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# NEW OPPORTUNITIES WITH CROSS BORDER COOPERATION – CROSS BORDER CORRIDOR EVENTS

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**The new global situation caused by the pandemic required new solutions, which led us to create a new event to foster the development of Finnish-Russian cross-border cooperation without physical interaction or presence, this is how the development of the Cross-Border Corridor had started.**

## **SO, WHAT IS THE CROSS-BORDER CORRIDOR?**

The Cross-Border corridor consists of two parts, the first event is organised to serve the needs of Russian companies and second one vice-versa. This productive, two-day creation and networking event aims to assist entrepreneurs to find the solutions for their cross-border-related problems and find potential partners abroad. For this, a case company sends the information about their business, clients, location, and other relevant information to the recipient.

The recipient part consists of professionals, business students, and companies from a local country. They provide the expertise and the knowledge of the target country. The company and the working teams actively interact and develop the solutions to the problems which leads to the final presentations of works and suggestions for the case companies. The first part organized for the Russian companies is held 18-19.11.2020. and the second one, for Finnish companies 10-11.12.2020.

“The Corridor” was realized entirely online, using Zoom for communication and documentation. All the work, including presentations, teamwork and briefing as well as the education programme was done on the platform. During the first Cross-Border Corridor, the teams were introduced to The Mural, a flexible digital workspace for visual teamwork, featuring sticky notes, text, shapes, icons, images etc.

At the beginning of the event the companies were presenting their needs for cross border development as well as basic information about the company to the workshop participants. The participants were then divided into teams of 4-5 persons based on their personal interest to work with specific company / companies. All the companies got a team to solve the challenge they gave to the event. During the first day the participants of the event found out more about the companies, their products, their competitors and the interest of the users towards the products the companies are offering. The next morning the participants of the event and the companies met to discuss more in detail about the needs and expectations of the companies. Based on these deep information sessions, the event participants focused on the specific needs of the company. The main customers, their needs and expectations were identified. Also the opportunities for the companies were described. Possible future channels for marketing, possible partners and funding opportunities were discovered. Participants of the event were also, based on the research done, sharing their views about what should be the next steps to do in order to get the products of the company to markets. All these results were shared and discussed individually by the participants and the company.

### **WHO WAS ATTENDING THE EVENT?**

During the first event, 8 Russian companies sent information about their products, services and cases in issue to the Finnish participants. Case companies were mainly from the Republic of Karelia and they were interested to see the results of the works that concerned the challenges in starting business in Finland or other relevant issues. Practical example of a case company, a food manufacturer, that produces healthy foods is interested in finding a Finnish retailer and a partner that could deliver the products to Finland. The other cases were similarly scalable and realistic. The company cases provided real challenges that a company faces when looking to expand over the borders.

Among Finnish cases there were also 8 companies from various fields including Art Centre, beauty salon, hotel, culture associations and others. The companies were searching the answers to the challenges like finding distribution challenges, new ideas and suggestions to the target country and clients. We also have received feedback from some companies. According to one

of the companies, the results of the event were satisfying and potentially will be used in favor of the company. Among the most important learnings in the event, according to participating companies, were related to customer behaviour and communication. We received positive feedback related to the arrangement of the event, however the point of improvement from the point of view of the participant is that the time for company presentations was short, which was 2-3 minutes.

## **SO, WHAT IS THE CROSS-BORDER CORRIDOR?**

The Cross Border Corridor event was organized in cooperation with the following Karelia CBC funded projects: CULTA, TourSME and BUSY. For more information, the project websites can be seen below.

BUSY – Business for Youngsters: <https://kareliabc.fi/fi/projects/busy-business-youngsters-ka4022>

CULTA – Cultural Training and Activation Initiative: <https://kareliabc.fi/en/projects/culta>

TourSME – Tourism Cooperation Between SMEs: <https://kareliabc.fi/fi/projects/tourism-cooperation-between-smes>