

Support for Young Innovative Entrepreneurs

Building Networks within the Barents Region



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Saila-Inkeri Puukko • Minttu Merivirta (editors)

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FOREWORD

The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan says; “to bring Europe back to growth and higher levels of employment, Europe needs more entrepreneurs” (Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan 2013, 3).

This has been a motivator to launch the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) project. While entrepreneurship and employment are facing challenges all over Europe, in the Barents Region there are both possibilities and weaknesses. The unique, “exotic” environment and rich nature have still-undervalued potential, but the ageing and non-active region is not attractive enough for young people to live and work in.

What should be done to activate young people to realize the possibilities in the region? It is obvious that the future lies in entrepreneurship, especially in small and medium sized companies. Entrepreneurship is a powerful driver of economic growth and job creation: it creates new companies and jobs, opens up new markets and nurtures new skills and capabilities. Investing in entrepreneurship education is one of the highest return investments Europe can make. (Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan 2013, 3, 5; see also Think Small First 2008.)

In the Barents Region especially internationalisation is the key to success. This means business cooperation across the borders. We have 4 countries and 4 official languages. Language, culture and border barriers are the most concrete obstacles to working and doing business across the borders. In addition, long distances pose an extra challenge.

In the YIE-project the main target groups were young entrepreneurs and future entrepreneurs in the Barents Region. The purpose of the project was the activation of youth to engage in business and create new business-ideas across the borders. The innovativeness of the project lies with the youth themselves: the exchange of experience and expertise from various fields, the exchange of cultures and having a better understanding of the Barents Region as an employment and business opportunity.

As a significant co-function to entrepreneurial skills development, YIE has also served as a meeting point for young entrepreneurs of the Barents Region. By offering chances to meet and network, YIE has successfully brought together several entrepreneurs, or future entrepreneurs, and this resulted in a fruitful cooperation between the participants. In addition to this, the project has worked to enhance the possibilities to find the resources and support tools needed in establishing successful enterprises, such as the InnoBarentsLabs in Rovaniemi and Murmansk. These are cross-border innovation laboratories, established for students to develop their entrepreneurial capabilities.

The project results are very substantial and worth displaying. In this publication we describe the background, implementation and outcome of the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project.

As the cross-cutting theme of the whole project has been creative thinking and innovativeness, we wanted the same atmosphere to be seen throughout this publication.

It was also important to have our participants' voice in the publication. We asked several entrepreneurs to write about their experiences in the project. It was great to see that they have almost exclusively positive things to say and that they could see the benefits offered by the project clearly. If anything, this underlines the fact that there was a specific need for this kind of project.

As an example of the entrepreneurs involved in the project, Yngve Bergheim from Ramsalt Lab in Tromsø, Norway, has been a very active participant of our group from the start. At Barents Reunion 2013 he was awarded not only as the Barents Entrepreneur of the Year but the Barents Young Entrepreneur of the Year as well. These awards are given to inspiring entrepreneurs who have attained unique achievements in the Barents area during the year. In his thank you speech, Bergheim emphasized that without the YIE-project he would never have even thought that there would be a possibility to find a business partner in Russia.

Our sincere hope is that YIE has reduced distances within the Barents Region. We have seen that young people are willing to work towards a vigorous Barents Region where young entrepreneurs see more possibilities than obstacles. One way to obtain this vitality can be through personal relationships, adequate support tools and cooperation in the region. By sharing the experiences of the YIE project staff and participants, this publication shows that the youth believe in the future of the Barents Region.

Saila-Inkeri Puukko & Minttu Merivirta

Lapland University of Applied Sciences
In Tornio, Finland
November 13th, 2014

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1 Introduction

Background and Presentation of the Project

Once upon a time there was a project called “Young Entrepreneurs in Barents” (Interreg IVA, 2006-2008). It was nicknamed the “Jee” -project, because of the enthusiastic atmosphere among the young participants during the networking events. The project ended and there was no-one anymore to keep the network alive, even though the need for networking among young entrepreneurs in the Barents Region was still there.

It took some years until a new financing program for external borders, Kolarctic ENPI CBC, was started. It was then the only program supporting cooperation between all Barents countries, including Russia. The ENPI priority “Economic and social development” also suited the project purposes that included aiming at sustainable business development, cross-border entrepreneurship and creation of new businesses (Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project Plan 2011, 2). The project preparation was challenging and long, but successful. It took about two years until project was finally kicked-off.

The project originated from two ideas; the above mentioned “Young entrepreneurs in Barents” and the “InnoBarentsLab” (IBL) – the innovative environment, supporting innovation processes and entrepreneurial activity amongst students across the borders in real-life projects.

It was clear that there was synergy between these two project ideas and it was a small step to combine the original “Young Entrepreneurs” idea and add a special innovative aspect. When the project ideas were integrated into one, the partner-network was enlarged with in total 10 partners from Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia. At the time there were still two universities of applied sciences in Lapland: Kemi-Tornio and Rovaniemi. When Lapland UAS was founded, a natural cooperation between these partners already existed.

The Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) -project finally started in March 2012.

OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTACLES IN THE BARENTS REGION

The Barents Region has been and still is facing dramatic demographic changes. The migration of the youth from the Barents Region is a common problem for all countries in the region (Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project Plan 2011, 2). When employment opportunities are changing for the worse all over Europe, the Barents Region is even more challenged to improve its attractiveness for young people to stay and work in the region.

In an aging and sparsely populated region where long distances and lack of services pose challenges, work and and career opportunities are limited. There are still possibilities in our

common and special region, though. The strengths lie in the exotic Arctic region; its special and "rich" environment, indigenous people (Sami people), cultural history and clean nature.

Even though there still are few SMEs in the Barents Region, the SME -sector is growing. Positive is that also internationalisation is growing. This gives new employment opportunities across the borders, especially in the age of new technological possibilities. (Ehdotus eurooppalaiseksi alueelliseksi yhteistyöohjelmaksi 2013, 3–5).

Networking and matchmaking of young people in the Barents Region was the driving consideration for the project application; the idea of the Barents Region as providing a possibility to stay and work, to do business, to find new business partners and possible clients within the region.

In view of the commonly observed and acknowledged low innovation- and commercialisation rate in the Barents Region, increased innovative entrepreneurial activities across the borders were needed.

NEED FOR THE PROJECT

The YIE -project aimed to help solve the Barents Region youth employment problem by encouraging young people to discover extensive business opportunities and to inspire young people to engage in entrepreneurship across the borders. Once inspired, young people tend to come up with great innovative business ideas. In order to make their ideas work there was a need for a support system for the actual entrepreneurship and innovative idea development in practice. (Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project Plan 2011, 2).

The YIE-project has concentrated on young people as the future of the Barents Region. The project identified common needs and constraints characterizing the entire Barents Region:

- Youth migration from North to South for better opportunities
- Ineffective cross-border business and innovative project networks
- Absence of a support system for young entrepreneurial initiatives
- Lack of promotion of entrepreneurship and innovative initiatives among young people
- Low innovative entrepreneurial competences among young professionals
- No recognition of the innovative potential of the Barents Region
- Low awareness of business opportunities
- Low attractiveness of the Barents Region among the young generation
- Almost non-existing cross-border small business cooperation, in particular among young people
- Insufficient "triple helix" dialogue (academia-business-local/regional authorities)

(Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project Plan 2011, 9–11).

As mentioned, the main target group of the YIE-project consisted of active and potential (aspiring) young and innovative entrepreneurs. The project also collaborated and networked with existing business incubators, innovation support institutions and field experts in the Barents Region.

The overall objective of the project was to support the economic and social development of the Barents Region by facilitating innovative entrepreneurial initiatives by young people in order to contribute to the development of the employment and entrepreneurship in the region. The specific

objective was to create a region-wide support system that will enhance the development and implementation of innovative business ideas across the borders by young entrepreneurs in the Barents Region. (Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project Plan 2011, 7)

SUPPORT STRUCTURE OF THE PROJECT

During the project there were different levels of networking between entrepreneurs, aspiring entrepreneurs and other stakeholders, regionally and internationally. The project also included the creation of innovative (business) ideas and the development of a training and mentoring program. This all was built as a support structure for young innovative entrepreneurs.

The support structure included the following activities:

1. Business Network; the establishment of a cross-border (CB) business and innovative project development network to support CB interaction and contact development for the target groups
2. Innovative Entrepreneurial Environment; the establishment of the Innovation Lab network in the Barents Region under the working title InnoBarentsLab (IBL) ensured a permanent support for CB innovative business development. IBL provides space, supervision and mentoring by experts from business life and academia
3. Training and Education; the development of regional, innovative, entrepreneurial competence supported by tailor-made training delivered jointly by business and academic experts
4. Awareness by all Regional Actors; the dissemination of project results to a wider public in the region, supporting the development of multilateral involvement of the regional actors and thus securing support for the project activities and their sustainability

It must be noted that in the whole Barents Region there did not exist such a unique entity for cross-border business cooperation for your entrepreneurs. The project enabled young, active and potential entrepreneurs to cooperate across the borders and have all possible support to innovate together. The project's purpose was to make sure that all possible regional actors from the authorities to the academia and business supporters join forces to support the young entrepreneurial generation of the Barents Region. (Young Innovative Entrepreneurs Project Plan 2011, 2–3.)

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- Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project Plan 2011.** Application for ENPI Kolarctic 2nd call of proposals.

Cross-border Cooperation and Project Partners

In total, 10 partners from each partner country, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia, were involved in the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) -project. From a project manager's perspective it felt as a certain challenge to get this fairly large project-network coordinated. Soon it became clear though that communication was easy. Regional coordinators, as well as work package leaders, took responsibility for their specific tasks and information kept flowing smoothly.

The project started in March 2012 with a kick-off meeting/opening seminar in Tornio for all partners. It was the 1st international meeting with project partners and for many of us the very first meeting altogether. The kick-off seminar resulted in a well-structured activity plan and most importantly in a common understanding of the project. After these two days of intensive work it was easy to continue regular collaboration via the internet, using, for instance, Skype and email. Skype meetings were organised on a monthly basis to keep track of regional activities and future activities. A cloud service, Dropbox, was convenient for storing documents and sharing them between partners/coordinators.

There were also additional face-to-face partner-meetings during the project period.

QUALITY MONITORING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Assessment of the project has been carried out in several ways, providing also information about project outcomes. There was daily project management, which included the above mentioned discussions with partners about current progress and future activities. In addition, 1-2 action plan updates per year (per partner) were implemented, which were a condition to partners' pre-financing allocations. These activities demonstrated progress compared to the project plan, and mainly the progress has been very good.

Internal Project Quality Monitoring: partners have contributed to the annual IPQM requested by financier representatives by responding into a set of questions including, among others, risk analysis, budgetary issues and positive impacts of the project. In addition, we have collected feedback from participants after each matchmaking event and it has been very positive, including some useful improvement suggestions that have been discussed with partners before organizing the next event.

Partners have commented that project events were noticed by local mass media and there is a growing number of followers also on Facebook, where we announce new events etc. The main

concerns have been discussed also at the project steering group meetings. Sustainability plans have been made and implemented to ensure further utilization and development of the project results in the future.

All partners have evaluated the cross-border cooperation between project partners as very good.

PARTNERSHIP

The core partnership has been the same for the project lifetime, although organisational changes have occurred: Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences and Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences merged into Lapland University of Applied Sciences in the beginning of the year 2014; Länsi-Pohja Entrepreneurs Association merged into The Regional Organization of Enterprises in Lapland; and the non-governmental educational institution of higher professional education Murmansk Humanities Institute's (MHI) name changed to the International Institute of Business Education (MIBO).

Project partners are:

- International Institute of Business Education, MIBO (Russia)
- Lapland University of Applied Sciences, Lapland UAS (Finland)
- Non-commercial partnership “Education, Innovation, and Scientific-Research Union Socium+”, Socium+ (Russia)
- Murmansk State Humanities University, MSHU (Russia)
- Murmansk State Technical University, MSTU (Russia)
- The Northern Chamber of Commerce and Industry, NCCI (Russia)
- The Regional Organization of Enterprises in Lapland (Finland)
- Barents Secretariat, BS (Norway)
- Higher Education in Eastern Norrbotten, HÖN (Sweden)

Associate partners are:

- Barents Regional Youth Council (Norway)
- Youth House TVIBIT (Norway)
- The Ministry of the Economic Development of the Murmansk region (Russia)
- Team Botnia (Finland)
- Barents Youth Cooperation Office, BYCO (Russia)
- State Department of Employment Service of the Murmansk region (Russia)

Expected Outcome and the Benefits of the Project

The Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) -project consisted of five (5) Work Packages (WP), which formed the basis of the project implementation and correspond with outcomes expected. Under every WP there were several activities with their own time frame and required output.

Project coordination and collaboration between partners was based on the selected WPs. Many times a WP showcases expertise in partner organisations, sharing roles and responsibilities by partners. In this project it meant, the main partners had their own WP to coordinate.

The above-mentioned WPs were:

- **Cross Border Business (CBC) and Innovative Project (IP) development network established (Coordination: Lapland UAS, former Kemi-Tornio UAS)**

This WP included both project partner and participant networks. First of all, the WP created a meeting arena for the target group: young entrepreneurs and future/potential entrepreneurs. In total three cross-border matchmaking events were organised in every partner region; Finland-Sweden, Russia and Norway. The final event was the Barents Business Festival (BBF). It was organised in order to enhance ongoing communication between public-private organizations and regional authorities and to raise awareness of public support in the region. Between the international events there was also a possibility for regional meetings and group coaching/mentoring. (Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project Plan 2011, 7.) It should be noted that regional networking was also an important part of the project.

