

Financial Times research helps to lead global group of environmental auditors

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The challenge

The National Audit Office of Finland chairs a global Working Group on Environmental Auditing, and due to a rapidly changing environment it can be a challenge to keep on top of a changing world.

The solution

Vivi Niemenmaa, the deputy director of NAOF, launched a concerted effort to bring the Financial Times into the organisation, to create a 'common language' and enrich her own thinking on sustainability matters.

The benefits

By using the Financial Times' global research, NAOF employees can remain informed on changing events, and speak to the specific events from each country they collaborate with, to build relationships with colleagues around the world and encourage discussion.



I see the FT as a global research tool that has readers all over the world, and it makes it somewhat easier to justify the importance of the work we do. It creates a common language to use a high-quality news source.

Vivi Niemenmaa
Deputy Director, National Audit Office of Finland



Auditing finances with an sustainable focus

The National Audit Office of Finland (NAOF) is the official auditor of the government's finances. They assist in monitoring fiscal policy and overseeing the political party and election campaign funding. The strategy of the NAOF is focused on renewal, and to have a greater impact on society, through sustainability.

The duties of the NAOF include securing Parliament's ability to use its budgetary powers and ensuring that central government finances are managed in a lawful, transparent and effective manner. This is with a focus on aiming at sustainable and stable general government finances and transparent and understandable fiscal policy rules.

Vivi Niemenmaa is the deputy director of the NAOF, heading the secretariat who specialise environmental policy issues (INTOSAI WGEA).

"In this global working group on environmental auditing, we support supreme audit institutions and auditors who provide this work," said Vivi. "The majority of my work links to a global network of auditors. Global cooperation is important because we as supreme audit institutions do not have counterparts in our own country."

Working in this global network of auditors, cooperation between countries is vital to ensure real change can be actioned. Vivi has been working with the NAOF for the last ten years to ensure this happens.

"When working together on the environment, it's quite easy to understand why you need international cooperation, because the environmental problems don't stop at the country border, and the problems are common," said Vivi.

"If you think of climate change, it doesn't matter where you emit the CO2. So in some cases, it's a good idea to cooperate by developing audits together, and to see the problem from both sides of a border, or at EU level or even globally."

Collaboration with countries around the world

EU and global-level collaboration is very important when discussing ESG and sustainability. As the climate continues to warm, countries are working more closely together to achieve set goals, all with the aim of helping lower emissions and ensure there is sustainability across the board. Vivi's team works closely with countries all around the world, to help steer projects to completion.

"We have 77 countries as members of our group," Vivi said. "We have to engage with our stakeholders at organisations such as the United Nations or the World Bank, in order to get the knowledge we need to do our work better, and also to tell them what we have found, and how that can help."

Each country within the group has different responsibilities, while developing audit methodologies, guidance and training packages. Vivi and her team ensure that discussions are fruitful and decisions are made quickly and efficiently.

"India is leading the work with plastic waste, USA with climate finance, China, Indonesia, and Thailand who are managing the sustainable transport package, and Canada and Finland on UN Sustainable Development Goals, so it's really a collaborative process globally," she says.



I love FT's content. The ESG news and the sustainability reporting, despite being in a private sector, is excellent. It's so useful to see the FT's perspective in my job.

Vivi Niemenmaa

Deputy Director, National Audit Office of Finland



“It is incredibly interesting working with multiple nations on climate change and sustainability. Quite often, it’s people who are engaged with environmental auditing, so they really understand the topics, and it’s quite easy to collaborate at a global level.”

A universal information source

With such wide sweeping topics in auditing, sustainability and climate change, Vivi was determined to remain informed on the wide array of issues that affected the NAOF and its partner countries.

Recalling an English writing course from the 2000s, she remembered the key areas her English coach raised that would help the class improve their English skills - with the Financial Times a key part of this.

“We wanted to learn to write better English, and understand what kind of mistakes are easy to do,” she said. “Our coach told us that in English, it’s not exactly the grammar, but it’s the words, the English language is very rich in words. If you want to write better, it might be a good idea to use a bit more varied vocabulary than what we did. He recommended, from the language point of view, it’s good to read a number of sources, one of which was the Financial Times.”

After the class, Vivi put in a request for the FT to be delivered to her office, and was one of the first to have requested it at the NAOF.

“One of the best checks is if there’s news on Finland. To my delight, there is and this is really very well written, with long and in depth analyses. Thinking on this, I asked myself, if it’s so good from a news perspective on Finland, maybe neighbouring countries will have the same coverage. It’s amazing to see.”

Now, after many years of a partnership with the FT, Vivi has encouraged her work colleagues to utilise the FT’s research and information capabilities, to make their jobs that much easier.

She wrote about her relationship with the FT on the NAOF’s internal intranet, where she promoted the subscription access, and her personal story about discovering the FT.

“I received some comments from colleagues, for instance recommending podcasts, or content I hadn’t seen yet!” she said. “One colleague even said ‘Oh, is it you that I can thank? Thank you for this tool!’

Ultimately, the Financial Times is one string to Vivi’s bow in ensuring she has the information she needs to be an informed professional when speaking to countries around the world.

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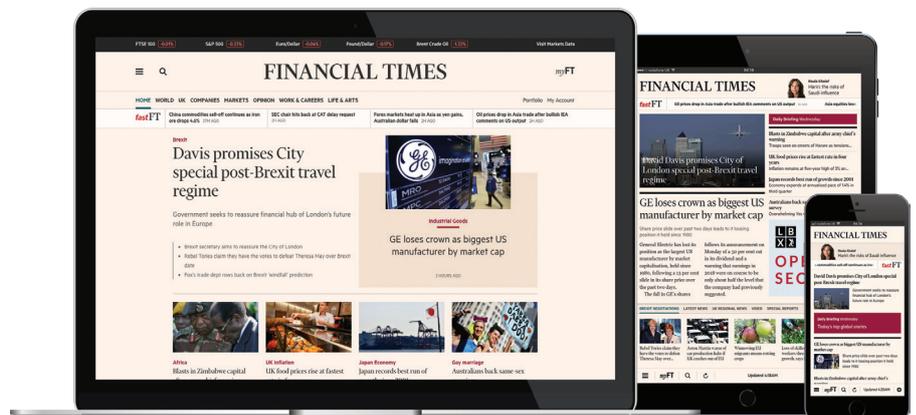
“It creates a common language to use a high-quality news source as well. It helps that it’s not only in research papers where these topics are discussed, but also discussed in the Financial Times. It makes it easier to communicate about them and their importance.”



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