

## **Press Release: Cross-Border Collaboration for Entrepreneurship and Sustainability: Students and Teachers Connect in Oulu**

Over 70 high school students and teachers from northern Finland and Sweden met on the 10.-11.5.2023 in Oulu to collaborate around entrepreneurship education and sustainable development. City of Oulu's BusinessAsema offered great facilities for the kick off – meeting. The event was part of a new three-year Interreg Aurora funded project run by City of Oulu, Ung Företagsamhet Norrbotten and Vocational College Lappia.

During the visit, teachers and students learnt and discussed about entrepreneurship, sustainable development, and cross-border collaboration. They also visited four different companies in Oulu and learnt about their sustainability work. Company visits took place in Nallikari Holiday Village, gaming company Fingersoft, recycling company Kiertokaari and the research institute VTT. Students and teachers also got to know local food culture during their dinner at the Rauhala restaurant, which is known for its sustainable approach to dining.

” I think that we had two very full days. The event was a lot of fun and we had great companionship during the whole exchange. We really got to practice networking. Meeting like this helps us connect across the border and it is a way to combine learning new things, having fun and getting in touch with new people. The exchange was organized in a way that we had to talk to people we didn't already know and that was a great benefit. Even if one comes from Finland and Sweden, we still have a lot in common”, says Marcus, a student from Strömbäckaskolan in Piteå, Sweden.

” It was great to exchange experiences and find out success factors that other teachers have. The school environment deals with everything from wellbeing to capacity development, so there were opportunities to have wide-ranging discussions” says Charlotte Lundmark, a teacher from Björknässkolan in Boden, Sweden. Her colleague Minna Mäkelä from Oulunsalo upper secondary school, Finland agreed and additionally emphasized the importance of networking possibilities. She also pointed out how amazing it was to see students overcoming their fears of speaking a foreign language and discussing with both students and teachers in English.

### **Project combines upper secondary education studies with working life and internationalization**

The goal of the project is to develop entrepreneurship education in Finland and Sweden in a multi-faceted way. The project connects sustainable development to entrepreneurship and develops the entrepreneurial culture in schools. This is done through different events, cooperation and collaboration projects, and meaningful meetings between teachers and students. This first meeting laid the foundation for the project, and the participants had an opportunity to give an input to the implementation of the project.

” I am especially looking forward getting more tools for international collaboration and for teaching to students the skills that are needed in working life,” says Anna-Helena Isopahkala, a teacher from Haukipudas upper secondary school, Finland.

” We teachers also need to gain positive input to be able to continue inspire the students, and we can get it through meeting other teachers “, says Maritha Eliasson, a teacher from Tornedalsskolan in Haparanda.

### **The event was about seeing and meeting new people**

The meeting offered both students and teachers the opportunity to get away from their regular studies and work, and their usual circumstances. During the two days, they gained new contacts and new perspectives. Expanding participants’ perspectives is one of the key elements in the project.

”It is useful to see new places and cultures and learn to communicate even though you don’t have the same mother tongue, it is difficult, but you learn a lot,” says Edla, a student from Strömbackaskolan in Piteå.

“The event was a really nice experience. It encouraged young people to international cooperation. It was interesting to visit and learn about the companies,” says Edith, a student from Vocational College Lappia.

### **The project dives deeper into world of entrepreneurship education in the future**

The project continues in September 2023 as almost 90 students and teachers will join the next event held in Oulu. Other events during the coming school year will be held in Luleå, Sweden. The project also facilitates virtual seminars for teachers as well as class to class collaboration project between participant schools. “After a successful Kick off -meeting and excellent collaboration between the partners, it is exciting to continue this project”, state project leaders Kati Ilkka (City of Oulu) and Linda Strandenhed (UF) together.

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### **Photos**

Oulu A – Swedish and Finnish teachers and students at an exchange in Oulu.

Oulu B – Dinner with local produce at the Rauhala restaurant.

Oulu C – Teachers and students at the study visit in Nallikari Holiday Village. From the top: Samuel Hagos, Mohamed Jabal, Heikki Soukka, Rasmus Järvenpää, Marcus Eriksson, Zainab Rezai, Minna Mäkelä, Anja Moilanen.

Oulu D - Teachers and students at the study visit in Nallikari Holiday Village. From left: Mohamed Jabal, Edith Hentilä, Anja Moilanen.

Oulu E - Teachers and students at the study visit in Kiertokaari.

### **City of Oulu**

Oulu is the largest city in Northern Finland. It is situated by the Gulf of Bothnia, at the mouth of Oulu River. Oulu is the prominent provider of high-quality education and has throughout the years evolved into a growing modern center of competence. The city’s mission is to promote the overall well-being of individuals and society. City of

Oulu work sin different levels of education from early childhood to upper secondary and adult education. City runs 90 public early childhood education units, 46 comprehensive schools, and 11 upper secondary schools. The City of Oulu and the schools are the innovative forerunners of teaching philosophies in Northern Finland.

### **Ung Företagsamhet Norrbotten**

Ung Företagsamhet Norrbotten is a non-profit organization promoting entrepreneurship among Swedish students and facilitating relationships between industry and the Swedish school system. The cornerstone of Junior Achievement Sweden philosophy is that entrepreneurship can be taught.

### **Vocational College Lappia**

Vocational College Lappia have offices in Kemi, in Loue in Tervola, in Muonio, Rovaniemi and Tornio. The operating area of Lappia covers 30 per cent of Finland's surface area. There are about 4500 students in Lappia and about 350 employees.