially due to the fact that comprehensive documentation had not been prepared, but also due to archiving problems. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment has published a guideline on the archiving of electronic materials after the conclusion of the implementation of the audited strategy.

The audit findings are based on documents, a Webropol survey, interviews in person and by email, as well as replies to a written request for information submitted to the ministry. The replies of interviewees representing different organisations were similar.

The implementation of the cleantech strategy did not fully meet the criteria set in the audit for good, high-quality implementation of the strategy.

No implementation plan was prepared for the strategy. No specific resources were allocated to the ministries for the implementation of the strategy; the funding came from the ministries' own operating budgets. The practical responsibilities for the implementation could have been more effectively organised. Even though the ministries would have required support, especially for mutual cooperation, they successfully

carried out most of the measures for which they were responsible under the strategy.

The implementation of the strategy was not actively monitored and there was no review procedure that would have allowed effective steering of the process. Information about the strategy was provided on the internet during the implementation but no detailed communications plan was drawn up. Furthermore, no advance plans on how to report on the implementation or how to assess the implementation process were made. During the implementation of the strategy, no plans were made on how to acquire appropriate materials for the assessment and comparison of the effects of the strategy. The manner in which the implementation process was managed did not encourage communication or interaction among the parties involved.

During the audited period, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment had not prepared any written guidelines on the implementation of strategies. A process guide laying out the stages of the implementation and the tasks required for each stage would ensure systematic operations during the process.

Recommendations of the National Audit Office

The National Audit Office recommends that the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment should

1. Prepare a written process guide as an implementation tool, which lays out the stages and tasks of the implementation process and how the relevant material should be documented.
2. Ensure that the implementation of the strategies is properly documented and that the materials are archived so that they will also be available in the future.