



BSRUN lives in three year life cycles. 2016 is the year of our Plenary Meeting (PM) which will be exceptionally organised back to back with the Annual BSRUN Forum on University Branding and Rankings at the University of Warsaw on 25-26 October 2016.

The PM will be organised in the afternoon (to facilitate travel in the morning) on 25 October followed by a reception. The Forum will be an all-day event on 26 October.

Usually, the PM is organised where the secretariat is located and, therefore, the location would now have been either Olsztyn or St. Petersburg. After a very careful consideration based on past experiences and the current situation in the region, the Steering Committee (SC) agreed that it is more important to organise both events on a location where participation could be expected to be the best possible. I do hope you agree with the SC. The University of Warsaw has recently hosted quite a few successful BSRUN events and this year the university is also celebrating its 200th anniversary.

The PM in Riga approved the current Rules and Regulations which came into force as of 1st January 2014. If member institutions wish to make changes to the Rules and Regulations, they have to inform the SC in writing at least three months (that is this time 25 July 2016) before the following PM for decision-making. If no changes are agreed by the PM, the present Rules and Regulations are automatically prolonged for three years. You can find the document on www.bsrunch.org under General information.

Member institutions are also invited to express their interest in the coordination of the network and hosting the secretariat and to make proposals about the next president of the organisation for 2017-19 by the same deadline of 25 July 2016. These invitations will be repeated in early June.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support to BSRUN and to encourage the participation of all you in the PM and Forum in Warsaw.

Yours sincerely,
Kari Hyppönen

BALTIC LIFESTYLE

Baltic Science Network successful kick-off



On April 7-8 representatives of the nine Baltic Sea countries gathered in Hamburg for the kick-off meeting of the new Interreg project “Baltic Science Network”.

Two years ago Senate of Hamburg proclaimed the initiative to establish new scientific network in the Baltic Sea region. The aim of the project is to better links universities, research institutions, scientists and students, to promote the joint acquisition of EU funds, and to increase research excellence in the Baltic region. The Hamburg Ministry of Science, Research and Equality successfully applied for funds from the EU’s INTERREG Vb Baltic Sea Region programme. Now, around three million have been granted for the establishment of a Baltic Science Network.

The network is not only a platform for closer communication between policymakers and decision-makers, but intends to initiate and implement joint concrete activities and projects that will foster science and research in the Baltic Sea Region. Relevant ministries, stakeholders and key actors from the science sector, such as universities and research institutions, will be closely involved in the design and implementation of these activities. The network is jointly organized by Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Russia.

The network will focus on the following areas:

- Establishment of the Network and joint presentation of interest
- Development of research and innovation excellence
- Mobility in Research and Higher Education
- Widening Participation in Research and Higher Education

The partners gathered in Hamburg to decide how to use available funding for establishment of transnational structures in the BSR where scientific policies are national, local and municipal. The work packages were discussed in separate groups, outlining the program for the coming year. As a result of the meeting a well-designed project plan.

Hamburg Senator and Minister for Education, Science and Equality Mrs. Katharina Fegebank said: “We have great universities and R&D infrastructure in the Baltic Sea region. Nevertheless, we have to optimize conditions for deeper cooperation between our scientists if we want to stay competitive on the global market. The BSN will concentrate our best recourses and will be the first ever project of cross-border scientific policy for the whole region”.

BSRUN is the associate partner of the BSN. The Network is also represented by University of Turku and UNECON (St. Petersburg) nominated by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and Russian Ministry of Education and Science respectively.

BALTIC LIFESTYLE

Forum Mare Balticum 2016

Towards Environmentally Smart Agriculture (ESA)



On April 19-21 2016, the international conference Agroforum Mare Balticum 2016, which concentrated on environmentally smart agriculture, took place at the Estonian University of Life Sciences (EMU) in Tartu. The participants discussed how to ensure efficiency, sustainability and profitability in the stringent environmental conditions and determine the balance between intensification and environmental sustainability in contemporary agriculture. The forum convened delegations from 18 countries. In addition to the Baltic and Nordic countries, representatives came from China, Italy, Germany, the UK, the USA and Russia.