The activities under this WP were organised to improve communication between regional and local stakeholders, to increase public awareness of innovation opportunities in the Barents Region and to create new partnerships; locally, regionally and across the borders.

One of the activities under this WP was the creation of a virtual communication platform by using mainly social media and already available virtual environments like the iLinc - virtual classroom (Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project Plan 2011, 14). Between partners virtual communication was organised via Skype, for participants e.g. via a Facebook-page and regional groups.

The activities above were the cornerstone of the YIE -project, creating the cross-border and innovative network of young entrepreneurs and other related actors in the Barents Region.

- **Innovation lab network in the Barents Region under the working title InnoBarentsLab (IBL) established (Coordination: Lapland UAS, former Rovaniemi UAS)**

This WP was aimed at establishing a physical environment where innovations could be further developed and innovative business cases could be piloted or launched. For this reason, two innovation laboratories called InnoBarentsLab (IBL) were established. The main activities under this WP included: benchmarking of existing innovation lab models inside and outside of the Barents Region, establishing and piloting InnoBarentsLab (IBL) both in Finland (Lapland UAS) and in Russia (MIBO), creating common IBL guidelines, operational concept and methodology and selecting, initiating and piloting four cross-border innovative sub-projects under IBL. The main actors and activators were students from the region cooperating with local and regional actors. The idea was to develop these practices further and some day to establish IBL in every Barents country (Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project Plan 2011, 8, 15–17).

The result from the project was the IBL itself; the physical and operational framework created, young people working and studying in the real-life projects.

- **Innovative entrepreneurial competence increased (Coordination: Norwegian Barents Secretariat)**

The main activity under this WP was a cross-border mentor-program. The program was planned to involve business, project and/or educational mentors and ten young entrepreneur initiatives from each region.

Also a set of educational activities, including tailor-made trainings, was organised in every partner region (Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project Plan 2011, 8, 17).

Because of the aforementioned activities, the entrepreneurial and innovative competences were expected to increase during the project. Under this WP it was planned to make an analysis based on two surveys to gather information from the participants - in the beginning and at the end of the project. (Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project Plan 2011, 18.)

- **Dissemination of the project results implemented (Coordination: Socium+)**

The YIE project has put an emphasis on dissemination activities, by using traditional and social media when informing about project's practices and achievements to the wider public. Good publicity was planned to be derived from different events like "Matchmaking" in every organising region. Ongoing dissemination activities have been organised through Facebook and BlogSpot; sharing information and thoughts from participants. This particular publication is about disseminating the project's experiences and achievements to the wider public via project workers and active participants.

- **Project management (Coordination: Lapland UAS)**

Project management was an important part of the project. A successful project needs constant management of activities and resources. In this project the coordination was organised regionally, one coordinator per country.

The lead partner, Lapland UAS, was the main responsible of the project, coordinating the partner-network, following the action plan and managing the resources available. Evaluation and reporting of the project activities and results is also one of the

management responsibilities. Constant and smooth communication between partners and financiers is important, especially when communicating across the borders in foreign languages.

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YIE's participant

Odd Levi Paulsen, Julev Film, Norway

Your name and short description of your company/organization?

My name is Odd Levi Paulsen and I'm from Tysfjord in Nordland, Norway. My company is "Julev Film" and my company produces short movies and Sami Web TV for the youth.

Which YIE events did you participate in?

I participated in Kirkenes, Rovaniemi, Murmansk and Sommarøy.

Why did you decide to take part in the YIE project in the first place?

I would say just to simply check the possibilities of innovative thinking in the Barents Region. I did not know that much of the Barents Region, so this was a good way to get acquainted with the region. I had also just established my own company and wanted to see if I could meet someone I could work with.

What did you expect to gain by participating?

I expected to get an international network and get to know other young entrepreneurs in the Barents Region. I also expected to find someone to work with, which I did.



Did the project meet your expectations?

Yes I would say. I met many people who are in my network now. I became acquainted with Rein Film from Finnmark, where we tied a good relationship which has resulted in close cooperation now.



How did you and/or your company benefit from participating in the project?

I've been running some film projects together with Rein Film, otherwise the project has not given so much back to the company. But I will say that it has given me more back personally as an entrepreneur, since i learned a lot and got new way of thinking as an entrepreneur. I have become friends with other young entrepreneurs and the potential for innovation is present in these friendships.



Have you got some specific good memory from the YIE events?

Yes it has been a fun and educational experience. We have met many young entrepreneurs from other countries, which has been incredibly rewarding. I think that in the future we will see more results from YIE. Some will work together and others will create new projects and products together.



In your opinion, is there a need for these kinds of projects for the entrepreneurs in the Barents Region?

Without a doubt! Without having the chance to meet, there will not be innovation across borders. It is important for the future to get this international network that we have gained through YIE.

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YIE's participant

Dennis Kreminsky, Arctic Turn, Russia



YIE has so far been an exceptionally interesting and engaging project that delivered quite a few valuable outcomes, and did so on several levels.

First and most of all, I was able to meet and build a stable relationship with a business partner in Norway, which remains the only reliable source of ongoing business activities in Europe for my company.



Secondly, I had a unique chance to personally meet and get inspired by otherwise hard-to-reach people, like the world-famous founder of IKEA, Ingvar Kamrad, or a well-known Scandinavian journalist Kari Lumikero.



Gaining understanding of international investment culture, investors' thinking and their practical requirements, meeting young and motivated people from other countries, being able to share current concerns and interests with them, all of this definitely enriched my understanding of the European business culture, and opened new opportunities for development.

To be more specific, learning about the way new businesses are created and developed in Europe led me to a boot-camp and business acceleration program run by Helsinki Ventures, a partner which will hopefully facilitate the establishment of a new joint company in Southern Finland.

I truly believe that being a boiling plate for all kinds of new initiatives and relations, YIE should definitely be continued and expanded in the future.

Barents Region Cooperation

The operation area of the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) -project is the so-called Barents Region. It is a well-known definition of a specific region for those who are actively involved in the Barents Region cooperation activities. However, for an outside reader, or someone less familiar with the “Barents cooperation” term, there is a need for some explanation of what the “Barents Region” actually is.

FORMALISING AND INSTITUTIONALISING BARENTS REGION COOPERATION

In short, the Barents Region is a widely used term that reflects formal cooperation under the name “Barents Euro-Arctic Region”. It is said to be Europe's northernmost inter-regional cooperation structure and it was established in 1993 in Kirkenes, Norway. Foreign ministers of Norway, Russia, Finland, Sweden and representatives of Denmark, Iceland, and the European Commission signed the so-called “Kirkenes Declaration” on 11 January, 1993. (This is the Barents Cooperation 2012.)

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 the Cold War era ended and it opened new ways for cooperation in the European North that earlier were closed. The European High North received new attention from national and European Union (EU) policy makers. Regional and national authorities and other actors recognized the importance of cooperation across the borders. In addition to the established Barents Euro-Arctic Region cooperation structure, there have been many similar initiatives targeting the cooperation in the North such as the Northern Dimension initiative introduced first by the Finnish government and later adopted at the EU level, the Arctic Council as an intergovernmental forum created in 1996 (Arctic Council 2011) and the Northern Europe Initiative by the United States in 1997 (Stenberg 2003).

Barents cooperation is formalized under the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC). According to BEAC the primary goal is to promote sustainable economic and social development in the Barents Region and thus contribute to peaceful development in the northernmost part of Europe. (The Barents Cooperation 2013.)

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGION

Geographically, the Barents Region includes the northernmost parts of Sweden, Norway, Finland and Northwest Russia. 13 territories are members of BEAC: Finnmark, Troms and Nordland in

Norway, Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, Nenets, Komi and Karelia in Russia, Lapland, Oulu and Kainuu in Finland, Norbotten and Västerbotten in Sweden. (The Barents Euro-Arctic Region 2014.)

The Barents Region is rich in natural resources such as fish, timber, minerals, oil and gas and also has important processing and engineering industries. The mining industry is on the rise in the Barents Region. Besides natural resources, the region possesses a highly skilled labour force. It is a region of high-quality educational institutions and universities, research and science centres (The Barents Cooperation 2013). Human capital therefore is also considered as one of the key resources in the north.

BARENTS COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

Formally institutionalized establishments sometimes may create doubt as to the real usefulness of such institutions. Even though the Barents Euro-Arctic regional cooperation is at high political level, there is also a lot of cooperation among people and industries in the region at a very practical level. National and international funding instruments are available for various joint cooperation projects tackling regional problems, challenges, as well as opportunities. The unique undertaking that is the Barents cooperation has a history of only of 20 years, but much has been achieved. Many relevant cross-border projects in spheres such as tourism, indigenous peoples, environmental issues, infrastructure, education and many more have been carried out in close cooperation between people and institutions across the borders of the Barents Region. The Barents portal offers an extensive list of realized cooperation projects with the funding of Kolarctic ENPI, Interreg Nord, the Nordic Council of Ministers and many other, in addition to a variety of research projects going on in the region. (Cooperation projects in the Barents Region 2014.) Young Innovative Entrepreneurs is among such cross-border cooperation initiatives that were initiated under the common framework of the Barents cooperation.

USEFUL LINKS ON THE BARENTS REGION

Barents Euro Arctic Council: www.beac.st

News from Barents Region: barentsobserver.com

Barents portal: www.barentsinfo.org

Arctic Centre news feed : arcticcentre.ulapland.fi/rss/Barents.aspx

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Cultural Differences in the Barents Region

In the Barents Region we have several things uniting us, both positive and negative. There are still some boundaries other than the borders between the Barents countries. In the Barents Region we have officially four languages in addition to Sami languages, but there are also cultural differences between Barents countries. Projects like Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) have been developed to bring Barents countries and peoples closer together, to learn from each other's differences and cultures, or even to learn a common language: English, or maybe Russian. As an example, a small and regional activity in Finland was initiated to give young entrepreneurs and future entrepreneurs and other stakeholders basic training in Russian language and culture through a virtual course during the project.

ENHANCING THE CHANGE

In general we see cultural differences quite easily as a boundary or obstacle to working together efficiently. However, they are also a richness that can give rise to new ideas and even innovations, not to mention increased knowledge and experience. In the YIE project we could see that differences are also a richness; people with different cultural backgrounds and expertise could create new and innovative things. We should understand our differences by meeting and working together. During the YIE project we organised several meeting and working opportunities for young people called “matchmaking” events. These matchmaking events were also an opportunity to learn about the Barents Region beyond our own borders.

Culture comprises the accepted norms and values and traditional behaviour of a group. The culture of each country has its own beliefs, values and activities. (Business Culture 2014.) Culture is a key element in business. Understanding the cultural backgrounds of business partners and clients is important when selecting a strategic approach. Through the matchmaking events and other meeting opportunities, the understanding of cultural backgrounds was expected to increase, as well as the overall knowledge of the new environment. On the other hand, the language barriers were expected to be reduced when participants learned to have more courage to use foreign languages.

What was realized during the project is that the boundaries aren't that big and that people-to-people communication can be quite easy when you get to know people. Face-to-face meetings are important especially in the beginning of the collaboration. New technologies are making our

communication easier than ever, especially in our sparsely populated region, but we should not to forget the importance of the first meeting.

EXPERIENCES WITH YIE

Cultural differences between partners were not a problem during the implementation of the project. All coordinators had a sufficient command of the English language, which made communication easy and fast. When the project was launched, it was obvious to have a face-to-face kick-off meeting where people had a chance to discuss and ask questions. After the kick-off, it was easy to continue via the internet, using, for instance, Skype or email. It was clear that some problems occurred in the beginning, because of different ways of working, but this issue was more organisational than cultural.

Project participants experienced that meetings with other participants decreased prejudice, encouraged them to use foreign languages and created a platform for real cooperation, which they could not have imagined before YIE.

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Entrepreneurship Maintains the Lapland Way of Life

The Regional Organization of Enterprises in Lapland sees the future of the Arctic/Barents Region as very important even for the future of the entire European economy. The area's natural richness/resources are important, but Lapland should not only expand to be a source of raw materials. The processing industry and the development of services are also essential for the future. Therefore, high-quality education and entrepreneurship as a real career option for young people are important to the region, as well as networking with young people across the borders in the northern regions. The Regional Organization of Enterprises in Lapland see the Arctic/Barents Region as one, common market and the labour market of the future. In order to promote the above-mentioned things The Regional Organization of Enterprises in Lapland has been involved in the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) project managed by Lapland University of Applied Sciences.

Due to the global recession, the economic situation is currently very challenging also in Lapland. However, there are sectoral differences. The Lapland industry sector sees improving trends, while the construction and trade sectors' outlook is poor for the next 12 months. For services, including tourism, short-term expectations are somewhat more on the positive side. The unemployment rate increased in Finnish Lapland last year, while in northern Sweden and northern Norway, employment improved (see Lapin TE-toimisto 2014; Arbetsförmedlingen 2014). This completely uncoordinated development means that employment-rich areas attract talent, like companies as well as employees. Although economic conditions differ in Lapland, this proximity and networking is an important opportunity for young entrepreneurs to get assignments across borders. Young entrepreneurs' strengths are specifically in good networking skills and in a good knowledge of the northern areas. YIE created something new and it proved a good tool for creating strengths.

