



Action: Strategic Partnerships



EPOS MULTIPLIER EVENT IN FINLAND – A SHORT DESCRIPTION

Venue

The EPOS Multiplier Event in Finland was organized on Thursday, 26th May 2016 13-16 in Mikkeli, in the Kenkävero Vicarage's Lake Pavillion. Kenkävero is an old vicarage serving today as a tourist attraction. The milieu is impressive. There are fine restored buildings, exciting exhibitions and events, exquisite handicrafts as gifts or souvenirs. In summer there is a garden and handicraft workshops, and delicious food is served in the restaurant daily all year round.



Target audience

The target audience of the event was the educational organizations in the region of Southern Savo. Because the schools end their semester by June, and the staff leaves for their summer holidays, the event had to be organized before that, in May. Also some entrepreneurs producing and processing organic food were invited; the spring time is, however, busy time for the producers. Some other important stakeholders were represented, such as the local representative of the Finnish Organic Association and the director of the Finnish Organic Research Institute.

There is a strong tradition of co-operation between local education institutions, Ruralia Institute, Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences and South Savo Vocational College, in co-creating and executing various EU-funded (regional development) projects. The Epos Multiplier Event was organized as a spring forum aimed especially at enhancing the cooperation between the institutions, and it offered also an opportunity to update what is going on in the joint projects of the participants.

Participants

Heli Ahonen, The Finnish Organic Association
Taisto Hirvonen, South Savo Vocational College
Torsti Hyyryläinen, University of Helsinki, Ruralia Institute
Sari Iivonen, University of Helsinki, Ruralia Institute
Laura Kuismala, South Savo Vocational College
Eeva Kuoppala, Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences

Ritva Mynttinen, University of Helsinki, Ruralia Institute
Minna Pasila, Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences
Jaakko Pitkänen, Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences
Taru Potinkara, Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences
Pekka Pulkkinen, Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences
Teija Pylkkänen, South Savo Vocational College
Pirjo Siiskonen, University of Helsinki, Finnish Organic Research Institute
Anna-Maija Torniainen, Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences
Eeva Uusitalo, University of Helsinki, Ruralia Institute

Specific topics

The title of the event was Innovative Education towards the Needs of the Labour Market, and the presentation of the EPOS-project, including the Erasmus+ funding possibilities took most of the time. In addition to it, there were shorter 'snapshots' on regional co-operation projects. The present co-operation revolves around entrepreneurship education, new ways of teaching and innovative pedagogy.

Discussions

The EPOS presentation inspired the audience to vivid discussion on the various innovative experiments in teaching. The participants had many examples and good results in teaching in which the students work with real life cases, similar to the one tested in EPOS project. Of the teaching methods tested in EPOS, the problem solving project was considered most interesting as a participatory learning environment. Some suggestions were made to develop problem solving projects even further, eg. students could participate also in the planning phase of the course. It was suggested also, that several student groups could have the same stakeholder/phenomenon/village/enterprise as their object of study, that is, each group would have their own viewpoint to the same target. This kind of project work could also be carried out in a virtual platform, where the real-life case would be constructed.



Of the other methods tested in EPOS-project, e-learning is mainstreamed already in Finland, and summer courses are difficult to be organized because of the summer vacations. (Although an intensive course could be arranged all year round, and there are many possibilities in them to be experimented). Additionally, challenges of multidisciplinary courses were discussed, and also the idea of collaborative learning. One interesting notion was the role of the teacher in the interface between working life and teaching, and the need to educate also the teachers to be able to operate in this boundary area, and guide the students efficiently.

There was also discussion on how the internships could be more efficient and more useful on the organic farms, and some concrete ideas how Finnish Organic Research Institute and the educational institution could co-operate in teaching.