Agroforum aims to bring together all stakeholders involved in agricultural development – policy makers, entrepreneurs and scientists – from all the Baltic Sea countries as well as from Eastern Partnership countries, forming a good platform for transferring know-how between the East and the West.

In his opening speech, Urmas Kruuse, the Minister for Rural Affairs of the Republic of Estonia stressed the importance of the proper management of natural resources and rural life, whereas the rector of the Estonian University of Life Sciences, Mait Klaassen, focused on the co-operation between different sectors and levels. The same problem was also raised by Raimund Jehle ((Deputy Regional Representative for Europe and Central Asia at FAO), who pointed out that very few people understand the role of agriculture in food production. R. Jehle emphasised that we need to feed a growing population in changing weather conditions. This, in turn, presents

significant challenges for agriculture. The solution, he says, is focusing on climate smart agriculture (CSA), which is a location-specific solution. CSA should be applied across scales, from national level to individual farms, across sectors and along the whole food value chain. Successful CSA requires an extensive support structure, government support, as well as services and financing schemes targeted at farmers. The application of CSA will above all, benefit the farmer.

By reduced tillage, crop rotation and crop cover it is possible to sequester and store soil carbon and produce more food and feed with less land use. To protect the environment and adopt to the climate change it is not necessary to reduce agricultural production. The solution may be just the opposite. Sustainable and a more intensive cultivation will help to save our planet through the sequestration of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Liisa Pietola, Chairwoman of the Copa-Cogeca Working Party on Environment, explained that a more efficient drainage of excess water from arable land, maintaining soil fertility, crop rotations and the preservation of biodiversity help to bind more carbon dioxide and increase crop yields. We should strive for a carbon-neutral production through recovered surpluses.

Speakers also came from other countries, including Belarus, Moldova, and Hungary, Italy and the UK. The representatives of the European Commission and the Director General of the Secretariat of the Council of the Baltic States (CBSS) took the floor.

Agroforum Mare Balticum 2016 was organised by the Estonian University of Life Sciences, and the Estonian Ministry of Rural Affairs together with the Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce, Council of the Baltic States and the Estonian Centre of Eastern Partnership. It is already the fourth time international forum Agroforum Mare Balticum has taken place at the EMU in Tartu. The rector of the EMU is confident that the forum contributes to recognising the importance of agriculture in all our lives, not only from food production, but also from the biodiversity preservation and promotion of rural life point of view.

BEHIND THE SCENE

Competence Development and University Curricula



On 18 May the international seminar “Competence Development and University Curricula” was held at Belarusian State Pedagogical University (BSPU) in Minsk.

The goal of the seminar was to discuss the mechanisms of competence shaping and development in the framework of the university curricula in the Bologna process context. The seminar discussions made special emphasis on development of system of continuous pedagogical education for sustainable development, the role of higher education in improving employability and the learning outcomes development process. It was important that seminar allowed to review pedagogical methodology in Belarus and triggered discussion on its renewal.

Opening the seminar Minister of Education Dr. Mikhail Zhuravkov underlined importance of international cooperation for the development of higher education in Belarus fostering academic mobility of students and teaching staff.

In his speech BSPU rector Dr. Alexander Zhuk recalled Belarusian experience and development program of pedagogical education for sustainability 2020. The keynote speaker prof. Jose Gines Mora, University college of London, presented results of research related to the role of universities in students employment. Prof. Mora underlined importance of ideological changes towards competence not only by students but professors as well. The panel session ended by presentations of international

speakers from University of Byalostok (Anna Rybak) and University of Turku (Eila Lindfors) with practical results of competence approach in teacher training.

The second part of the seminar was dedicated to challenges and processes of teaching in Belarusian universities. The panel discussion included Alexander Rytov from Belarus State University, Sergey Pershun from Polotsk State University, Irina Shestitko from BSPU, Valentina Simkhovich from Belarus State University of Economics, Alexey Khomich from Brest State University and Igor Titovich from Republican Institute of Higher Education. The discussions covered prospects for higher education of Belarus in the context of the Bologna process, experience of the implementation European master and double degree master programmes in Belarus, university's experience in reforming/adapting the curricula to the Bologna standards for teaching new competences, including previous Tempus projects.