The right kind of support and encouragement is important for young entrepreneurs and success depends on good operating conditions, a good regional competitiveness, networking and the exchange of good ICT capacities. Young entrepreneurs do not expect society's direct financial support for their activities, but rather good training opportunities, as well as handling of the operational and competition environment.

Lapland entrepreneurs need and want more internationalization. Lapland has a lot of experience in international cross-border trade with co-operation between the companies. Also, employees commuting across borders will bring new opportunities to businesses. Companies operating in international trade and cross-border employees are an important resource for young

entrepreneurs who want to develop their business. The willingness to provide mentoring should be used by young entrepreneurs who need cross-border market awareness and experience.

Entrepreneurship should be seen as a way to maintain the Lapland way of life. In Western countries, the labour market seems to develop, because the digital and ICT sectors are developing, especially in low-wage sectors. But also the high-wage sectors create new jobs. Also the numbers of sole entrepreneurs are going up, while average-wage jobs hardly increase. Entrepreneurship will thus have an even greater role than in the past for the future of Lapland. We are on a good path, as in Lapland there are currently about 800 entrepreneurs under 35 years of age. This represents about ten percent of the companies operating in Lapland, which have the same relative share of entrepreneurs as the entrepreneurial community throughout the country.

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Coordinators' Expectations for the Project



FROM CHALLENGES TO SUCCESS - LAUNCHING THE PROJECT

For better or for worse, my background is 100% Lappish. I have lived, studied and worked my whole life in Finnish Lapland. My family and relatives have stayed here in the same region for centuries. I feel this is both a good and a bad thing. It is good, because I have a strong motivation to develop the region and I can see its possibilities, related to its special nature and location, based on my experience and background. Yet at the same time I am struggling with its limitations; like the small and ageing population and the inactive mindset of the people. I have experienced and closely followed the downsizing of everything in Lapland, such as public services and study opportunities. I have been lucky to find a place to study and get a job without being forced to move somewhere else. (Though maybe sometimes it is good to widen your horizon to gain new ideas...?)

I appreciate these active and brave young company owners who try to start something new in the region, doing their best to employ themselves and maybe even others in the process. They really want to live here, because entrepreneurship is not the easiest choice to make. Entrepreneurship gives more possibilities to activate the small towns in the region, making them more attractive to newcomers and returnees. This was my driver when starting the planning process of the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) project.

With the word "region" I mean both my home region in Finnish-Lapland, but also the Barents Region at large. I can see that the interesting location on the Finnish-Swedish border and the "twin city" concept make Tornio-Haparanda quite international, especially when looking at our common history. Of course nowadays, with new technological innovations, we have the doors open to the world. Why shouldn't the region be international from the onset?

Years ago I was introduced to the Young Entrepreneurs in Barents (YE) -project, which was coordinated by young people in the Barents Region, one of them my friend and colleague. The project was known for its positive atmosphere and the active involvement of young entrepreneurs. I was keen on the idea of a project with active and inspired young people working together across the borders.

During the YIE project we had the quite ambitious idea to set up a huge network of young entrepreneurs, despite of our region's limitations. When we started the project, it was obvious that that would be a challenge! The Barents Region is a vast region, but people are few, especially when it comes to young entrepreneurs who want to internationalize across the Barents Region. It was clear that cultural and language barriers were also present - at least in people's minds. Still, even with this realisation, we wanted to go ahead. We wanted to initiate the project.

The preparation for the project was no walk in the park, especially, because program was delayed and the first call did not go out until a couple of years after the initial start date. It was nerve-racking to have to wait and suddenly to realize (as always) that we had so little time to launch the project and that so many changes had occurred during the very last days. At some point in the planning process I met project manager and teacher Anzelika from the former Rovaniemi UAS. We decided to combine our ideas of Young Entrepreneurs and InnoBarentsLab. Afterwards, when Kemi-Tornio UAS and Rovaniemi UAS were joined together, we worked as colleagues in the same organisation, Lapland UAS.

The rest of the story is history...



FROM PARTICIPATION TO COORDINATION

I grew up in the border town of Kirkenes, Norway, right next to Russia and Finland. I have always been very curious about what was on the other side of the borders. My father had a travel agency, selling trips to Russia in the 90's. We went for family camping and weekend trips to Finland and Sweden as we lived close by, but we never went to Russia, which is our nearest neighbour. As I understood it, Russia was mainly for business people. I was just a couple of months old the first time we went to Finland and Sweden, but the first time I went to Russia was at the age of nineteen, for the Barents Youth Conference in Murmansk. When I moved to Tromsø to get an education, it was with the goal of taking part in the development of the North. I applied for the "Young Innovative Entrepreneurs" program that I found advertised in the regional newspaper "Finnmarken", as the program was highly related to my education, but also because I was curious about the opportunities in the region and I had always had a dream of becoming an entrepreneur.

I was full of expectations when we started the project activities in 2012. I saw the program as a unique opportunity to expand my network and knowledge about entrepreneurship and the opportunities in the Barents Region. People often tend to think of the South when speaking about education and business opportunities, so this was an opportunity to differentiate my knowledge

and experience. I wanted to get to know the region where I was born and raised and to take advantage of the enormous opportunities that we have here in the North.

An important reason for applying for the program was the opportunity to travel to Russia and to learn about Russian culture and business opportunities. Most people in Norway see Russia as foreign and so far away, while in reality Russia is one of our nearest neighbours.

By participating in the activities of the YIE project, I have gained a broad network of young entrepreneurs, business, industry and regional actors. I also got the opportunity to get a mentor from the travel industry. With the mentor, I shared ideas, discussed needs and opportunities in various business sectors in the region. Having a mentor was both inspiring and motivating.

As previous project coordinator in the Barents Secretariat, Morten Brugård, went for a new job in Innovation Norway's Russia department, I got the opportunity to become the project coordinator of YIE in Norway. If it hadn't been for my participation in the project and the experience I gained, I would never have gotten this opportunity. This means these kinds of projects are highly important for the employment opportunities for young people in the Barents Region as well.



HOW WE STARTED WITH THE PROJECT

In 2010 I graduated from Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences, International Project Management program. I was inspired to work in projects, to develop project materials, to talk to people, to be the part of a team creating something new that will lead to practical results and make a contribution to the creation of a better world. Yes, everything seemed to be that bright and promising. Well, I must say that now I am more realistic, but still believe that every new project is a small step to a better future and an improved society. That's how I roll.

Before the YIE project started, I had not been familiar with the project idea at all. I had never worked in a project connected with entrepreneurship. My experience in projects by that time was very limited. I didn't have a chance to participate in the planning stage and at first it was very challenging to get through all the documents and get the idea right, to understand the goals and results that should be achieved. The "innovation" part was also difficult to define, because it seemed so that everybody knew what it meant, but it was hard for them to formulate it. Still, I managed, we managed.

During the kick-off event in Tornio, I had to find many answers. We had to discuss almost everything in order to create a common view. We went through the project events and goals and discussed who would be participants, whether we needed some limitations in age or field for them. A lot of issues were discussed during that event between the partners and as a result we elaborated the common vision. Our expectations were the same – we needed practical results, something that would speak for itself after the project would be done.

It was quite an adventure to find project participants, but when our associated partners got involved in the process everything went better and quicker. Eventually, we had 32 participants all in all from different business fields. That's how it started in Murmansk.



THOUGHTS AND EXPECTATIONS AT THE START OF THE PROJECT

My working life changed rather dramatically at the start of the year 2011. I had decided to break up from research, teaching and strategic work at Luleå University of Technology to return to my home village to a different life (with sheep and lambs!) and new working challenges. My commitment as a director of the Association for Higher Education in Eastern Norrbotten (Högskoleförbundet Östra Norrbotten - HÖN) means long term strategic work to raise the inhabitants' level of education. The vision is to enforce successful and sustainable development in eastern Norrbotten through education and collaboration. And entrepreneurship is crucial in this region and so is the need for young people.

So, when the intention of the YIE project plan for an ENPI Kolarctic application was presented to me in 2011, just before the summer holidays, I got really interested and saw a lot of possibilities for working with young people. HÖN joined the project as the only Swedish partner in a rather late phase, when the total budget was already settled, which is why the resources and thereby the activities on the Swedish side were limited. However, we were happy to be a part of the project

and we were warmly welcomed by the other partners, even though it meant a somewhat reduced budget to them.

Before joining the project, I checked the potential to involve young entrepreneurs or young people with business ideas in the project. I found out that there were many of them in the region; from high school students to university students and also young entrepreneurs already running different kinds of businesses. So, I felt quite sure of succeeding in reaching our goal to involve 10 young people in the project. I believed that 3 matchmaking conferences in 3 different countries, a mentoring program during at least one year and the opportunity to participate in lectures governed by needs would attract many entrepreneurs. In my thoughts HÖN could also contribute to the “educational part” within the project, by suggesting lecturers and themes.

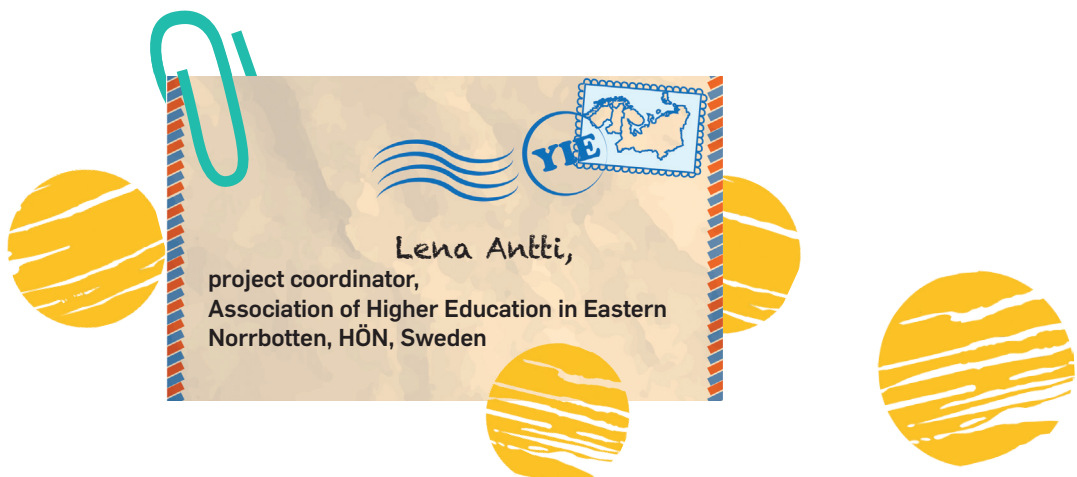
My plan was to guide 10 young entrepreneurs from eastern Norrbotten in Sweden through 3 years of the project; networking with cross-border ideas, offering them mentors and relevant lessons and conference themes, supporting them in developing their business/business idea hopefully together with like-minded entrepreneurs in Norway and/or Russia and/or Finland....

Further, I expected to be involved in the process in which 4 cross-border business ideas would be selected for further development in the InnoBarentsLab in Rovaniemi and/or Murmansk. I also believed that the final action within the project, the Barents Business Festival would attract many old and new companies and businesses to participate in this huge cross-border networking conference.

Well, that was in my mind at the start of the project....

After the project kick-off in March 2012 in Tornio I was very excited and eager to start the project. Meeting the other partners, comparing each other’s expectations and views of the project and the work during the first kick-off created a good atmosphere for collaboration and an exciting blend of skilled leaders in a new network.

I hoped that the project would result in increased understanding of cultural similarities and differences and perhaps especially in business culture between the participants and partners from the 4 countries. Further, I hoped that the project would facilitate long term cross-border relations between the partners and a number of sustainable cross-border business relations between young entrepreneurs.





3 SUPPORT TOOLS FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Regional Support for Young Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurship plays a key role in better economic recovery and further growth in the Barents Region. Youth entrepreneurship can be a vital tool in solving many socio-economic problems, such as mass youth unemployment problems, or youth migration to the southern parts of Barents Region countries. Youth entrepreneurship can be a viable tool for increasing innovativeness and new expertise development, creating new workplaces that will result in lower regional and local unemployment, increased innovativeness and the development of new expertise.

In order to use the existing potential of young human capital, an environment for entrepreneurship and innovativeness should be created. It is recognized at the national and European Union levels that more attention must be given to the development of various measures to promote entrepreneurship, especially among young people. The European Union in general has relatively low levels of entrepreneurial activity compared to the United States and Japan.

Accordingly, low entrepreneurial activity, especially among young people, is an important problem also in the Barents Region. In recent years more attention has been given to large investment projects in big industries in the Barents Region, while very little attention has been paid to the small entrepreneurs and youth entrepreneurship problems in particular. Youth entrepreneurship is defined differently in different situations. In this particular paper youth or young people is defined as those aged between 18 and 35 and entrepreneurs refers to both aspiring and existing entrepreneurs.

YOUTHS ARE THE STRENGTH OF THE BARENTS REGION

Young people of the Barents Region should be considered as a golden reserve of human capital of the northern area. They will shape the future of the region. Taking into account the challenges of the region and turbulence in the global economy, including unemployment, more attention should be paid to creating alternative economic activity for young people in the form of self-employment and entrepreneurship.

Supporting youth entrepreneurship should become a priority in regional development. Many common youth problems and challenges have been identified across the borders; among others they include high youth unemployment, social problems and youth migration to the South, or to bigger cities, for jobs. Therefore, the partners in the YIE project aim to find best possible tools to create viable support for youth entrepreneurship and, in addition to that, bring young or aspiring entrepreneurs together in order to enhance the potential for cooperation across the borders.

