

STATEMENT BY THE JYVÄSKYLÄ CITIZEN'S PANEL

The impact of the city's savings on
residents' everyday lives

27 May 2024

STATEMENT BY THE JYVÄSKYLÄ CITIZEN'S PANEL - THE IMPACT OF THE CITY'S SAVINGS ON RESIDENTS' EVERYDAY LIVES

At the beginning of the panel work, the panelists were asked what things made Jyväskylä a good place to live in. The panelists stated that Jyväskylä is a good place to live in for reasons such as it being of a suitable size and mainly a safe and communal place. Jyväskylä has good opportunities for hobbies and physical activity and diverse cultural spectrum. There are plenty of educational opportunities available. The beautiful natural environment with its lakes and hills is always present in Jyväskylä.

During the actual panel work, the Citizen's Panel examined the savings made by the City and assessed their impact on various population groups.

The panel considers that the impacts accumulate unreasonably on some sub-groups. These include many inhabitants who are in a disadvantaged position, and especially children and young people. The panel obliges decision-makers to take care of pre-emptive services.

The direct impacts of the austerity measures on residents of Jyväskylä who are in a secure economic situation are limited.

The Citizen's Panel has approved the statement by a vote: yes 27 – no 0.



1. The austerity measures influence residents who are already in a disadvantaged position

When policy decisions on savings are made, the decisions have to withstand the test of time, because restarting operations is always more expensive than maintaining them. The panel points out that the savings made by the Government of Finland and the Wellbeing Services County should also be taken into account in the City's savings so that the same target groups are not affected.

When the savings are examined in more detail, it can be seen that the savings are now accumulating on those residents who are already in a disadvantaged position. Even minor cutbacks can lead them into a negative spiral. The panel emphasises that those in need and in a vulnerable position suffer the

most in all age groups. The savings are particularly hard on those with an immigrant background, people with reduced mobility, neuroatypical people and, for example, low-income pensioners, unemployed and those working part-time. The savings are unreasonable for children in special groups, early adolescents, young people and young adults.

The panel therefore asks policy-makers to pay attention to those in a disadvantaged position. Marginalised people are always at a risk in all population groups. Combating inequality has a positive effect on all population groups. Care should be taken of the weakest.

Comments to the decision-makers:

- Residents who are inflicted by several factors undermining their social position are most affected.
 - *For example, a single parent with an immigrant background and a special needs child may not find employment so easily. In this case, that person is also on a low income, and the effects of austerity measures accumulate on such persons.*
- Cutbacks are made in the Wellbeing Services County and at the national level, and these will affect the same vulnerable groups.
- Social background often correlates with a poor financial situation.
- Increases in the prices of physical activity services and cultural services will have a particular impact on those on low incomes.
- The opportunity to use public transport is important for all groups. However, savings on mobility, in other words public transport, winter maintenance of roads and routes as well as parking, accumulate especially on people with reduced mobility, the elderly and those on low incomes. Persons with reduced mobility and persons with intellectual disabilities are subject to unreasonably many austerity measures related to mobility: deteriorating public transport, lesser snow ploughing and higher parking fees. It is important for the independence, self-confidence and self-determination of persons with intellectual disabilities and persons with reduced mobility to be able to be mobile and not be dependent on others.
 - *For example, the deterioration of public transport (increasing ticket prices, fewer services and ending transport to the indoor swimming pool) may lead to poorer employment opportunities and social life.*

2. The panel pays attention to savings concerning children and young people

The panel identified 45 austerity measures targeted at children and families with children. There are too many savings influencing children, young people and young adults. Savings on children and young people have an immediate impact on their and their families' lives, but the savings also have visible and significant long-term impacts.

Children and young people cannot choose the environment in which they are born, so it is important to provide them with sufficient services and support. Cutbacks on children and young people have an indirect impact on society as a whole. It is precisely children and young people who benefit most from pre-emptive measures, so these measures should not be subject to austerity measures. They unfairly put children and young people in an unequal position.

Comments to the decision-makers:

- The combined effect of the savings is unreasonable for many children and young people.
- Savings on school and leisure time are especially targeted at those in need of special support. As an example, reducing weekly teaching hours makes learning difficult, especially for pupils with learning difficulties or with no support for learning at home. There should be no reduction in school staff. Learning, safety and ability to focus on one's own work must be guaranteed in schools and daycare centres.
- The savings now made have an impact on opportunities for hobbies and physical activity by those with most limited means. The opportunities for hobbies and physical activity must be secured.
- Those using public transport are subject to too many austerity measures. For example, on-call daycare centres may be located far away, bus ticket prices will go up and bus services in sparsely populated areas are being reduced.
- There is a concern that an increase in mental ill-health will bring more restlessness, insecurity and the possibility of violence both in schools and on the streets. In the background, there are longer development trends, which escalate with the savings.
- The sense of community spirit and inclusion of young people must be supported. They must be involved in joint debate and decision-making.

3. The effects of cutbacks targeted at young people are far-reaching

Young people need to be given the message that they are important to the City. The combined effects of the cutbacks are unreasonable for young people, especially those at a risk of social exclusion. The cutbacks now made in the services for young people will bring costs later.

Some of the savings resulting from the cutbacks targeted at young people are small in financial terms, but their impacts are far-reaching, for example in the case of youth workshops. The price of young people's social exclusion is unreasonable for society as a whole – those paying the final bill are the local government, the Wellbeing Services County and the state, but also the young person's family and closest people.