The final part of the seminar included presentations about recent and planned educational projects as Olga Semenova from UNECON told about English teacher training program in framework of EuroFaculty Pskov project and Adela Garcia-Aracil from TU Valencia informed about content of the new project on methodology reform of education in Belarus.

The discussions may be continued at International NordFo Conference in Rauma, Finland on September 28-30.

Fostering Competencies Development In Belarusian Higher Education - FOSTERC



FOSTERC

Dr. Adela García Aracil

INGENIO (CSIC-UPV)

Technical University of Valencia (Spain)

During the first trimester of 2016, the institute INGENIO (CSIC-UPV), a joint research institute of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) and the Technical University of Valencia (UPV), submitted a proposal to the Erasmus+ Programme Capacity Building in Higher Education: FOSTERC.

Focusing on the National priorities fixed by Belarus, the main aim of FOSTERC is to support the modernisation of governance, management and functioning of Belarusian Higher Education Institutions.

For that, FOSTERC will:

- Provide indicators for conceptualize learning outcomes in terms of competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes)
- Upgrade and improve innovative training methods and the development of pedagogical creativity
- Equip Belarusian Higher Education Institutions with the necessary information tool to facilitate the implementation of internal and external quality assurance systems/guidelines
- Modernize the systems and practices of data collection and analysis in the Belarusian HE system through the development of an integrated 'Management Information System' improving HEIs' management in teaching and learning activities.

The Technical University of Valencia (UPV, Spain) represented by INGENIO will be the responsible for coordination and project management. Dr. Adela García Aracil permanent academic staff at INGENIO will be the project coordinator.

The associate partners will be:

- 3 European Universities: Lietuvos Edukologijos Universitetas (LEU – Lithuania), U. w Białystok (UwB – Poland), Turun Yliopisto (U.Turku – Finland)



- 8 Belarusian Universities: Belarusian State University (BSU); Yanka Kupala State U. of Grodno (YKSUG); Belarussian State Pedagogical University (BSPU); Francisk Skorina Gomel State University (GSU); Grodno State Agrarian University (GSAU); Polotsk State University (PSU); Brest State University (BrSU); Belarus State Economic University (BSEU)
- Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus
- National Institute for Higher Education (NIHE – Belarus)
- University Solutions, SL (USSL – Spain)

In spite of Belarusian higher education has a good level of development and quality, it has been formally isolated of the main trends of European higher education. The new situation (full integration in the Bologna process) requires a special attention of European cooperation programmes in order to support advances in the modernisation of Belarusian universities. This is an historical moment when the cooperation and support of other European universities is crucial for developing a climate of understanding among Belarusian and the rest of European universities. The activities addressed in FOSTERC will promote the shift towards input/content to output/outcomes in Belarusian Higher Education Institutions. Training workshops and training visits will provide good practices to Belarusian institutions to integrate learning outcomes into full model of education. Moreover, FOSTERC will provide benefits for the consortium both to the EU programme- and partner-country groups and will allow developing, transferring and integrating practices and policy recommendations.

BALTIC LIFESTYLE

The role of Higher Education in improving employability



Prof. dr. José-Ginés Mora

The main objective of universities always was to prepare people for serving society at large meeting the employment needs in each historical moment. From its origins in the Middle Ages, universities have served the labour demands of society, providing priests to Church, servers to kings and nobles, and professionals to society. Later, in the Industrial Age, universities provided civil servants and professionals required by modern states and technicians demanded by the emerging industrial sector.

That labour market was static with no main changes in jobs during lifetime. Consequently, the higher education model was also static, preparing for stable professions and teaching and learning the state of art of disciplines to be applied later on the jobs. The educational systems were fully regulated and with rigid learning structures. The static labour market required a static and regulated higher education system. In that static model universities provided a diploma that it was equivalent to a professional title. With few exceptions, the identification between academic diploma and profession has been a main and relevant trait of higher education system for centuries.

