

# A new thesis helps the Port reduce the carbon footprint of its procurements

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Jonna Valosalmi was immediately interested when she heard that the Port of Helsinki was seeking a thesis writer to develop its procurement processes in a more sustainable direction. At the time, her studies in Environmental Technology at Lappeenranta-Lahti University of Technology (LUT) were already in the final stretch.

“This topic is important now, and it will be vital in the future. I had studied lifecycle assessment and corporate responsibility and wanted to work on these themes. I was barely familiar with procurements at that point, but I thought I’d just jump in,” Valosalmi recounts, laughing.

When Valosalmi was selected as the Port’s partner and the research project started just over a year ago, she specified that the thesis would deal with the carbon footprint and climate impact of procurements.

The goal of the thesis was to create a model that the Port could easily follow to take environmental criteria and the carbon footprint into account when planning procurements.

Jonna Valosalmi says she only realised the Port of Helsinki's impact on the entirety of Finland when she was writing her thesis.

Valosalmi's research methods included interviews in which she surveyed the Port's present practices and development needs.

"Each procurement is its own kind of process, which is why I interviewed the managers of the Port's various departments. It was really nice to see the importance of managing the climate impact of procurements to them. Many of them had already adopted it as a part of their work," Valosalmi says.

**"All companies can make a difference through their procurements"**

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The Port of Helsinki's recently appointed Project Manager **Janne Sullström** is grateful for his colleagues sharing their thoughts in Valosalmi's interviews.

Onshore power connections were constructed in the South Harbour in summer 2020.

“It’s great that the current status has been reported comprehensively; it’s been a great help during my orientation. In the future, Jonna’s work will be the Port’s green guideline that we’ll use when developing procurements and assessing their overall environmental responsibility,” Sullström says.

Sullström is currently working on developing the Port’s procurements, and one of the fundamental premises of this work is reducing the carbon footprint and expanding the carbon handprint. The owner also requires the Port to operate responsibly.

“Environmental perspectives are becoming increasingly important in car procurements, transport and services. We have invested millions in onshore power and automooring systems that make the mooring of ships faster and reduce the total emissions of the Port. In addition to this, our electricity procurements take carbon-neutrality into account,” Sullström states.

“Though procurements, all companies can influence the actions of their stakeholders. Since we are a public and visible operator, it is also our duty to be responsible. When we set requirements for our suppliers, we also communicate our policies outward and change things for the better.”

## **A practical guide as a result**

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Jonna Valosalmi’s master’s thesis, which was completed in spring, is a practical guide for assessing procurement processes. The thesis includes action charts and instructions for the various stages of procurements.

For example, minimum requirements may be set for suppliers, with access to tendering only granted to those who meet the requirements. Similarly, agreements may include goals set at the various stages of the agreement period, the achievement of which can be tracked.

“For me, the greatest lesson from my thesis was all the ways in which you can influence the carbon footprint of the procurement process. Annual public procurements in Finland are worth 35 billion euros. Directing them to low-carbon options really makes a difference,” Valosalmi says.

While Valosalmi learned about procurement processes, she also became familiar with the Port and its operations and expanded her knowledge about shipping.

“Now I know what a significant operator the Port of Helsinki is, and what kinds of goods enter Finland via shipping. That’s why I was particularly happy to see the good work that the Port is doing as it aims to reduce the environmental impact of shipping,” Valosalmi says.

## **Writing history at the same time**

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Valosalmi’s thesis was instructed by Head of Sustainable Development **Andreas Slotte** and Environmental Specialist **Anton Airas** at the Port.

Airas says that the process of Valosalmi’s thesis and the interviews included have already proved beneficial for the Port.

“The more we talk about this topic, the more natural it feels to pay attention to it. Jonna knew how to ask good questions that evoked thoughts among the interviewees,” Airas says, praising Valosalmi.

Sullström adds that Valosalmi’s thesis is also valuable documentation of the Port’s present status.

“The big picture is that the Port is committed to becoming carbon-neutral by 2035. When we look back in 2035, we’ll see where we started. At that time, it will surely be great to say: hey, we did it, even if it seemed hard,” Sullström says.