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Author(s): Timonen, Liisa; Nenonen, Marjo; Tolkki, Jaana; Immonen, Heikki

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HUOM! TÄMÄ ON RINNAKKAISTALLENNE

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Tekijä(t): Timonen, Liisa; Nenonen, Marjo; Tolkki, Jaana; Immonen, Heikki

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INVEST FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION!

SALES PITCH

We need to foresee future and grow entrepreneurial competences, skills and opportunities for students and staff widely. In this session we will share concrete examples and good practices on how our [INVEST European University alliance](#) develops innovative and entrepreneurial higher education strategies and practice.

1. BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

The world around us is changing faster and faster. The work changes and new professions arise daily, population ages and the need to consider and take responsibility of climate change grows exponentially. The transversal competences like creativity, initiative, tenacity, teamwork, understanding of risk, taking responsibility and having resilience are more needed than ever; and those competences can be supported with innovative and entrepreneurial higher education.

Streamlining the process of innovative and entrepreneurial higher education for all is one of the key challenges in higher education. Innovative actions and good practices are needed for all the Europe's benefit as we need to increase competitiveness and productivity. The entrepreneurial competence development should be embedded into all types of higher education from degree studies to various modes of continuous learning. That is what we do in our INVEST European University Alliance.

In INVEST, the accent is put on gaining knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for sustainable and responsible regional development in its broad sense. One of the three focal points is to educate entrepreneurial thinking, business skills and leadership in a way, where independent and critical thinking, civic consciousness, sustainability and responsibility are crucial. The other two focal points are water, energy, food and environment nexus and quality of life. INVEST aims at fostering sustainable and responsible entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial mindset in regional economies. We do this by building joint, international entrepreneurial learning pathways for students, and collaborate closely with our working life partners.

The aim of this case is to first, share and spread the applicable process and some results of our INVEST alliance project, second, encourage others to apply the tools in curriculum development supporting quality and relevance of higher education. Finally, the aim is to raise the awareness of our European University alliance and invite new members into the dialogue.

2. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

INVEST develops engaged education addressing labour market needs in the partner regions. Most of the partner regions lack of competent labor due to ageing and thus decreasing population. We aim at providing flexible study programs and continuous education benefitting from online learning and various public training opportunities. Graduates and lifelong learners with innovative and entrepreneurial mindset can have a positive input into the regional economies and well-being.

INVEST exploratory entrepreneurship pathway is to be built with an open and flexible manner that enable the students' participation not depending on their study status. The pathway will include different types of learning opportunities: entrepreneurial studies (number of ECTS and micro-credentials available to be confirmed), business innovation and idea generation programme & competition, hackathons, innocamps and different forms of coaching. Students can include these into their INVEST specialization programmes, full degrees or continuous learning bucket to re- and/or upscale competences while already in the working life. Also, teachers' ability, competences and skills to foster innovative and entrepreneurial education are supported within the joint staff development process.

Entrepreneurial education is embedded into education development entity, where we do a lot. First, we build 16 joint degrees, 3 summer schools and 3 winter schools, and create pathways for continuous learning. We also create INVEST Living Labs into all the partner regions together with the business partners. We also build thematic research groups and facilitate flow and co-creation of knowledge with our training of trainers programme. ToT programme enable peer learning and co-creation of competences and skills. All these key areas include physical, virtual and/or hybrid mobility and enable involvement and participation. The opportunities to discuss and elaborate entrepreneurship among all these is systematically worked with.

3. OUTCOMES / IMPACT

As the key outcome, we aim at establish a visible and recognised innovation ecosystem serving entrepreneurial learning, innovation and actions. In this innovation ecosystem, the learning pathway will include elements of Business Academy, DRAFT-programme, Epic Challenge, Entrepreneurial Week and Start me up-competition. These innovations and learning tools are already existing and in active use at Karelia University of Applied Sciences, who coordinate the entrepreneurial education development in INVEST. Some of the actions in North Karelia, Finland, are open for the students from vocational education, universities of applied sciences and academic universities and some even to staff members. The diverse, multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach offers a floor for meaningful competence development, and is to be modelled in INVEST alliance, too.

As the INVEST exploratory entrepreneurship education pathway is still under construction, at this stage we can share reflections over the process and some estimations about the benefits and impacts. All the higher education graduates, no matter what their major or degree is, do need these competences and skills. All of us dealing with the process need to constantly and carefully while applying, and later, while implementing, consider how to ensure the use of the results? The key element here is the real integration with the organisational strategies, curriculum development processes and actions among all partners. When we do develop things that are directly driven from our strategic aims and goals, we are definitely on the right track.

The beneficiaries are the HEI students, both degree students and lifelong learners, HEI staff, regional businesses and working life as a whole. With our actions, we can in our turn support the regional employability, competitiveness, productivity and responsibility to foster sustainable future for us all.

4. LESSONS LEARNED

The INVEST exploratory entrepreneurial pathway will support concrete innovativeness of education, development of teachers' and students' competences as well as increase numbers of virtual and physical mobility. Thus, the integration of the results into everyday practices in

organisations is part of curriculum development and HR-development processes – what we do remains and grows in time.

Yet the process is not so simple as it might sound. The primary challenges met so far are the several parallel development processes we are working with, difficulties in harmonizing the offering of studies at partner HEIs enabling joint actions and use of resources, different approaches in staff competence development, timing challenges and even different kinds of interpretations of what making the aims and objectives alive means in practice.

There is no short-cut to mitigate the challenges – or at least we haven't found one. Our process relies on systematic co-creation, open dialogue, negotiations, agile development allowing testing, failing and learning, and openly shared documentation. We just need to devote a lot of time for simply working together to create and design processes and tools that are applicable for all. And we need the acceptance and support of the HEI management of all the partners to enable the change. In practice, it means compromises, where possible, adjustment of requirements, where possible, and re-thinking, where possible, and creating a lot of involvement and ownership for the whole process.

5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

The more challenging and constantly changing operational environment drives the higher education institutes really to consider how can we achieve the results, meet with the future working life and rapidly changing society and build a bright world for us all. This consideration recalls strategic, profound and open operational environment supporting quality and relevance of higher education really meeting with the needs and looking for the future.

Building and promoting innovative and entrepreneurial education is one of key tools in this strategic development process. As long-term priority, with INVEST innovation ecosystem serving entrepreneurial learning, innovation and actions, we will be working to strengthen the university-business relationship to become a driver of the sustainable and responsible development of the regions being an active part of the regional economy and community.

Authors: **Liisa Timonen**, Marjo Nenonen, Jaana Tolkki

Contributor: Heikki Immonen