Currently labour market context is dramatically changing. We are moving towards a global society, where mobility of persons and ideas is faster than ever before, where knowledge and information is becoming the engine of development. On the other hand, higher education is becoming universal in a triple sense: everywhere, with open access to almost everybody and for people of any age (lifelong learning).

The consequence of this new context is that jobs are changing, many new professions are emerging and many of these new professions have blurry borders. A second consequence is that the direct link between academic degree and profession is broken and a new concept emerges: Employability.

Employability has been defined by Manzt Yorke as: “A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy”.

Employment, a main objective for all graduates, depends on their employability but not only. Obviously, the general economic situation of a country or region is important. In the case of higher education graduates, the level of development of the knowledge society has also a relevant influence. Nevertheless, universities have to focus in improving employability because the possibility of being influential in general economic factors is quite limited.

Certainly higher education is something else that to prepare students for future work. Higher education has other missions such as to transmit understanding of theories, methods and knowledge and cultural enhancement and personality development. Even in relation to jobs, higher education has to prepare students to call into question the established “rules” and “tools” of professional work: to be sceptical and critical, to handle indeterminate work tasks and to strive for innovation.

Employability depends basically of two factors: personal characteristic of individuals and education. The educational systems improve employability through increasing the competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) of individuals. In summary, universities increase competencies, competencies increase employability and employability increases good employment. Then, universities have to focus in providing the right competencies to graduates because this will improve the participation of graduates in the labour market, something that is, by the way, the most important mission of universities from an economic point of view.

Consequently, competencies should be the central objective of higher education. Higher education quality should be measured under this perspective. An education of quality is that which provides graduates with the right competencies for labour market and for life.

How to improve competencies? First at all we need graduates tracking. We need to know what graduates are doing after finishing their studies, how was their educational experience and how is their labour experience. With this information we will be able to analyse where are the gaps between the demands of competencies and the acquired competencies of graduates. Several projects (REFLEX, HEGESCO, PROFLEX) have settled the basis for this type of studies. Eurograduates is a new proposal for tracking European graduates in a systematic way.



We need to know also the opinion of employers about which competencies are most required in the labour market. A recent study concludes that European employers think that:

- Professional expertise (i.e. subject-specific knowledge and expert thinking) is the most important skills set that affects graduates' employability.
- Interpersonal skills (communication, teamwork skills,..) are almost as important as professional expertise.
- In an organisation it might be enough to have just one or two persons who are strong in innovative/creative skills or commercial/entrepreneurial skills.
- Strategic/organisational skills are needed for long-term career opportunities
- Foreign experience can tip the balance in selecting a graduate for a recruitment decision, although employers will still look more closely at relevant work experience and field of study.
- General academic skills are well developed but they do not rank highly on the agenda of employers.

The following question is: Are universities providing the competencies required by the labour market? There is a competencies gap between the required competencies and the contribution of higher education to competencies? All recent studies show that there is a gap especially in some competencies more related to innovation and entrepreneurialism. Higher education is

good preparing graduates for the more traditional labour market (the static model) but is not good enough preparing for a changing labour market.

The next question is obvious: How can universities bridge the competencies gap? In several ways, but acting on the ways of teaching and learning is the most effective. Some studies conclude that acquisition of competencies required by labour market depends on the prevalence of some pro-active teaching and learning modes, mainly: Problem-based learning; facts and practical knowledge; participation in research projects and internships, work placement. On the other hand we know that traditional modes in teaching and learning contribute little, if any, to develop competencies.

Universities have to modernise the ways of teaching and learning but they need the support of business for bridging the competencies gap. Business (public and private) have to cooperate with universities in different ways for improving graduates competencies. For instance: Cooperating actively in curricular development; developing joint study programmes; cooperating in Continuing Education; facilitating work placements, problem based learning and on the job training; cooperating with career offices; and supporting mobility.