CHALLENGES TO POLICIES AND SUPPORTING MEASURES FOR YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Many states and local governments that understand the economic and social benefits of entrepreneurship, already implement entrepreneur-friendly policies with the aim to support local entrepreneurship. Almost every country has a long-term economic development strategy and entrepreneurship is viewed as an integral part of this strategy. However, often very little attention is paid to the promotion of youth entrepreneurship in particular.

There are particular barriers to entrepreneurship that young people face, such as less access to financing, lack of work experience due to young age, lack of specific knowledge, lack of networks and many others. The particular barriers to youth entrepreneurship in the Barents Region should be studied and understood in order to create an appropriate entrepreneurship promotion and support environment.

The available studies by the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Towards Entrepreneurial Culture for the Twenty First Century 2006) and the OECD (Green 2013) indicate there is a set of crucial factors for youth entrepreneurial engagement. These factors should be taken into account when dealing with the development of specific youth entrepreneurship promotion policies and initiatives. Promotion of an entrepreneurial culture among young people is one of the factors. Cultural values can have an important influence on entrepreneurial behaviour. A negative perception of entrepreneurship by family, and society in general, or a lack of business role models, can discourage young people from engaging in entrepreneurship. Therefore, an environment should be created where entrepreneurship is considered as a viable and even prestigious career choice. This can be achieved through the promotion of role models, PR campaigns, and different youth networking events.

Entrepreneurship education is another important element that needs to be taken more into account. Such education can foster the entrepreneurial attitudes and skills necessary in the business environment. Better linkage between business and education should be attained and a better environment and infrastructure should be created.

In 2004 the European Commission called for the introduction of entrepreneurship education into the national curriculum from primary school to university. In recent years the Nordic Countries, including Sweden, Norway and Finland, have actively engaged in the development of enterprise education. Also in Russia more and more attention has been given in recent years to the introduction of entrepreneurship education.

YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT IN THE BARENTS REGION

Each of the Barents Region countries has their own structures, each with a different focus. To better develop and integrate different support practices in the Barents Region countries, it is important to know what is already on offer. On the whole in the Barents Region there are many various entrepreneurship support initiatives implemented, while there are few entrepreneurship interventions targeting young people in particular. Youth entrepreneurship promotion requires more specific measures, since there are particular challenges facing youth entrepreneurship. Not too many measures or programmes at EU or national level address in particular these challenges

of youth entrepreneurship and in the majority of existing programmes young people starting a business are treated as a part of the adult population at large. The same can be said about various entrepreneurship support measures in the Barents Region countries.

At the EU level there are several beneficial programmes promoting youth entrepreneurship, such as the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs and European Social Fund programmes and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument support project initiatives targeting youth entrepreneurship. All of these programmes can also benefit the Barents Region. Therefore public authorities and educational institutions should be more active in applying for available funding for more active youth entrepreneurship support in the Barents Region. (See Entrepreneurship 2013; Erasmus 2013; European Parliament 2013; The New European Neighbourhood Instrument 2011.)

Young and aspiring entrepreneurs need to be better informed and consulted about these existing support opportunities. During the project it was obvious that young people from all four project participating countries knew very little, or almost nothing about support opportunities available to them. Hopefully in the future there will be a place where to develop an integrated Barents Region youth entrepreneurship programme supported by the Barents Region states.


Even though various support structures are available for entrepreneurship in all four countries represented in the project, it is obvious that more effort at the national and regional level should be made to deal with youth entrepreneurship issues, otherwise the creative and innovative potential, as well as human capital, represented by the young people will be lost. Therefore, YIE project is looking for innovative responses to the dual challenge of stimulating entrepreneurship and encouraging cross-border cooperation at the same time.

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YIE's participant

Johan Berglund, Barents Regional Youth Council (BRYC), Sweden



I have participated in most of the main YIE events, although there have been some that I (for one reason or another) was not able to attend. I was initially made aware of the project through my attendance at the Barents Reunion in 2012. I had previously been involved in various conferences concerning youth issues in the region, so, needless to say, this YIE-project sounded like an exciting opportunity. My expectations of the project were sufficiently simple; I wanted to meet and network with people from all over the Barents Region. I had no immediate business idea that I was working on at the moment I joined up with the project, but I figured something might come up along the way.

In retrospect, I would indeed claim that the project met my expectations (and then some). By participating in the YIE I have been able to travel around the region and to network with its entrepreneurs on a personal level. As I am part of an organization where the habit of networking and knowing who's-who is integral to what we do, this experience has been of paramount importance. The seminars, workshops and training received during the various YIE main events have also had a major impact in my everyday life.

And while I am on the topic of the main events, I can confidently say that they have been the highlights of the project for me. I still recall, vividly, the sensations that washed over me the first time I heard Dennis Kreminsky talk about his experiences at the first event in Rovaniemi. Dennis has become somewhat of a poster child of the YIE project, I would say, as he was willing to share both the ups- and downs of starting his own company. Authenticity, as it turns out, is worth its weight in gold and Dennis has probably been approached with business offers (I would argue) more than anyone else in the YIE. Another thing about the main events that has definitely exceeded any of



my expectations (as modest as they were) was the training we received in Kirkenes. The workshops and their facilitators were expertly conceived, and while I do not know whether or not Morten Brugård was solely responsible for the arrangement, he has my sincerest appreciation for his work on the subject. I shall not belabour the point much more than I already have, but suffice to say that the workshops were some of the best I have ever attended.



It is my firm belief that the YIE-project has contributed (and will continue to contribute) more to the region than anyone has as of yet conceived. The YIE is a veritable goldmine of opportunity linking together entrepreneurs, exchanging ideas and business experiences. And all of this from our region, not some far off market with vastly different conditions. As we every day keep acclimatising to the idea of being global citizens and businesses, I think that we (perhaps too much so) get into the habit of looking outside our immediate surroundings for solutions and ideas; thereby not realizing the potential that's just around us. Realize that you can make an impact right here with the people that live here with you, your neighbours, your friends. For together we possess unique knowledge of the region and its specific needs and challenges.



I often hear the Barents cooperation heralded as an example of creating exceptionally good relations between its participatory countries. Working together brings a sense of community and participation, it brings partners, friends and mutual understanding. In a turbulent world wrought with diplomatic issues and dispute, I believe that projects like the YIE bring stability through people-to-people contacts and, ultimately, peace. As a matter of fact, it could be argued that by participating in the YIE and ensuring the future existence of projects like it, we are not just making the region a better place to live - but the world as well.

Mentoring as a Way to build a better Entrepreneurial Basis in the Barents Region

Mentoring is a concept that can be perceived in various ways. It's maybe easier to define the concept by explaining what it is not. For example, the line between mentoring and consulting is fine, and if the mentor or mentee understands the relationship incorrectly, it can easily lead to a consulting relationship. However, consulting is more about giving answer to questions, while mentoring is finding answers together to the problems at hand. At its best, mentoring is a partnership between two people usually working in a similar field or sharing similar experiences (What is Mentoring? 2008).

A mentoring relationship is based on the mutual interest to benefit both parties, common trust and a commitment to a long-term "professional friendship" (see for example Smith 2013; Management Mentors 2014; What is Mentoring? 2014). There are many kinds of mentoring relationships. For example, a mentor can be needed when a young talent, maybe a student, is searching for his/her strengths, potential and personal skills in future working life. Mentor-mentee relationships can also occur in working life within businesses.

Mentoring can be a powerful personal development and empowerment tool and it helps people to progress in their careers in an effective way. It can boost a mentee's confidence as a person and as an entrepreneur. A mentor is a guide who can help the mentee to find the right direction and to develop solutions to career issues. As the mentor most likely has gone through similar experiences as the mentee is dealing with, it's easier to empathise with the mentee and to understand their issues. (What is Mentoring? 2008.)

In the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) -project we sought ways of utilizing mentors to enhance the entrepreneurial knowledge of mentees. In this case the mentors would be experienced entrepreneurs and the mentees would be young and aspiring entrepreneurs.

WHAT CAN MENTORING INCLUDE?

During the YIE-project, mentoring guidelines were produced (Mentoring Guidelines 2012). These guidelines served as a starting point when planning an upcoming mentor-mentee relationship. However, it must be mentioned that all the relationships were different, because people are different. A mentor-mentee relationship is always formed based on the personal needs and characteristics of the persons behind it. There is not one way of mentoring that could be adapted for everyone. This is a richness rather than an obstacle.

There are various different mentoring programmes all around the world. It is often highlighted that mentoring benefits both parties. At the same time as the mentor shares his/her knowledge, the mentee can offer new information about today's educational backgrounds. It's important that both come into the relationship as equals.

YIE's mentoring guidelines give instructions on what kind of activities can be part of the mentoring:

- Provide direction to, or list relevant books, web resources, articles, or other resources.
- Serve as a resource broker.
- Provide job shadowing opportunities, or an on-site visit.
- Discuss training and educational opportunities.
- Suggest methods for advancing the mentee's growth.
- Request or offer résumé assistance and long-term career guidance.
- Provide networking opportunities, or assist the entrepreneurs in professional networking.
- Recommend developmental activities.
- Communicate experiences and challenges as a entrepreneur.
- Attend a business related event together.
- Provide effective feedback.
- Acknowledge areas in which you do not have the necessary skills and refer to other resources.

(Mentoring Guidelines 2012.)



BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIP FOR BOTH PARTIES

In YIE's mentoring guidelines, a list of benefits for mentor and mentee is presented. It's highlighted that a good mentorship is equally beneficial for both parties in the relationship. (Mentoring Guidelines 2012.)

A mentor's main benefits can be the following:

- Personal satisfaction from enriching the young entrepreneur's experience through entrepreneurial skills development.
- Give back to the community and region through the development of young people as entrepreneurs for the future by personally and professionally supporting their growth.
- Enhance coaching, feedback and existing leadership skills.
- Exposure to new and different thinking styles, knowledge and perspectives.

(Mentoring Guidelines 2012.)

On the other hand, a mentee can benefit in the following ways:

- Gain entrepreneurial skills and understanding of entrepreneurship as it relates to professional and personal development.
- Learn the meaning and application of entrepreneurial skills in a variety of environments
- Gain access to the experience of professionals for guidance in e.g. time management, communication and networking skills.
- Develop skills and knowledge to become future mentors.

(Mentoring Guidelines 2012.)

It is pointed out that the most effective mentors improve their own knowledge and leadership skills within the mentoring relationship. While assisting a mentee, a mentor has a chance to reflect on and articulate his/her own experience and expertise. (Hart 2010.) In this way a mentor can also see his/her own work in a totally new light and the relationship can in fact become as beneficial for the mentor as it is for the mentee.

MENTORING IN THE YIE-PROJECT

It was not easy to start a mentoring programme within the YIE programme. Although it seems that there is a specific need for mentors in the area, it was harder to find mentees than mentors to commit to the programme. Many were interested, but maybe because of a lack of time, the final implementation didn't come through.

In Finland, the mentoring possibilities were presented at a few different events organized for the Finnish national participants in the project. In the fall of 2013, during a national get-together in Finland, existing mentoring possibilities in the area were introduced. In addition, in the beginning of 2014, mentoring brochures were produced for both mentors and mentees, and these emphasized the benefits of the mentoring relationship.

It seems that it takes a little time for people to get acquainted with the concept of mentoring. Some may be scared of the time it takes. It's often easier to see the obstacles rather than the possibilities. At the same time, we discovered that at this point there doesn't seem to be a need for cross-border mentoring. Face-to-face meetings and discussions in one's own language is the

core of mentoring in our area. Although today's technology would offer a suitable platform for cross-border mentoring, the people are not yet ready for it.

The cooperation between the YIE-project and The Regional Organization of Enterprises in Lapland has proved to be fruitful for the future of mentoring in Finnish Lapland. Mentoring possibilities offered by these two organizations are showcased and presented for the entrepreneurs in Lapland on the web pages of The Regional Organization of Enterprises in Lapland.

The YIE-project has set up a foundation for mentoring in the Barents Region, but only future will tell how it will be exploited. Although it's important to find cooperation possibilities between the young entrepreneurs in the area, it's also important to embrace the long-term knowledge of the experienced entrepreneurs. As the overall goal is to strengthen the Barents Region and its entrepreneurship among the youth, all possible support systems can be beneficial.

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Mentoring in Practice

In a "dual role" of senior lecturer in media studies and professional film-maker (MA in film directing and screenwriting), I acted as a mentor in two different international projects, Creative Edge and Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE), for 8 months between May and December 2013. Both of my mentees were media students at Lapland University of Applied Sciences (formerly Kemi-Tornio UAS). During that period we worked closely on two short fiction films written, produced and directed by the mentees under my supervision as an executive producer.

As our aim and objective was to produce films, we divided our mentoring schedule over three major film production stages: pre-production, production and post-production.

We started our mentoring project from pre-production stage, because my mentees' screenplays had gone through the pitching, development and screenwriting stages during their media studies, and during that stage we polished screenplays into shooting scripts. We also discussed and went through other essential elements of film pre-productions, e.g. casting, filming locations, the overall theme, style and genre of films, technical issues, storyboards etc. During the pre-production stage we had mentoring sessions weekly. Sessions were either face-to-face contact meetings or online meetings and discussions in Skype and in our Facebook group. We also took part in a film seminar in Skellefteå, Sweden to broaden our professional networks.