Comments to the decision-makers:

- The savings resulting from the reduction of youth workers and the service network of youth facilities and youth workshops are small when compared to their positive effects on the target population. The impacts may be unreasonable, especially for young people at a risk of social exclusion.
- Youth services are low-threshold early support services that can be used in pre-emptive work, taking into account issues such as mental health challenges faced by young people.
- Youth facilities offer opportunities for developing a community spirit and for inclusion. They can be the only place where there is a safe adult to talk to. This also plays a role in integration and attachment to society.
- Young people do not have the same channels of influence and opportunities (such as the right to vote) to be heard about the cutbacks that affect them. It is therefore important to ensure active consultation of young people in the development of services and functions and to give them an active opportunity to do things themselves and act on their own.
- Activities targeted at young people should be developed rather than discontinued. As an example, the panel highlights workshop activities, the pre-emptive effect of which has been verified. According to youth statistics, about half of the young people participating in workshops find their place positively in society after the workshop period, instead of being excluded from society, which entails significant costs. Opportunities for co-operation with organisations and companies could also be explored in the development of workshop activities.

4. Pre-emptive services are important

The panel notes the importance of pre-emptive services and the need to avoid targeting austerity measures on them. In addition to pre-emptive services, cultural and physical activity services increase the wellbeing of all residents.

The deterioration of services promoting wellbeing is reflected in the costs of social and health services in the Wellbeing Services County. It is important to make timely input in pre-emptive services: a small amount of money now may bring big savings in the future.

Comments to the decision-makers:

- Cutting pre-emptive services will bring savings in the short term, but manifold costs in the long term.
- There is a need to look more closely at the consequences of the discontinuation of pre-emptive services: for example, cutting down on workshop activities will cause significant costs, not savings. It has to be assessed whether cutbacks on issues such as youth facility services or reducing the resources of school instructors will also result in costs rather than savings.
- Savings made in different sectors have an accumulative effect. The panel therefore hopes for comprehensive and multidisciplinary planning for decision-making in order to understand the cutbacks made by many different public sector parties and the impact of the cutbacks on the lives of residents of Jyväskylä..



COMPOSITION AND METHODS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESIDENTS' PANEL

A random sample of 32 inhabitants of the City of Jyväskylä of different ages and living in different parts of Jyväskylä and in different life situations were selected on the Residents' Panel of Jyväskylä. The Residents' Panel was tasked with assessing the impacts of the savings decided in the 2024 budget on the everyday lives of local inhabitants and highlighting what should be taken into account in the 2025 budget to ensure that the savings do not unreasonably burden any population group.

Invitations to the Residents' Panel were sent to 1800 randomly selected 15 to 89-year-old residents of Jyväskylä. Prospective participants were asked about their age, gender, country of birth, family type, educational background, life situation and residential area as background information. Of the 159 applicants, 32 participants were picked by drawing lots based on the background information in order to compile a comprehensive sample of Jyväskylä in a miniature size. Five participants left the panel during the process, so 27

participants were finally involved in drafting and adopting the statement.

The panel participants familiarised themselves with the economy of the City of Jyväskylä and the balancing measures that were decided in the budget for 2024 and that are directly reflected in services and local residents' everyday lives. The participants got to know these issues through presentations by experts of the City, video lectures by financial management, and printed material. The panel had three meetings, and an electronic working platform was also used between the meetings. During the meetings, the panel prepared a joint statement to support the preparation of the budget.

A Residents' Panel compiled through random sampling was experimented now for the first time to support decision-making by the City of Jyväskylä. The Residents' Panel trial is funded by the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra. The events were planned and carried out by an external facilitator together with the City's inclusion services.



JOIN THE CITIZENS' PANEL FOR CITY BUDGET PLANNING!



Dear, Jyväskylä resident! You have been invited to participate in the City of Jyväskylä's Citizens' Panel. This invitation has been randomly extended to selected residents, and you are one of them!

As a panelist, you will engage in discussions with other participants about how the cost-saving measures decided in the 2024 budget will impact people's daily lives. The goal is to find a balance in financial planning so that the effects do not excessively affect any specific group.

We would like to hear your thoughts on what aspects Jyväskylä should prioritize to remain an attractive and good place to live in the future.

When are the meetings held and what is required from me?

No special skills are required to participate in the panel. You will get the necessary background information from the experts. The panel, consisting of approximately 30 people, will meet three times during the spring. These discussions will lead to a joint statement that will support the 2025 budget preparation and be shared with the public.

Panel participants are expected to commit to attending at meetings and familiarize themselves with the topics discussed between sessions.

Panelists will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the budget proposals from various committees and evaluate their experience with the panel process in the autumn.

Participants will receive compensation: 200 € for spring and 100 € for autumn. In addition, travel expenses will be covered.

Please register for the panel by March 17th by filling out the form at this Webropol link: link.webropol.com/s/ilmoittaudu-asukaspaneeliin.

If you have any problems with the form or have further questions, please contact **Matleena Kantola, Participation Coordinator**, at **+358 50 350 8698**, from Monday to Thursday from 8 a.m to 4 p.m. or matleena.kantola@jyvaskyla.fi.

We'll select 30 different participants for the panel from those who have registered. Selected participants will be informed by April 5th.

The invitation has been sent to 1800 randomly selected Jyväskylä residents aged 15-89. Names and addresses were randomly drawn from the digital and population information register.

The panel will be conducted in Finnish. If you need assistance with the Finnish language, please indicate it in the registration form.

*Thank you for your interest in
shaping Jyväskylä's future!*

Mayor
Timo Koivisto

City Board member
Timo Lehtonen

Meetings at Piippuranta Club in Jyväskylä,
Kangas (Paperitehtaankatu 1):

- Tuesday, April 16th, from 5 to 8 p.m
- Saturday, April 27th, from 9 a.m to 4 p.m
- Monday, May 6th, from 5 to 8 p.m

Compensation: 200€



The form at Webropol

JYVÄSKYLÄ