In conclusion, if we want better jobs for graduates, we need to increase their employability and eventually their competencies. Improving competencies requires proactive ways of teaching and learning and the cooperation of stakeholders.

BEHIND THE SCENE

Make your campus alive!

On June 2-3 the international seminar “**University campus management and development: contemporary trends and future of university campuses**” was held in Gdansk University of Technology. The seminar program consisted of four parts including two sessions on historical campuses and modern out-of-city campuses.

The main goals of the “Historical city campuses” were to find differences in contemporary and past mission of the campus; to gain experience how to revitalize and modernize the historic campuses without losing its soul and character.

The city case of Gdansk was presented by representatives of all three city universities – GUT, University of Gdansk and Medical University of Gdansk.

Dr. Kzysztof Szczepaniak from UG recounted the history of Gdansk, its destruction during WWII and following reconstruction. He underlines that Gdansk is a good case of the city where historical building can be changed and modernized.

Prof. Jacob Szczepanski and prof. Lucyna Nyka from GUT presented the history of the campus territory from the pastoral past to the foundation of TU in 1899. The campus was developing but was lacking system and was not well connected with the local district. Recently GUT analyzed the trends of campus development – creative education, high quality of public spaces, environmentally friendly zone and interconnection with the municipality. The main idea of new development plan was to unite university with the city by removing fences and walls, to make campus pedestrian by removing parking slots off campus and to create new buildings that form high quality spaces. Creation of the comfortable public zones for students showed that if students get such area they start using it actively despite everyone said it is unneeded before reconstruction.

Dr. Jacek Bigda from MUG explained that the medical university is naturally connected to its hospitals. University invested over 400 mln. Zlots to build brand new contemporary hospitals that attract more and more patients and thus campus reconstruction is impossible without re-thinking of the local transport system plan.

The city case of Riga was presented by Latvian best universities – Riga Technical University (RTU) and University of Latvia. Both institutions are located in historical centre of the Latvian capital and both are developing ambitious plans of new campuses construction on the other bank of Daugava River.

Imants Klavs let the audience know of the recent changes in University of Latvia. The new campus development project was entrusted to the care of the group of architects, lawyers, real estate managers etc.

The main goal is to create an atmosphere University of Latvia will be known for. The combination of great research and learning opportunities (i.e. high class labs) combined with public spaces for intensive socializing need modern equipment, modern architecture, environmentally friendly and sustainable landscape.

The RTU project called City in the city was presented by Aigars Locmelis, deputy rector for infrastructure development. The ambitious plan includes reconstruction of existing and construction of brand new facilities on Kipsala Island. The university is not expanding but concentrating around one site so when new buildings are ready, the old one are sold out to keep balance and not to waste financial resources.

Ms. Gloria Niin presented the city case of Tartu on behalf of University of Tartu and Estonian university of Life sciences. Tartu was developing as the city of the students ever since its establishment. The nature of the city led to agreement that universities should develop their facilities in the empty slots in the city centre rather than move outside.

Representatives of University of Bialostok (Piotr Bialas) and University of Warmia and Mazury (prof. Arkadiusz Zukowski) gave overview of brilliant case of construction of brand new campuses out of the centres of Bialostok and Olsztyn respectively.

The seminar highlight was presentation by Mr. Mauno Sievanen and Mr. Juha Uotila from Finnish company SYK Oy - University Properties of Finland Ltd. Core business of SYK Oy is to produce, maintain and develop premises for universities, colleges and their partners. SYK supports the strategy of universities and their possibilities to act as motors in common development in their surroundings. The vision is to grow to be the leading campus developer in Europe. The aim of campus development is to increase social density by connecting campuses to the surrounding urban structure and business sector while increasing the shared use of premises. City-specific campus strategies were completed in 2015 to outline broader land use decisions and solutions in various university cities. University Properties of Finland Ltd is paving the way for the campuses of the future, places that provide synergies and vitality for the entire region where they operate.

The participants and organizer agreed that seminar was extremely fruitful and proposed to continue in 2017 in Riga.