The production stage was almost completely face-to-face due the nature of film productions which means dense, long filming days more often on location than in studios. Lots of problems had to be solved and lots of things had to be learnt in a short time period, but it was absolutely the best way to learn the craft of film making. During our production stage we spent about two weeks with our 20 to 30-person film crew and during this stage we concentrated more on directing and producing.

When the actual filming was completed, we started the post-production stage where the images are edited and sound, music and visual effects are added etc. During this stage our mentoring sessions were arranged according to the editing process: when new versions of the film were ready we gathered together, watched the film, discussed about what we had seen and then made a list of possible corrections and improvement suggestions.

And finally, the films were ready and the mentoring sessions finished. So what did I learn from this terrific and inspiring experience? Here are some thoughts and guidelines concerning the mentoring process from a mentor's point of view:

Mentoring is time consuming. It's important to keep in touch with your mentees and to be available especially in the very beginning, when mentees have thousands of questions and have

a lack of experience and direction. But it is OK for the mentor to take a step back once in a while as well. He doesn't have to be right in the centre of things all the time. By meeting each other frequently during a longer time period, you are able to see the development and progress.

Mentoring is challenging. To find your role and the right balance between advisor, teacher, business partner and a friend is the key to a successful mentoring process. In short: it's all about chemistry. But if you possess a willingness to get engaged in your role as mentor and you truly believe, that you have something to offer to your mentees, then you are going in the right direction.

Mentoring is to trust each other... and to earn this mutual trust a mentor has to be believable both professionally and in experience, but also as an interactive person able to express himself or herself and able to listen to his or her mentees. In short: mentoring is an interactive process. It's not just giving answers to questions but it's about the process of finding those answers and solutions together. Once you have become closer acquainted with your mentees, you are able to be more direct with your feedback and you are able to receive feedback better as well.

Set your aims and objectives together. The best way to start your mentoring is to set clear, ambitious and realistic aims and objectives with your mentees, which will create a solid body for the whole mentoring process. When the aim is clear, the steps and procedures towards it will be easier to set and the picture of the whole process will be clear for both parties.

Mentoring is rewarding, especially, if you accept the fact that learning can be a two-way street. When thinking and discussing about the same topics and issues together with people from different businesses, nationalities, educational backgrounds and age groups you will receive different points of view you wouldn't ever even consider working just on your own. For mentees your work as mentor could be a life-changing moment, when they have finally found their focus and way through the chaos and the ocean of questions and uncertainty. When you have gone through everything in depth, they will have a clear view of things and how to make use of their own potential. And most importantly they have learnt to trust themselves as professionals.

MORE ABOUT "MENTORING IN PRACTICE":

yioproject.blogspot.fi/p/mentoring.html



Need for Entrepreneurial Mentoring in Finnish Lapland

A young or aspiring entrepreneur needs a wide variety of support activities when starting a new business. The first steps can be that the entrepreneur will ask help from different kinds of organizations supporting start-ups in the Lapland region, as they have comprehensive services from the establishment of a business to the business planning process.

A young entrepreneur needs particularly some experienced external evaluator with insights in how to assist aspiring entrepreneurs' own skills development and focusing their core business activities. The mentoring, or the transfer of knowledge from an experienced entrepreneur to a less experienced entrepreneur is a great way to share so-called silent knowledge with the young entrepreneur.

One goal of the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project partner organization The Regional Organization of Entrepreneurs in Lapland was to improve the mentoring activities in the region, together with Lapland University of Applied Sciences. While mapping the Mentoring situation both on national level in Finland and specifically in the Lapland region, we found out that mentoring is done in many different ways. When we talk about the growing urban areas, where both mentors and mentees are many, mentoring is implemented professionally and there is also permanent financing for it. Previously, only Rovaniemi Regional Development Agency Ltd was responsible for mentoring in the Rovaniemi region in Lapland.

The earlier form of mentoring program originated from a national project “Hynttyyt yhteen” in Rovaniemi, after which the Rovaniemi Regional Development Agency Ltd has been responsible for the mentoring in the area. The support organizations in the area have been informed of a “mentor bank” maintained by the development agency. The aim is that different organisations in the area do not provide the same or overlapping services, but cooperate with each other.

The Regional Organization of Entrepreneurs in Lapland and Lapland University of Applied Sciences have published a mentoring brochure in English, with the aim to inform about the activities in the project, particularly for young people and entrepreneurs. The Regional Organization of Entrepreneurs in Lapland has also published the Finnish version of the brochure on their own website.

The mentor program was also presented in Rovaniemi during the Arctic Design Week in February 2014. There was also a mentoring kick-off meeting about the “Lapland model of mentoring”, held in November 2014 in Tornio, specifically explaining the benefits of the mentoring process for both potential mentees and mentors.

The challenges in the process relate to Lapland's specific geographical characteristics: vast area, long distances and low population density. The important element of mentoring is often the

positive chemistry between the mentor and the mentee. Thus, it is challenging to match a suitable pair from such a small pool of people. In addition, long distances are an obstacle to intense mentoring. There has been interest in mentoring, but new mentor-mentee pairs have not yet been created through the project.

After the project, the responsible organization for mentoring in the Lapland area will be The Regional Organization of Entrepreneurs in Lapland together with Rovaniemi Regional Development Agency Ltd. The Regional Organization of Entrepreneurs in Lapland will inform of and maintain a “mentor bank”-like list of interested mentors. In fact, mentees are controlled in essentially the same manner as in the Rovaniemi Regional Development Agency Ltd, through the support and financial organizations. When the program has been institutionalized and it has become familiar to operators in the area, it is possible to start thinking about an extension, for example, to cross-border mentoring.

In cross-border mentoring it is particularly important to discover a common language. In other words, to understand the basic principles and terms of mentoring across the confining borders (different from consultation). Particularly, an experienced entrepreneur, wanting to explore a new country legislation and entrepreneurship through another entrepreneur, could also take advantage of international mentoring. In such a case, the best solution would be co-mentoring each other.

YIE's participant

Victor Kapustin
Soap Factory Murmansk, Russia

The YIE project provided an opportunity, which is hard to get for an ordinary entrepreneur, to see the international aspect of the business and make numerous acquaintances among talented and energetic people from different countries. “Young Innovative Entrepreneurs” offered not only useful educational material on relevant topics, but also a friendly atmosphere of cooperation and exchange of experiences. Success stories, sharing ideas, new areas of competence – all this inspires and motivates to action. Through the project, I got valuable experience and a business partner. I think “Young Entrepreneurs” have found their recipe for success!

Mentoring as a Part of Studies at Lapland UAS

The school of Business and Culture of Lapland University of Applied Sciences integrates a mentoring path within its own curriculum. The role of Lapland UAS is to act as a mediator by providing students information about mentoring and leading them to the mentoring path.

Mentoring is intended for students who are particularly interested in entrepreneurship. If students are wondering about their abilities to start their own business, mentoring can be a helpful tool to evaluate whether to develop their business idea. Mentoring can provide a useful, larger perspective in entrepreneurship.

Teachers provide information about mentoring possibilities directly to students during courses; this is to ensure that information is better transmitted to students. It also provides a possibility for discussion and reflection. The most important thing is to make sure that students are motivated to become mentees, which will enable them to take responsibility for their learning process.

Mentoring is coordinated by The Regional Organization of Entrepreneurs in Lapland which has a mentoring model that utilises connections in and knowledge of the Lapland region.

INTEGRATING MENTORING PATH AS PART OF STUDIES

There are two models for mentoring. One is aimed at the students of Liike Academy including both business mentoring and personal mentoring. The other is an integrated model for other Lapland UAS's students of Business and Culture who are interested in entrepreneurship as a future prospect.

LIIKE ACADEMY MODEL

Liike Academy is a working-life-oriented study model in which studies are completed by starting a business. Liike Academy as a company carries out assignments which include development assignments, business ideas and solutions for customers. It is a paid business service. (See Liikeakatemia 2014.)

Business Mentoring

When starting their business, a Liike Academy student company can apply to a mentoring program to get help in understanding the first steps in business life. The role of the mentor is made as easy as possible. The mentor will share his/her business story and experiences of business life and discuss business related topics with Liike Academy companies.

The goal of business mentoring is to help Liike Academy companies understand the demands of business life when starting a company.

Personal Mentoring

Personal mentoring is available for Liike Academy students in their third academic year. Each student can individually monitor his or her business idea and develop skills and objectives with the help of a mentor.

Liike Academy students get information from coaches and are guided to apply for mentoring. The Regional Organization of Entrepreneurs in Lapland will help to choose a suitable mentor from Lapland's entrepreneurs.

MENTORING PATH FOR BUSINESS AND CULTURE STUDENTS

Information about mentoring is offered to all the students of Business and Culture during the first and second academic year. However, it is emphasized that interest in entrepreneurship is key when applying for mentoring. Annual enrolment takes place towards the end of the 3rd and 4th academic year.

Mentoring Path:

1st Academic year

Students are provided with basic information about mentoring by a teacher at the start of the first year.

Contents:

- What is mentoring?
- How can students benefit from mentoring?
- Examples of mentoring (video).
- Time for questions and discussion.

2nd Academic year

Through the InnoMarathon course, students will get more information about mentoring (What is offered? To whom? Why?). Students are instructed to search for information about mentoring in the YIE mentoring guides (Share Your knowledge as a mentor! 2014; Get valuable knowledge from a mentor! 2014) and asked to write an essay on their interest to participate in mentoring.

- What would the benefits of mentoring be for me?
- How will it help me in a future perspective?
- Presenting a potential business idea.

The essay serves as a memo if they decide to apply for the mentoring program later.

3rd Academic year / spring semester

Mentoring information and the contact details of the coordinator are provided in the 3rd year. The following topics are introduced:

- What does mentoring mean in practice?
- How many appointments will there be with the mentor?

- How to apply for mentoring?
- Guidance for writing the application.

Students are provided with links to mentoring information (See for example Mentoring 2014; Share Your knowledge as a mentor! 2014; Get valuable knowledge from a mentor! 2014) and instructions for mentoring (Yritysmentorointi 2014), which are useful to read.

The main goal of the mentoring process is to enhance the business life of the region. Students are encouraged to engage in entrepreneurship and build their own future.

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YIE's participant

Zoltán Fodor, Urbanid, Finland



My name is Zoltán Fodor, and I'm running my own business Urbanid which is specialised in 3D visualisation. I established my company when I moved to Finland in 2011. In the beginning I offered urban planning services, since I studied city planning and urban design, but then over time I became involved more and more in 3D modelling, so today I am offering only these kind of services – city modelling, ground modelling, 3D illustrations and building virtual environments.



If I remember correctly the first YIE event I participated in was the Matchmaking event in 2012 organized in Haparanda/Tornio/Rovaniemi. After that I participated in all the following YIE events: Murmansk, Kirkenes, etc.



A friend of mine, a fellow entrepreneur introduced me to the YIE project. When he told me about the project, I got interested as I consider myself a creative person and I found the idea of cross-border cooperation and partnership interesting. This kind of "attitude", the idea of YIE, was brand new for me since I am from central Europe, I had never experienced cross-border collaboration before, which is quite common here in the North. I liked the idea of getting to know Norwegians, Swedes, Finns and Russians, and I thought this would be a good way for me to learn more about what it is like to be an entrepreneur in the North and perhaps find new partners, new work for my business.



My expectation was that I would find new customers from the participating countries. Now, after these few years within the project, perhaps a bit wiser, I would say I set my expectations too high, but I am not disappointed at all, because during the YIE events I grew my network a lot. I made a lot of new friends and contacts and even made a deal with InnoBarentsLab – I am building a 3D "test lab" for them, a collaborative virtual environment which aims to help cross-border cooperation and works as a new kind of tool to inspire students or any other visitors.

Besides growing my network, the other benefit from participating in the YIE project for me is that I learnt a lot about entrepreneurship. I feel myself more professional and confident than before joining the project, and I believe that the new contacts I made will lead to more future projects, even outside Finland.

I only have positive feelings and good memories about the project, but the best thing perhaps was the workshop(s) we had in Kirkenes, where we learnt how to prototype our ideas and how to present ourselves, how to pitch for investors.

I think there is a need for this kind of projects in the future. Without YIE I wouldn't be the person, the entrepreneur, I am today.

The background is a solid yellow color with several white, wavy, brushstroke-like lines scattered across it, primarily on the right and bottom edges.

4 ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE PROJECT

Forming National Networks within the Project

In every region within the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) -project area, there has been a slightly different approach how to inform and contact potential participants. Maybe in some regions it was easier than others. Presumably, in universities it was easiest to contact students and graduates on the campus. Together with other stakeholders, like private organisations, it has been possible to reach companies in the region. When reaching out to participants, credibility always matters, which was the reason for the public-private -network in the project.

In this project the main objective has been internationalisation and networking across the borders, but we cannot ignore the need for entrepreneurs to network within the region. Because of this need, the project also organised national meeting points for its participants. It has been rewarding to see new partnering during these national events and, following positive feedback, it seemed important to continue.

Besides networking and partnering, the national events were also a channel to disseminate information about the project and upcoming events. From a project manager's point of view it was good to meet regional company owners and to have closer contact with them than at the massive international events.

From the beginning the positive atmosphere of young entrepreneurs was our focus. At the national events the plan was also to network regional participants to create "team spirit". The idea of "team spirit" and "togetherness" can lower boundaries to participating in big international events.

Some training/educational activities were often integrated in the networking events. It seemed to be important to have some real reason to participate, not only for networking itself.

NATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN FINLAND

Saila-Inkeri Puukko, Minttu Merivirta & Anzelika Krastina

The application procedure for participants started in Finland from the "kick-off" meetings. The "kick-offs" were organised in order to promote the project to the target group, meaning young and potential entrepreneurs with an interest in internationalisation. (YIE seminar in Rovaniemi 2012.) Before that some marketing materials, including marketing channels had been created to raise people's interest in the project.

Part of the promotional activities was also inspirational training for students and young entrepreneurs in Tornio. A benchmarking trip to Kiruna was organised to combine an interesting excursion with a networking possibility for entrepreneurs (Visiting LKAB mine 2012).

The project recruited entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs from the region, but also from the university campus areas. On the campus it was rather easy to contact teachers and students. Establishing contact with the young entrepreneurs in the region was something of challenge. In Finland we had a good partnership with The Regional Organization of Enterprises in Lapland. Their role was especially to match the YIE-project with young company owners. Active regional cooperation with other stakeholders within the region was ongoing from the start.

At the start of the project there was a formal application procedure, but later it was decided to put it aside and select participants mainly via an unofficial "search and find" method, which consisted basically of word of mouth recommendations from other YIE participants. Of course selection criteria varied depending on the case and some regional activities were open to everyone interested. Considering the limited population in the region we reached a quite high number of participants: in total over 300! Eventually there were about 20-30 active, long-term participants who participated in the project from its start to the end. Within this group there were both companies and students.

NATIONAL GET-TOGETHER EVENTS IN FINLAND

The Finnish participants had a get-together event on January 17th 2013 in Tervola. The purpose was to meet, discuss and create stronger networks also regionally. The meeting was organized together with two other projects; Northern Creative Youth 2 and Creative Edge. All the participants of the event were from the creative field, so there was also a chance to expand networks internationally. The highlight of the event was an inspirational panel where young entrepreneurs shared their stories how to succeed in the creative industries. All in all, this informal and relaxed get-together was well received by YIE's Finnish participants. It was a great way to build and maintain networks.

YIE's Finnish participants gathered together for further regional networking at Science Centre Pilke in Rovaniemi on February 21st 2013. The event was organized in cooperation with the NoCry2 project. During this meeting, the participants got a chance to present their projects or companies using the "six senses" (smell, taste, touch, hearing, sight, intuition) created by iLme innorooms (see 2014). One of the central activities in Finland has been also the initiation of the mentoring program. Project manager Heidi Alariesto from Rovaniemen Kehitys Oy (see 2014) was invited to the event to present their mentoring or kind of "godfather" activity, in which an experienced entrepreneur volunteers to advise young entrepreneurs (see Yrityskummitoiminnassa yrittäjä auttaa toista yrittäjää 2014). The purpose of the event was also gathering feedback from participants on their needs and wishes. And in the process also to see if there was any interest in starting the mentoring program.

A group of Finnish YIE participants and students from Lapland UAS took part in The Stories -seminar, organized during the Arctic Design Week 2014 in Rovaniemi on February 20th. After the seminar an info event was held in which the participants were given some information about

the upcoming YIE events and activities, as well as about a chance to get involved in mentoring with the help of YIE.

YIE staff from Lapland UAS further explored good practices in innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems during a benchmarking visit to Dublin between 17 and 21 March 2014. Lessons learnt during the visit added greatly to the further development of InnoBarentsLab and other entrepreneurship support activities within the project.

In addition to the mentioned events, there have been other trainings like a Russian language course and presentation skills training among others. Finnish participants also visited the Barents Sea Youth Conference in Hammerfest and created new useful contacts during the stay.

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SUMMARIZING EVENTS IN SWEDEN WITHIN THE PROJECT

Lena Antti

In Sweden we started the project by looking for participants through advertisements on the web, in the local newspapers and by visiting schools and exhibitions (were young people likely would be visitors – work, education, career, business events). We also got suggestions on participants from teachers and entrepreneurs and we contacted them in person. The main target group was young people who had just started a business, or were interested in doing so. We also visited Luleå University of Technology to inform students about the project's potential.

The main geographical area of interest comprised 4 municipalities in eastern Norrbotten, but participants from elsewhere in Norrbotten and Västerbotten were also invited to apply for the project. Those who became interested had to apply for the project by describing themselves and their business intentions. Unfortunately, we didn't succeed in getting the 10 participants we had planned on. Seven applied and were assessed as qualified to join the project.

NATIONAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES IN SWEDEN

In October 2012 we had a national “kick-off” meeting during one day, on which the participants presented themselves and their business ideas. Each one had prepared a power point presentation and we discussed every participant's idea and intention. They thought it was really good to put words on ideas and to get the opportunity to describe their businesses and respond to questions about them.

The Swedish participants were also invited to join the activities organised by the Finnish partners and some did, for example, participate in a benchmarking trip to LKAB in Kiruna. This resulted in a business relation between a participant from Sweden and one from Finland.

In August 2013 we had a second meeting for one day, for which we had invited a speaker from the Swedish Centre of Entrepreneurship. Again the participants were happy and satisfied with the program and got valuable ideas for business development in Sweden. During the day we also discussed preparation for the coming matchmaking conference in Kirkenes where pitching was on the program.

All the participants who joined matchmaking conferences In Haparanda-Tornio, Rovaniemi, Murmansk and Kirkenes have expressed that they were very pleased to join the conferences, they got to know much about similarities and differences when it comes to the business climate in the different countries and they got new friends and contacts in the Barents Region. Some of them were also involved in other Barents projects.

YIE IN RUSSIA (MURMANSK REGION)

Anna Trubkina

Before the national kick-off event, the partners from the Murmansk region were active in sharing information about the project's possibilities. And our associate partner, the State Department of Employment Service of the Murmansk region, invited a few new entrepreneurs to this event. This was the official start of the project.

We developed an application form that included several blocks of questions such as: personal information (name, age, and contact information), a short description of the business idea and his/her motivation to participate in the project. Every partner organization held interviews with possible participants and around 30 new entrepreneurs and students with developed business ideas were selected.

NATIONAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES IN RUSSIA

As part of the IBL activities (MIBO is responsible for the organisation of IBL work in the Murmansk region) the following trainings were implemented:

- "Psychological resources of the entrepreneur"
- “Preparing and defence of a business-plan”
- Business-training “Marketing solutions on the market of goods and services”
- A series of workshops devoted to the problem of personal financial planning started. The series includes 8 workshops. Two of them: "How to create a personal financial plan, or

money is always available" and "Developing of a personal financial plan" were arranged in 2013.

MENTORING PROGRAM

Within the mentoring program several trainings and seminars were organized. We want to mention the training on "Communication management". This training was highly requested by Russian participants and we invited a professional business trainer Mrs. Larisa Milyakova, candidate of economic sciences, associate professor; qualified business-trainer, main specialization: HR management, business communications, motivation and retention of personnel in the company, recruiting. This training took a day and was full of different tasks and team work.

Another training event for the participants of the "Young Innovative Entrepreneurs" Project was held by the Northern Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The main topic of this event was "How to set up your own business. Measures for supporting start-up entrepreneurs in the Murmansk Region". The aim of the event was to offer actual and useful information to all the participants of the training event about:

- general issues regarding setting up a new business, state registration of a new company, liquidation and reorganization of enterprises
- the mechanisms of state support for start-up entrepreneurs in the Murmansk Region, that includes financial support and consulting support

The participants were informed about experts from the NCCI who are able to assist them with their requests.

After the informational part there was the possibility to ask questions, get individual consultations with specialists of the NCCI and representatives from business support organizations, to obtain practical tips on business issues.

PILOT PROJECTS AS A STRENGTH OF THE NORWEGIAN PARTICIPANTS' GROUP

Morten Brugård

When recruiting in Norway, we first focused on getting the message out there about what YIE was and that it was going to happen. The project manager was allowed into universities, conferences and chambers of commerce and industry to talk about the project and our plan. We also managed to pitch the project to mainstream media like newspapers and radio. The momentum gained from these early activities helped us not only to attract participants, but also to get leverage throughout the project, as the public was aware of YIE and the opportunities we could offer. After this initial priming of the target audience and area, we announced to the general public and some targeted groups that the application process was open.

We focused mainly on actual entrepreneurs and business owners, as we viewed the actual accomplishment of cross-border business through the project as a key aspect. That these were already successful businesses would also help the sustainability of the project results in our opinion. After receiving all applications we sat down in a small committee reviewing all

applications and putting together a diverse group in terms of field of business, geographical positioning, maturity of business ideas and other key aspects. We had more than double the number of applicants to the number of possible participants in the project. Throughout the project we added several companies and entrepreneurs to further enrich the group of Norwegian participants.

NATIONAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES IN NORWAY

National educational event at Sommarøya

At an educational event at Sommarøya near Tromsø the entrepreneurs initiated a roadmap aimed to promote the opportunities in the region and create enthusiasm about these opportunities and the region itself.

The participants were given presentations about the opportunities, and presented themselves and their ideas in a manner in which they shed light on the opportunities exploited by themselves, in order to show the diversity in the opportunities that are present in the region, but often forgotten due to the focus on oil, gas and shipping.

Eirik Mofoss from Tromsø already had got in-depth cross-border experience from studying at the Norwegian, Russian High School in Murmansk. Now he was one of the enthusiastic youngsters participating in the program.

“I believe this is the beginning of something great! So many inspired and like-minded young people, all with the same predilection for entrepreneurship. We have already created a valuable network. I hope we can stay connected between the events, both on a personal level and within the project in regards to helping each other and cooperating”, said Eirik Mofoss.

Jenny Mikkelsen Spring, also participating in the program, highlighted the fact that this educational event was very inspiring and builds on a foundation where co-creation of value between the young innovative entrepreneurs is essential. She summed up the event as very successful and explained that she was already looking forward to the next event hosted by Young Innovative Entrepreneurs, a matchmaking conference that would take place in Tornio and Rovaniemi in mid-November.

Pilot projects

On the Norwegian side we have had a strong focus on finding and doing pilot projects. Pilots are Russian WAR (Willing, Able and Ready) companies. Simply put, we were looking for Norwegian companies that we regarded as ready to enter the Russian market in search of customers or partners. If the companies are over-achieving in Norway, we believe this will help achieve sustainable results in cross-border business. Our pilot projects are front runners that we can use as examples of good cross-border business and great examples to follow. If our pilots are successful we believe that more will follow.

Ramsalt Lab AS (Tromsø)

Ramsalt Lab AS has initiated cooperation with Arctic Turn from Murmansk. The companies met at YIE and have had strong ties after the initial meeting. They are after one year still strengthening the cooperation and in February 2014 there are two persons in Murmansk working 100% on joint

projects for Norwegian customers together with Ramsalt Lab. ICT companies from Northern-Norway looking to Russia for highly qualified partners have now initiated a project called Barents ICT-Clusters.

Rein Film AS (Alta)

Rein Film AS is preparing a short film that will be shot on the border between Norway and Russia. The film will be made jointly by Norwegian and Russian actors, film makers and camera crews. The film will be shown at Russian and Norwegian film festivals. The background for making this a pilot is the idea of a joint film market for the Barents Region.

MuApps AS (Tromsø)

MuApps AS founder and guitar player, Medby, has used his own experience from 20 years of teaching aspiring guitar players to create an educational app he himself would have found useful when learning to play guitar. Now he is looking to take advantage of the rapidly growing Russian app market for phones and tablet. MuApps represent the new breed of entrepreneurs – small, born-global companies with great possibilities of scalability. In the world of start-ups scalability is viewed as the key value driver. A scalable idea is an idea which has the ability increase volume without impacting the contribution margin. “We are already selling our product in 50 different countries through AppStore and Google Play, and our business model is highly scalable by nature,” Medby says as he bursts out in a smile. “But we are looking to promote and differentiate our app for the Russian market, as this market is booming as we speak”.

Small projects

We have also done some small projects that did not make it into pilot projects. BioPrawns AS and Kirkenes Trading AS are involved in maritime industries and were brought to the Murmansk Fish Expo in 2013. Several possible contacts were investigated, but no results were achieved. ScandiDerma AS wanted to enter the Russian market with their skin care products. Through YIE we initiated contacts in Moscow and Karelia, but the market entry failed.

Dissemination of the project

On the Norwegian side we have spent a lot of time telling people about what we do and the results we have achieved. We have even attracted new companies and entrepreneurs by word-of-mouth that we are highly capable in helping young entrepreneurs enter the Russian market. We have built a firm foundation to build on.

Introduction to Matchmaking Events

The international matchmaking events were the cornerstones of the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) -project. In total 3 matchmaking events were organised during the project. Each partner country was responsible for one event, except for the events that was organised jointly by Finland-Sweden (Haparanda-Tornio-Rovaniemi).

The aim was to offer young entrepreneurs from various industries support and increased competence to do business and initiate projects in the Barents Region. The idea of the international conferences was to give inspiration, enthusiasm, knowledge, ideas and a network to start up and continue cross-border projects.

Matchmaking events consisted of various kinds of activities. For instance, inspirational and expert lectures, group work and company dating, as well as activities during the evening programme, all formed an important part of the networking.



Photo: Annett Pée

The first Matchmaking Event in Finland

The Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project organized an international matchmaking event in the Tornio-Haparanda-Rovaniemi region from the 14th to 17th of November 2012. The theme for the conference was “Strengthening the North”.

The objective of this first matchmaking event was to give the participants an opportunity to innovate and network internationally and thereby create cooperation across the borders. The event was attended by more than 100 young entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial-minded students from Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia.

SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE BARENTS REGION

The event kicked off on Wednesday evening 14.11. with a welcoming dinner at the Tornio City Hotel. The actual matchmaking seminar was held on Thursday 15.11. in Sverigefinska folkhögskolan’s atmospheric spaces in Haparanda, Sweden. Leena Alaläykkölä, the Dean of Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences (in the school of Business and Culture) welcomed the seminar participants to the event and predicted the event would be a great experience for everyone. The host of the event Daniel Muotka (Träningsbyrån, Luleå) presented YIE’s predecessor, the Young Entrepreneurs in the Barents Region project, in which he had worked as a project manager. After this, YIE’s Project Manager Saila-Inkeri Puukko presented the project and purpose of the matchmaking event to the participants.

On Friday 16.11. the seminar participants were transferred to Rovaniemi where the second day of the matchmaking event was held. The host Juha Eskelinen (Tivoli, and Cafe & Bar 21, Rovaniemi) welcomed the participants to the Rantavitikka campus of Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences. Then the Director of the Lapland Chamber of Commerce, Timo Rautajoki, introduced business and innovation opportunities in the Barents Region. In both the Haparanda and Rovaniemi matchmaking event’s, participants also got to hear some inspiring success stories from young entrepreneurs of the Barents Region.

In Haparanda Elina Stoor from iLme Innorooms (Tornio, Finland) presented her company’s innovative ways to organize showrooms and events. A Norwegian success story was showcased by Yngve W. Bergheim, Joakim André and Martin Normann Lund from Ramsalt Lab (Tromsø) which had become one of Norway’s leading Drupal-companies in only a few years and which was investing more in expanding it’s international network for the future. Ramsalt Lab’s representatives had come to the matchmaking event to meet with potential co-operation partners from different industries. Finally, Sanna Hänninen from NH Norrbotten (Haparanda, Sweden) shared her

business story of making dreams come true, as she had established a career working with something she loves, horses. Her business started as a youth company during upper secondary school but was later officially registered. Hänninen reminded the audience to always pursue their dreams and not settle for less.

In Rovaniemi an innovative success story from Finland was presented by Reijo Koivula from Lappset Group Ltd. The company had been established in 1970, so the success story had continued for more than 40 years. Koivula highlighted the importance of selling the solution to customers' problems, not only products. In the best case product sales becomes customer intimacy, product marketing becomes brand marketing, products are turned into concepts and maintenance into services. Finally, the room was filled with laughter when Koivula played an innovative presentation video in which Lappset Group's history was fast forwarded from one decade to another in the spirit of current movies from Star Wars to The Lord of the Rings. Also, web designer Dennis Kreminskiy (profitum.ru, Murmansk, Russia) shared his own experiences of entrepreneurship. He stressed that the keys to achieving success in business are particularly reliable partners and a good reputation.

THE POWER OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

However, the matchmaking event wasn't all about listening to existing success stories, for the participants also had the opportunity to create a foundation for their own success stories in workshops. The participants were divided into nine groups in Haparanda. The first day's agenda was getting to know other members of the group and co-create a small-scale innovative business idea.

On the next day in Rovaniemi the workshop activities continued with the same groups. This time the assignment was to discuss what kind of support there is for entrepreneurs at this moment and what kind of support is still needed. The results of the workshop conversations were utilized directly as a part of the planning and developing of the InnoBarentsLab, Innovative Business Services project established within the YIE project.



The second day in Rovaniemi seemed to be very important for further project implementation as the mind maps and posters produced by the groups gave a clear idea of what the InnoLabs should be like, one of the facilitators Nina Ershova emphasized.

The facilitators of the workshop groups were very pleased with the discussion and the new, innovative and diverse ideas from every group. In particular, multiculturalism in groups turned out to be a special richness.

Anzelika Krastina pinpointed that an innovative basis was created and an atmosphere that gave a freedom for ideas, with no limitations on crazy ideas.

— Positivity and open minds were the keys. Cross-cultural dialogue served as a source of innovation.

Iikka Rahkonen reminded also that a cross-cultural approach served the innovative activity and expanded people's points of view.

— I think my group exploited their different kinds of competences. It was good to realize that great innovations can need several types of competences.

Morten Brugård also saw that in his group the cross-cultural aspect created a foundation for working.

— The most important was learning about different ways of seeing things in different cultures.

Anzelika Krastina too stressed that in brainstorming people got to see things from different angles and that sharing opinions and thoughts was what made it valuable.

— In their small businesses entrepreneurs are on their own, but here they got to hear what other people think and thus widened their own perspective. And certainly via workshops they managed to reinforce their new network.

For Tuija Kuisma it was especially impressive that the students in the group realized that they are not alone with their business ideas and that they can find help.

— It was also great that the young entrepreneurs in our group were enthusiastic about their businesses and ready to tell how they started and so on. They also tried to find ways to help each other, although they were from different business branches.

Ekaterina Tamistova was also happy as a facilitator that the participants had a chance to meet like-minded people.

— It's very supportive if you want to start something new or continue what you are doing. The workshops were undoubtedly beneficial for all the people involved, because everyone learned new things and, perhaps, got an insight or found a business partner.

SUPPORT FOR FUTURE SUCCESS STORIES

The workshop results of the YIE's matchmaking event were versatile and beneficial for future project operations. The participants also seemed pleased with the fact that they were directly consulted concerning the potential support networks and needs. After all, they are the ones who most likely will be utilizing these support systems in the future.

Numerous good ideas and suggestions were introduced, while the groups considered different support networks. Krastina mentions for example that the participants suggested to create InnoBarentsLab as a Business Mall, an open space, physical and virtual, where young entrepreneurs can meet any time and where they would get help as needed any time on the spot

or online. Online platforms would also facilitate networking among young entrepreneurs in the Barents Region, where distances are long.

Another suggestion was that there should be another event, where the participants could really work in the workshop to design and plan in detail their cross-border business projects together. Two days wasn't enough to get into plans and networks deep enough.

— These are just few from more than 100 new ideas. All of them were “most important”, Anzelika Krastina pointed out.

So this first matchmaking event of the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project was overall very successful. In addition, it was a great opportunity to showcase cross-border cooperation with countries and organizations. The event was organized in cooperation with Lapland UAS and Högskoleförbundet Östra Norrbotten. All the ten partners of the YIE project were involved in the organization from the starting point and they were all responsible for the arrangements for the participants from their own countries.

The project manager of YIE, Saila-Inkeri Puukko, reminded that the collaboration between all the ten partners of the project was crucial for the event to turn out as successful as it did. Close cooperation also made it possible for there to be a great amount of participants from every country.

— In particular, this was a successful demonstration of the teamwork between Kemi-Tornio and Rovaniemi Universities of Applied Sciences. Although the distance between us is more than 100 kilometres, the collaboration and practical arrangements worked out nicely and naturally, Puukko praised.

YIE's participant

Tommi Hietaharju
Hiutale Aerials, Finland

Born and raised around YIE

I stepped into the YIE project from school, because I was interested in entrepreneurship. I had a business idea and I was thirsty for real-life advice. Six months later I was CEO and co-founder with my two friends in Hiutale Aerials Oy.

The best thing in the YIE project were the conversations with other like-minded people from different countries and very different businesses. It is easier to understand the big picture of entrepreneurship when talking to somebody who has experienced the same path as you are about to go. I don't say that I copied all the pieces of my business model from some Norwegian guy, but I had nice pieces of inspiration from many different entrepreneurs. It is like you are about to furnish your living room and searching desperately one floor type out of 100 example pieces. Once you find ten ready-built and decorated example living rooms in an IKEA store, you will be relieved. It is easy to pick up things you like and combine. One of the most inspiring "how I ended up founding a company" -stories in the YIE project for me was told by Ingvar Kamprad, founder of IKEA.

There is definitely place for this kind of project. Happiness is born when people make their living of what they love to do.

Disclaimer: Warning - Writer represents entrepreneurs.

Writer can work when he wants, he can name price for his work and working can mean filming a Porsche commercial with a radio controlled helicopter.

Support wanted by Young Entrepreneurs – Workshop Results during first YIE Matchmaking Event

This article reflects the innovation workshop organised by the InnoBarentsLab student group during the first matchmaking event of the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) project. It shows how YIE participants feel about existing business support. The focus of the workshop was on young people in the Barents Region and it gave them the possibility to express their ideas on entrepreneurship support and the need of support for young entrepreneurs and start-ups.

The first matchmaking conference of the YIE project was jointly hosted by two Finnish partners, the in those days still separate universities: Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences and Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences (nowadays merged into Lapland University of Applied Sciences). The participants in the matchmaking event came from all the Barents Region countries, so the crowd of the event was very international.

WORKSHOP PROCESS

During the second day of the conference, which took place in Rovaniemi, a workshop was organised that had three main topics:

1. What kind of support do young entrepreneurs receive in your country?
2. How to enhance the cooperation across borders?
3. Creating IBL together – a support structure for the cross-border cooperation of YIE.

Each task and question was further explained by the facilitator and there were about 15 minutes for each session. The workshop was done by using a Problem Based Learning (PBL) method where every participant wrote every answer they thought of on a Post-It note and then attached it to the whiteboard. There was a tree drawn on the whiteboard with three sections, a section for every question. While attaching the Post-it's the participant had to explain what they wrote. After each participant attached their Post-it notes to the whiteboard, the topic on hand was discussed.

The workshop was a combination of questions that concern the YIE project goal and the IBL development goal. The following process guidelines and guiding questions for facilitators were shared.

Participants were encouraged to imagine if they would like to develop an existing firm, or begin new a business across the borders in the Barents Region. What kind of support, help and assistance would they like to receive? How did they see the new InnoBarentsLab (IBL): how could they benefit from it? What kind of services should the new IBL offer? Participants briefly discussed



Workshop ideation process

and named expected support/assistance/help. Facilitators wrote ideas on post-it notes and attach to the board.

Facilitators introduced the task to the participants. Participants had a few minutes to think about their answers and to write them on Post-It notes. After this, each participant had to explain their answers while sticking them on the whiteboard. After everyone attached their notes to the whiteboard, there was a short discussion about the topic.

WORKSHOP RESULTS

There was a wide range of different answers, but there was some repetition in them, so the answers could be divided into eight different categories: consultation, networking, international support, training, working platform, finance, human capital and practical support.

Some of the participants listed already existing services just to show that they are needed as well, but then it was also mentioned that the existing services were difficult to access. Accessibility of business support services came up quite a lot in the conversation during the workshop. Participants said that existing support is not easy to access or to use for young entrepreneurs. They felt that, even though support already exists, it is scattered around and young entrepreneurs don't know where to go first, or where to start. What contributes to the accessibility is also the fact that some areas where young entrepreneurs need help, such as help with marketing plans, costs money.

Since the YIE project was a cross-border project, international business support services were discussed a lot. Support in different languages was demanded, so that foreigners too could do business in the Barents Region. More importantly, young entrepreneurs wished there would be guidelines for doing business in different Barents countries. For some a possibility to obtain cross-border networks or business partners seemed to be more appealing. Participants thought

Table 1. Categories of the Workshop results

Category	Services wanted
Consultation	Marketing Consultation Accounting/Bookkeeping Advice Mentors Specialists Quick Phone Consulting Consultation on starting a business Information Accessible guidance
Networking	Cultural Exchange Assistance in networking creation Informal Networking Connections Intercultural Interaction with competence and skills
International support	Multi-Language support Information about sales in international markets Country specific guidelines for starting a business International entrepreneur society Services in English International Partnership opportunities Language courses Intercultural interaction Cross-border legislation advice
Training	Seminars on updates in legislation, labor, taxes Educational Support in business Marketing events Business training How to start a business Selling skills -seminars and training Personal development training
Working platform	A place where ideas can be discussed with other entrepreneurs and experts A place for workshops Office space Feedback environment
Finance	Discounts on rents for new entrepreneurs Investors Step by step financial assistance Meet up with angels and investors Seed capital Financial grants
Human capital	Human Resources
Practical support	Practical and technical support Help with creative marketing ideas Assistance in paper work Help with business plan and its realization Help with market and product analysis Help with marketing Help with finding partners Help in implementing entrepreneurs knowledge Help with business development Help with strategy

that it was a big problem that it was hard to get contacts and business partners across borders. They thought it would be good if there was a place, or a platform, where they could meet cross-border contacts. Participants also pointed out that a place or premises for working in the beginning stages of the business is important, since young entrepreneurs cannot afford to pay rent.

Another big issue seemed to be that young entrepreneurs needed help with practical things such as marketing and writing a business plan. For some activities they wanted expert advice and for others they desired free, active support. One reason for this was that young entrepreneurs don't have sufficient business know how. Some participants pointed out that one solution for this would be to organize specific training or specific seminars on current matters.

Table 1 demonstrates the support that the workshop participants required by category. On the left, the eight categories are listed and on the right, entrepreneurship support services suggested for each category are listed. Due to repetition in answers, not all of them are listed in Table 1. However, the table shows the most wanted support. The results reflect an interesting point, since the participants were from different countries, a lot of the support suggestions were about international support. Also, participants showed the need for practical support, such as help with marketing their products and assistance with the paper work.



Workshop ideation tree

The second Matchmaking event in Russia

The second international matchmaking event of the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) project took place in Murmansk, Russia, on the weekend of 24th to 25th of May 2013. The objective of this event was to gather the entrepreneurs who were participating actively in the project within their respective countries. The main purpose was to match them into cross-border cooperation with their companies, and in that way combat the migration of the young people from the Barents Region to the southern parts of the countries.

