

How Forum Virium Helsinki Built a Lean, End-to-End Digital Operations Platform with Podio Software

CASE STUDY

FORUM VIRIUM HELSINKI

COMPANY

Forum Virium Helsinki

INDUSTRY

Public Sector/Nonprofit, Innovation, City Development

PRODUCT

Progress® Podio®

COUNTRY

Finland

SUMMARY

Forum Virium Helsinki is the City of Helsinki's innovation company, working with businesses, universities, public sector organizations and residents to develop and pilot new urban solutions.

Much of its work is built around EU-funded projects, where collaboration spans multiple cities, partners and stakeholders. These initiatives require careful coordination, structured reporting and ongoing visibility into how work is progressing.

“We save a lot of money. The amount of saved money over 10 years using Podio is massive.”

Juhani Kantola
CIO, Forum Virium Helsinki

Challenge

As the organization grew into a 60-person operation, managing partnerships and internal workflows across EU-funded projects, each with its own reporting requirements, stakeholders and timelines, became increasingly unwieldy—especially when considering the lean administrative team supporting HR, finance and a single person responsible for IT. It was quickly becoming apparent that the organization needed systems that could do more with less resources.

Early on, there was no single system everyone worked from. Teams relied on a mix of tools, between spreadsheets, shared drives and project-specific platforms like Trello, which made it difficult to maintain a consistent view across projects or track information in a structured way.

That fragmentation became increasingly difficult to manage alongside the organization's broader responsibilities. In addition to project work, they needed to support HR processes, manage thousands of external contacts, coordinate events and meet strict EU reporting requirements—all without adding new systems or increasing administrative overhead.

As the organization grew, that model started to create friction. Keeping information aligned, workflows consistent and reporting accurate required more coordination than their structure could support. needed.”

Solution: Letting the System Grow Within the Organization

Forum Virium Helsinki didn't replace everything at once. They started with a small number of use cases and built up from there. The Progress® Podio® platform was first introduced for project management and customer relationship management (CRM). Over time, as the team saw what was possible, they began using it across more parts of the organization, gradually turning it into the system that supports nearly every department and process.

Today, the Podio platform supports a wide range of operations, from project tracking and reporting to HR workflows, event management and internal coordination. And instead of managing work across multiple tools, teams now operate within a single, connected environment.

A few things made the difference:

- Bringing project and operational data into one place, so teams weren't relying on separate tools
- Structuring workflows so processes were followed consistently throughout projects and departments
- Connecting systems and processes, so information flowed without needing to be re-entered
- Making it easier to see what was happening in different projects without having to track down updates

From there, the team continued building more advanced workflows.

HR processes, for example, are now managed entirely within the Podio platform. Development discussions, absence requests, education budgets and remote work approvals are handled through structured forms and automated workflows, with access controls in place to keep sensitive information secure.

Project and event workflows are also closely connected. Public registrations feed directly into the organization's CRM, allowing them to track participation and relationships over time. With more than 20,000 contacts, keeping that information organized and usable is a key part of their day-to-day operations.

The Podio platform is also connected to other tools within the organization. Integrations with Google Workspace, email marketing platforms and web forms allow information to move between systems automatically, reducing manual work and helping keep everything aligned.

They also built automated reporting processes to support EU requirements. Project data, budgets and reporting timelines are tracked within the platform, with workflows and notifications helping teams stay on schedule and meet compliance expectations.

In some cases, that information is shared externally. In response, project data connects directly to public-facing visualizations on their website, allowing stakeholders to see progress without requiring manual updates.

Results: Operating at Scale Without Adding Overhead

With the Podio platform supporting nearly every area of the organization, Forum Virium Helsinki has been able to grow without expanding its administrative footprint.

Instead of introducing new systems or increasing headcount, they've built a model where a small team can support a wide range of operations—while still meeting the demands of complex, multi-stakeholder projects.

The impact shows up in a few key ways:

- Greater visibility across projects, with a clearer view of progress, data and reporting
- Less reliance on manual processes from HR, reporting and event coordination
- More consistent way to manage projects, relationships and internal workflows
- Added ability to support a 60-person organization with a lean administrative and IT structure

“We didn't realize at first how well the Podio platform could grow. It became the building block for many operations.”

Juhani Kantola
CIO, Forum Virium Helsinki

That approach has also helped keep IT cost ratios lower than those of similar organizations. By consolidating multiple use cases into one system and reducing the need for additional tools, Forum Virium Helsinki has been able to avoid tool sprawl and now operates with a lower IT cost ratio than comparable organizations. This consolidation also enables teams to work more efficiently across projects, supporting greater output without increasing overhead and saving both time and money.

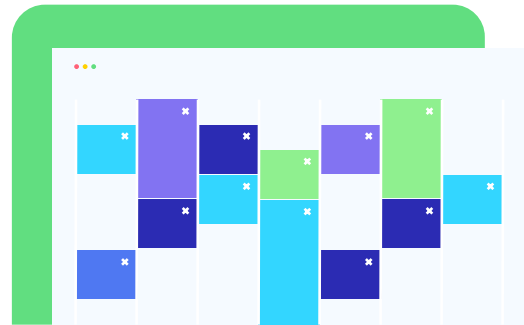
Looking Ahead

Forum Virium Helsinki continues to build on the system it has developed over time.

A key focus moving forward is expanding the use of AI-assisted workflows to better leverage the organization's data. With more than a decade of project and partner information stored in the Podio platform, the team is exploring ways to connect historical data with future EU funding opportunities—helping identify the right partners, projects and themes for upcoming initiatives.

They are also continuing to refine integrations and workflows across their existing systems, with the goal of reducing manual work even further while maintaining accuracy and control.

As the organization grows, the goal is still the same: not adding more tools, but continuing to develop the system they already have in place so it can support the next stage of growth.



Explore how the Podio platform can help simplify workflows and improve operational visibility.





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Worldwide Headquarters

Progress Software Corporation
15 Wayside Rd, Suite 400, Burlington, MA01803, USA
Tel: +1-800-477-6473

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