University and the property reform leading to campus development pioneering

Case University Properties of Finland Ltd (SYK Oy)

Effective as of January 2010, the new university law in Finland changed legal status of the universities, resulting a re-modelled relationship between universities and state, town and province. The new law guaranteed the financial and administrative autonomy for the universities. This changed the angle related to space cost. The space cost turned to be a real cost that the universities are accountable for and the properties because a remarkable value of the universities' asset.

University property reform relating to change of university law, triggered the establishment of three university property companies that would own and manage the universities' properties. These three established companies were University properties of Helsinki, Aalto University Properties and University Properties of Finland. Property fortune was sold or partly given as a non-cash issue capital contribution by the state of Finland. The ownership of the property companies was to be shared with the state and the universities, the shares were given each university in accordance with their size.

University Properties of Finland Ltd (SYK Oy) was established to own and manage the properties of universities located out of greater Helsinki area, and took over the operations as of beginning of 2010. Company is owned by the state of Finland and 10 universities. The legitimately guiding documentation, Partner Contract, was signed between all partners stating the clear operating principles. Upon the contract, SYK Oy treats all partners equally, efficiently maintains the property and manages the property portfolio, follows the principles of the real estate business at all levels of operations, cost-efficiently produces and leases the premises and maintains the value of the properties over the long term.

The Annual General Meeting of SYK Oy is held at least once a year, whereas the appointed Board of Directors gathers according to its annual schedule. The operations are led by the executive team of 4 members, managing the staff of 35 employees. With cooperation of approximately 1000 service providers, SYK Oy manages and oversees the premises for 112 000 students and 19 000 people working there, spread widely over the campuses of 10 universities. SYK Oy's 311 buildings cover EUR 1.1 billion square meters with EUR 1.2 billion asset value and produced 144 million net revenue (2015). FYE 2015, the company's investments totaled EUR 126.8 million, 151 projects (EUR 145 million) were in preparatory and planning stages and 37 projects (EUR 221 million) in investment phase.



SYK Oy has pioneered the campus development from company's early steps. A change from passive property-owning to active development of substance is needed in order to make the campus attractive for modern, R&D-oriented industrial players, service companies etc. The aim is to turn campus into a vital element of the city, inclusively multi-functional environment for working, studying, learning and living, a place that empowers the city and the whole economic area around it. Thriven by synergy, the campus operators sustainably share the resources e.g. space and equipment, allowing a wise investment-making for the future needs.

