



Good practice

Living Labs – Laurea: Co-producing knowledge with local communities

Working Group: Territorial

Member State, Region: Finland, Uusimaa

Thematic areas: Jobs and Skills, Quality of Life and Equal Access to Services

Basic project details

Lead organisation:

Laurea University of Applied Sciences – Finland

Partner organisations:

The Partner organisations are representative of the following sectors: Healthcare and Social Services, Technology and IT Services, Construction and Real Estate, Retail and Consumer Services, Financial Services, Logistics and Transportation, Education and Training, and Non-Profit and Community Services.

Project duration: 2006 – Ongoing



Overview and objectives

The Living Labs are hubs managed by a Higher Education Institution (HEI), which puts forward state-of-the-art resources for learners to address a local/regional societal issue. The Lab identifies the challenge, the stakeholders (an industry, business, a group of citizens, media, governmental authorities, etc) and creates a learning programme. The students joining the programme develop their competences and obtain their degree while working on specific challenges, providing real-world experience and applied learning.

The Lab in Laurea has been implementing this model since 2006, launching and finalising various projects. The current projects account for a Digital Living Lab (with state-of-the-art resources such as robots and drones), a BarLaurea (which represents a space for work-based learning of learners in the Hotel, Restaurant, and Café/Catering (HORECA) sector, and

contributes to serving organic and local-based dishes), and the Event Living Lab (which supports the local event organising business). The experimentation is citizen-driven, co-creating challenges for digital inclusion, health services or sustainable tourism, while promoting creativity, diverse learning and multidisciplinary. It allows for the rapid experimentation within the community of ideas and prototypes developed by the HEI's staff and students.

The goal is to foster open innovation and shared partnership, combining the ideas, knowledge, and resources of different stakeholders to solve real-life problems.

Context

The problem aims to tackle specific community-based challenges, thus improving the quality of life in these communities. At the moment, it works on improving the event organisation industry in the Finnish region where it operates, the digital innovation in the region and providing a sustainable model for the HORECA industry. It also aims to boost partnerships between academia and the local industry, while preparing learners for the transition into the workplace.

Target groups

Students, Researchers, Local businesses, Communities.



Actions

Co-creation and open innovation operations, user-driven innovation, collaborative learning, rapid experimentation of ideas and prototypes. In a nutshell, it runs iterative project-based learning programmes. Normally, three such projects are running at the same time, and implemented until they are organically introduced into the fabric of the local community. The diversity of each project depends on the challenge identified, on the desires of the local community and stakeholders and on the solution with which the HEI's staff and students come up.

Financial allocation

Total budget: EUR 8 300 000 for 2023

EU co-funding: Yes

Sources of funding:

National and EU funding via the European Social Fund 2014-2020, Horizon2020, Horizon Europe

Working Group Insights

“In agreement with the other members of the Territorial WG, I selected this good practice because it uses existing regional resources to widen partnerships for community-based problem solving. The Living Labs are a world-wide example of collaboration with a Higher Education Institution at its centre. The specific example of Living Labs set up by the Laurea University of Applied Sciences expands the HEI's local and regional partnerships with businesses, community services, local and regional authorities among others for the benefit of preparing its learners while delivering a specific regional/local service.

By providing challenge-based learning experiences to its students, the project contributed to tailoring the learning experience to the needs of the community around while also making use of external partners' resources in enriching the learning experience. It helps to better prepare learners for the world of work, while upgrading the potential of the region and setting up longer-term solutions which will then require the retention of the talent that worked on identifying a solution to the challenge presented".

PIOTR SADOWSKI

Secretary General, Volonteuropa

Results

The project contributed to nurturing talent in the region by providing learners with real-life learning experience and a learning offer tailored to the needs of the community and labour market in their vicinity. The project contributed to retaining talent by providing opportunities for students and researchers to engage in real-world projects and innovation. The projects remain in the region, boosting the retention rate as graduate students can continue working on the projects as they are taken up in the community.

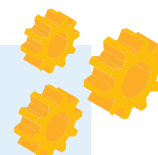


Success factors

Success factors include strong collaboration between academia, industry, and communities, as well as a focus on open innovation and rapid experimentation.

Implementation challenges

The main challenges included coordinating the diverse range of stakeholders involved, ensuring continuous engagement and collaboration, and managing the complexity of integrating various disciplines and sectors. Additionally, maintaining the balance between academic objectives and practical, real-world problem-solving posed significant challenges. These factors required robust communication strategies and adaptive management to ensure the project's success.



The conclusion of our expert Piotr Sadowski, Secretary General, Volonteuropa

"Laurea's 'Living Labs' embody the essence of lifelong learning, creating spaces where knowledge is co-produced with communities, skills evolve through real-world challenges, and learning extends beyond formal education into continuous engagement with society".

Useful sources

Official website: <https://www.laurea.fi/en/research/laurea-living-labs/>

<https://vitalise-project.eu/laurea-activity-living-lab/>

<https://enoll.org/member/laurea-living-labs-network/>

<https://tuotanto.laurea.fi/en/research/laurea-living-labs/>

<http://www.transitsocialinnovation.eu/sii/living-labs-1>

<https://www.laurea.fi/en/laurea/laurea-annual-report/annual-report-2023---rdi-and-business-operations/#:~:text=Annual%20Report%20%2D%20RDI%20and%20business%20operations&text=In%20three%20years%2C%20Laurea%20has,and%202023%2C%20EUR%208.3%20million>

<https://www.laurea.fi/avainkumppanuus/#avainkumppanimme>

<https://www.laurea.fi/en/international/event-living-lab/>

<https://www.laurea.fi/en/international/barlaurea/>

<https://www.laurea.fi/en/research/digital-living-lab/>

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