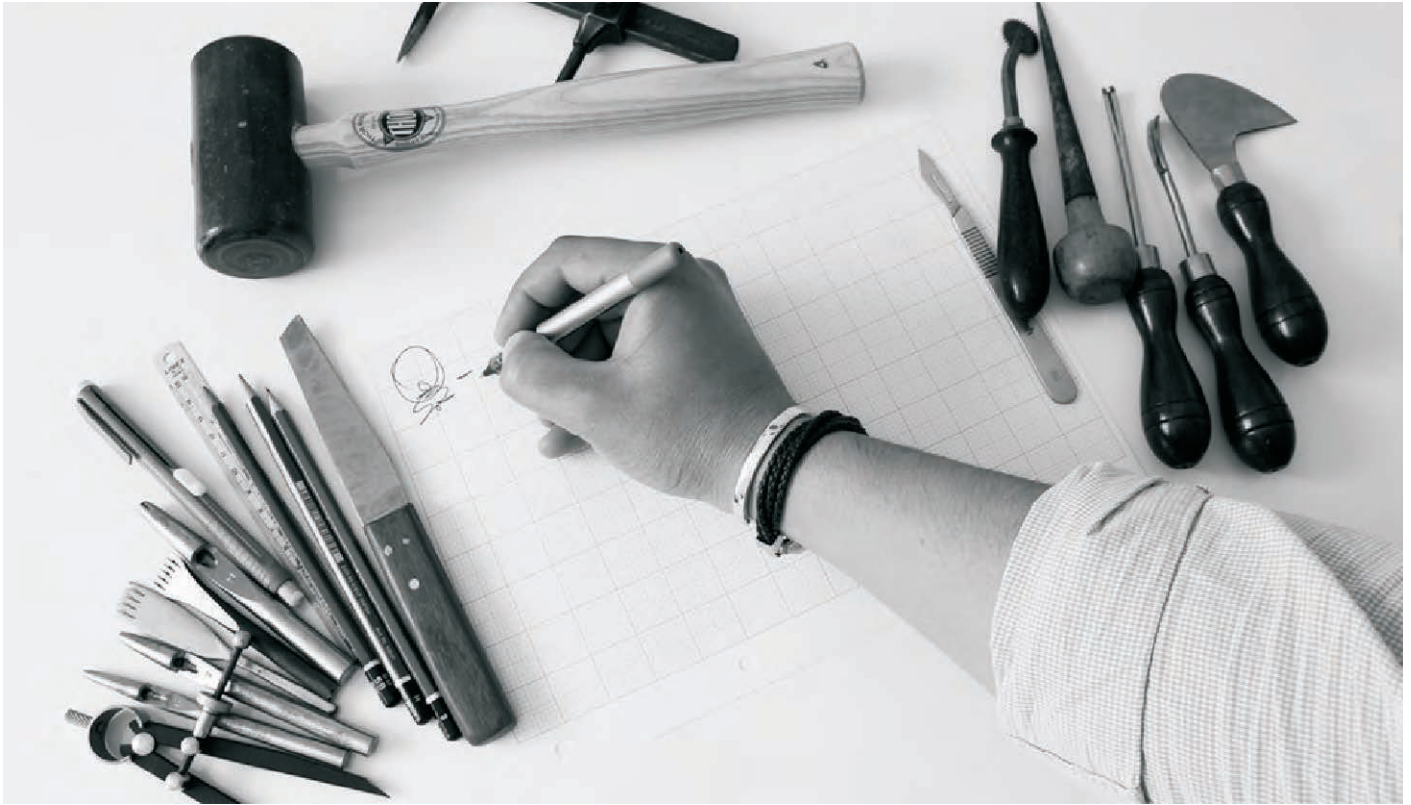
For SYK Oy, it has been clear that identifying the university customers' and the unimunicipal areas' strengths, needs and the potential for development, is highly important. Thorough evaluation and campus strategy work is now complete with the valuable findings on a certain municipal area's economic status, urban analysis, finding university's focus points and a masterplan for the campus development. The synergy values around medicine and welfare, dental care and business were recognized and are the focus of our new investments.

Internationally attractive campuses are created in cooperation with internationally-oriented partners, both companies and universities, also with campus developers from various parts of the world. Kampusareena building, located at the campus of Tampere University of Technology, proves that SYK Oy has taken the successful path. Rethinking university campus, challenging the ways of operating and introducing new players to campus, we move from local to global, and promote the creation of future platforms for successful modern communities of learning, research and innovation.

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NEXT DESTINATIONS

International NordFo Conference in Rauma, Finland
on September 28-30



Make it NOW! Learning, Exploring and Understanding - conference aims to provide an arena for discussions on craft, design and technology as an innovative combination of knowledge and skills related to eco-social values in altering the world according to human needs and wants.

The active and creative process of making is a key element when combining knowledge and skills in order to meet human needs and wants. In the 3D-world, the challenges of the constructed environment will be even more multi-material in the future.

Societies need active citizens who can collaboratively solve the problems and challenges arising and these individuals need meaningful experiences to develop the requisite knowledge and skills. Recently, research has emerged on the learning, exploring and understanding of the physical and material aspects of making as well as on the mental capital that individuals need and acquire when using craft, design and technology in order to transform their ideas into material.

To promote and broaden research and education and encourage the exchange of ideas and cooperation between key parties, we invite researchers, entrepreneurs, teachers, officers, curriculum developers, and all those interested to join this NordFo -conference, organized by the Rauma Unit of the Department of Teacher Education of the University of Turku. The critical and constructive exchange of ideas and debate are welcomed!

You can contact the organizers both for academic inquiries and administrative support by e-mailing:
nordfo2016@utu.fi.