The conference was two days long and entrepreneurs had the chance to visit Russian companies and develop their skills and knowledge of Russian companies and how to develop business in Murmansk region.

SUCCESS STORIES FROM ENTREPRENEURS

During the first day we could hear a success story from a Norwegian entrepreneur, Tage Sæther from Murmanskstorgsnabsservice JSC, who had started to trade fish between Norway and Russia. It was a useful and an interesting story which gave motivation to a lot of entrepreneurs who listened to the experiences of this young Norwegian entrepreneur. On the same day YIE entrepreneurs participated in a business simulation. They were separated in groups, so it was much easier to visit to the different places, where they learnt how to start a business in the Murmansk region. At the same time they also had the chance to visit Kola partneriat, a business fair which was held the same weekend as the matchmaking conference.

During the Friday afternoon, there were visits to companies such as Industrialpark SIVA, which is a business incubator, a consulting company, NetSL, and also the designing studio of one of our Russian entrepreneurs, Alexandra Gapanovich, and the Youth House Mr. Pink (Murmansk branch of Barents Youth Film Academy).

SHARING EXPERIENCES

The objective of the second day of the conference was to exchange the experiences from the first day. The entrepreneurs were separated again in work groups in order to discuss the barriers to cross-border business and business in general according to the information gained through the business simulation game and the visits to the companies.

After the work groups, the entrepreneurs had the time to discuss the result of the conference with everybody else and talk about the development of cross-border business. On Saturday evening it was time for the farewell dinner that most of the project partners and young entrepreneurs attended and they shared a nice evening together.

After the event, all the entrepreneurs were looking forward to the next matchmaking conference in Kirkenes, Norway.

DEAR FRIENDS!

Many thanks for the perfect organization of our meeting in Kirkenes! Especially, for the warm and so friendly atmosphere during our stay in Norway! We got useful information, we had an opportunity to share our experience and find new partners for our business!

Thanks one more time!

YIE'S PARTICIPANT

Travel agency "April",
Russia



The third Matchmaking Event in Norway

The third matchmaking event of the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) -project was organized on the 1st and 2nd of November 2013 in Kirkenes, Norway. The conference gathered 77 participants from all four Barents countries. Most of them already running their own business, or planning to do so within a short period of time.

In the opening speech given by Rune Rafaelsen of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat, he noted that there were a lot of aspiring female professionals present. Actually, more than half of the participants were female. A mix not often seen in the male-dominated Barents business sphere.

DESIGN THINKING AND PITCHING WERE THE KEY ISSUES

The conference was built around two main topics; human-centred innovations through design thinking and pitching your ideas.

Federico Lozano started the two-day program by introducing the participants to the concept of design thinking, before guiding them through an exciting day consisting of three different sessions. Session 1: Empathy & Need Finding, Session 2: Ideation and Session 3: Rapid Prototyping & Definition.

Through these three sessions, participants learned how to produce rough, rapid prototypes, elicit useful feedback, and iterate. We also explored prototyping for less tangible services and processes through role plays and storyboards.

Innovative products and services are not enough to ensure your company's success. Everyone needs a simple and compelling way to explain what they do. It's the key to successfully prospecting networking events, chance meetings and parties for new businesses.

But unfortunately, the way most people explain themselves comes off self-indulgent and boring, resulting in wasted conversations and fruitless encounters. Steinar Korsmo from Seed Forum taught the participants how to quickly and simply define their profession, product, service, organization, or event and its value proposition to their products, to investors, customers and partners.

GOOD FEEDBACK FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

The results of the conference were astonishing. The participants answered that they had increased their entrepreneurial competence, their business competence and their innovative competence. They also reported that they had extended their business network by participating in YIE.

Youth Workshop as a Side Event for the Barents Reunion

For the sixth year in a row, the Barents Reunion convention gathered influential people from the Barents Region together on June 12th and 13th 2013 in Tornio, Finland. The topic for the convention was "Transforming trade barriers into boundless opportunities". The annual convention's goal is to increase networking and cooperation among the people living in the Barents Region. (Barents Reunion 2014.)

This year, as a part of Barents Reunion convention, the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) project organized a Youth Workshop for its participants. YIE's participants Denis Kreminskiy, Heidi Andreassen and Mattias Johansson got a chance to make an appearance also in the Barents Reunion convention's general program.

THE FUTURE OF THE BARENTS REGION WAS DISCUSSED

The workshop kicked off with some brainstorming about the challenges and opportunities of the Barents Region. The idea was to think about how we could turn the existing challenges into opportunities in the future.

Some of the most important discussion topics were increasing the attraction of the Barents Region, so that the talented youth of the area would prefer staying here in the future and how to make the Barents Region better known globally.

After brainstorming together, the participants of the first workshop were divided into two groups to discuss different matters such as people, resources, technology, infrastructure and globalisation. It was great to see that, at the end of this first workshop session, the list of opportunities in the Barents Region had become much longer than the list of challenges.

YIE's young entrepreneurs and students also got a remarkable chance to present the results of the Youth Workshop at the Barents Reunion convention. The presentation raised issues about the future and development of the Barents Region from the young people's perspective. As a part of the presentation, a new Facebook page, Connecting Barents, was launched. The page is meant for networking and cooperation between the people of the Barents Region.

The founder of Ikea, as well as the Barents Reunion convention, Ingvar Kamprad was so impressed by the presentations that he wanted to personally thank the youth of the Barents.



DOUBLE VICTORY FOR YIE'S PARTICIPANT YNGVE BERGHEIM

The Barents Reunion convention always culminates in the awarding of the Barents Entrepreneur of the Year and the Barents Young Entrepreneur of the Year awards. The awards are given to entrepreneurs who inspire others and who have managed unique achievements in the Barents Region during the year.

The criteria for the winners are: they have to currently live in the Barents Region, set a good example in terms of values, be an ambassador for the region, display creativity beyond the ordinary and actively work to increase cross-border cooperation within the region. For the Young Entrepreneur award, the individual has to be less than 35 years of age.

In 2013 the winner of the Barents Young Entrepreneur of the Year was chosen by the YIE project and winner of the Barents Entrepreneur of the Year was chosen by Ingvar Kamprad. Both parties were very in agreement, because the winner of the both awards was Yngve Bergheim from Ramsalt Lab (Tromsø, Norway).

Yngve Bergheim has been actively involved in the YIE project from the beginning and has even found a business partner from Murmansk, Russia (Denis Kreminskiy, Arctic Turn), through the project. He emphasizes that this kind of cooperation would never have been possible without the YIE project and the matchmaking events that have been organized for the participants.

Bergheim wanted to especially thank Ramsalt Lab's co-founder, Martin Lund, and Morten Brugård for choosing him to be a part of the YIE project. Of course, he also thanked the YIE project and all its participants.

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YIE Participants exploring Northern Industries in Hammerfest

The annual Barents Sea Youth Conference (BSYC) took place from 2 to 4 April 2014 in Hammerfest, Norway. The goal of the conference was to give young people, future professionals, an insight into regional industry initiatives and career prospects, as well as an opportunity to build new networks with each other and the business community in the Barents Region. (BSYC 2014.)

This year 30 students and young entrepreneurs from Finland, Russia, and Sweden gathered together. It was a unique opportunity for all to get familiar with the developments in the oil and gas industry and to see what its benefits for the development of the entire region are. Visits and presentations at the Statoil LNG plant, Polarbase, as well as meeting the companies at the expo during the conference opened up new perspectives.

From Finland all participants were active members of the YIE project and therefore we took the chance to promote our project and the upcoming cross-border activities. One of our experts, Iikka Rahkonen from Lapland UAS, Tornio campus, informed the audience about the industries and business opportunities in Finnish Lapland. Probably the most exciting part for young people from the Barents Region was the teamwork in workshops, working on challenging topics of Arctic technology and looking for solutions to current problems. The conference ended with presentations by the participants on innovative solutions to given industry problems.

YIE project participants from Finland shared their personal experiences from the BSYC and the visit to Hammerfest:

Joni Niskala is an entrepreneur and a YIE participant and his goal was to meet industries in order to network and seek new business opportunities. His company Minetec Oy deals with hydraulics, automation, installation and maintenance. He admits that this was not a common trip. He gained new views and discovered a different side of business opportunities. He thought it was nice to see the motivation of the students to be a part of northern industries. *“I discovered the future potential that can grow from created contacts. I also feel comfortable acting here as a mentor during the workshop, since I have some experience”.*

Annika Konttaniemi, a business student from Lapland UAS and an InnoBarentsLab (IBL) student leader, emphasised the importance of teamwork. Her group consisted of two engineers, a journalist, and herself. The team did not have previous teamwork experience, but was able to work in a very creative manner and she found an especially interesting journalistic approach demonstrated by her team member. *“Everybody needs a culture shock, not only in terms of nationalities, but also in terms of working cultures; we need to act like grown-ups here.”* Regarding



Annika Konttaniemi is happy about the experiences gained in Hammerfest

the industries, Annika added: *“I am concerned about the preservation of nature in Norway seeing all the developments in the oil and gas industry.”*

Roni Mäläskä, a business student from Lapland UAS and active student of YIE InnoBarentsLab in Rovaniemi, shared that to him, it had first of all been a big cultural experience, “an opportunity to work with fellow students who come from all over the Barents Region and some from even more distant locations, to the city of Hammerfest.” *It is not easy to share ideas with each other and learn how to work together and also foster the group spirit between team members, when you have only known them for a day. I have also received a lot of information concerning the oil and gas industries which are located in Norway, the current situation and the future of the business in the area. I discovered also that Norway is more than just oil and gas; it is a way of life. I always had an image that civilisation ends in Rovaniemi, but vibrant life can exist in a northern city of 10 000 people like Hammerfest and Lapland’s people can offer so much more than they even realise, such as different innovative business services, tourism services and infrastructure development activities.”*

Samir Younes, a student of Lapland UAS and IBL member, acknowledged that this trip opened new possibilities and created an understanding of huge opportunities for cooperation in the North, not only in the oil and gas industry, but also for more innovative businesses. *“Being in the workshop with engineers made me more confident in my business studies, because the diversity in education, cultural background and personality all contributed to better results. That is also what I learnt from the Statoil presentation, about 19 nationalities working in Hammerfest LNG plant. We talk so much about the North, but now it is time for the action to make it work!”*

Heidi Alariesto represented her own company, Sijaishaltija Oy, which aims to help companies to manage staff and find workers easily. Heidi said that her aim was to create contacts during the



IBL members **Roni Mäläskä** and **Samir Younes** meeting the industry at the Statoil stand

conference expo, however, due to a closed road on the way to Hammerfest she lost valuable time and therefore there was not enough time for company negotiations. The lesson in this is that you never know if the weather is good in Norway! Overall Heidi admitted: *“I have got a couple of interesting contacts and I hope that some of the students will contact me and will help me to get into the Swedish and Norwegian markets.”* Besides new international experience, for Heidi it was also a good chance to get to know our Finnish participants and she thinks that there is a great potential for cooperation in this group. As an experienced entrepreneur, she acted many times as a mentor or advisor during the workshops.

Heidi Hjulberg, student of Business administration in the Liike Academy-model at the Tornio campus of Lapland UAS, stressed that she was surprised at the cultural differences between the Barents countries, even though we are so close here. The working style of the other students was different from the Finnish one. It sometimes took a long time to make decisions. *“In addition this was a great chance to see the large gas and oil industry and its developments. I got some ideas to create a business within the building industry here and I will share these business ideas with my family and I will use the connections I created.”*

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Business Camp in Murmansk

InnoBarentsLab's Business Camp in Murmansk, Russia, was organized from 19 to 23 May 2014. The aim of the business camp week was to explore the markets and cooperation across the border and a total of 10 businesses were chosen to take part in the program. The visit included meetings with business teachers/tutors and entrepreneurs in Murmansk.

I had never been to Russia before, and having Russian blood in the family I always knew I'd visit someday, but the chance came along sooner than I thought! The city is unbelievably photogenic and the one and only memory card I had with me was starting to look frighteningly full towards the end of the trip.

SIGHTSEEING IN MURMANSK

Our route took us through the Raja-Jooseppi border station in unusually warm weather for May. The first leg of 100 km or so of sand road seemed like an expected welcome into Murmanskaja Oblast, but the road quickly improved to match the weather.

After several hours of driving through beautiful forested areas, we passed the dumbfounding sight of Monchegorsk, one of the most polluted places in the world. The scenery around this town is so eerie with trees standing dead in the muskeg and a weirdly thick smog hanging over the city.

Our first day in Murmansk we went sightseeing and perhaps the most memorable visit of the day was to the city's favourite concrete soldier nicknamed; "Aljoshka". The astoundingly tall statue was placed on the outskirts of Murmansk city to commemorate the soldiers who fought in WWII.

Aljoshka looks over the sea and surrounding fells just by the harbour with a great view and impressive soundtrack of clonking metal below.

A quick visit to a small Orthodox church gave me a glimpse of the lesser known world of iconography and musty incense, men in black robes and big beards.

BUSINESS NETWORKING IN RUSSIA

For the business camp we had organized meetings and go-sees with our contacts at Murmansk international Institute of Business Education (MIBO) and with entrepreneurs in our own fields of interest.

ARTishock

I got to visit the ARTishock creative crafts studio, where 4 women, including Victoria Nimofeeva, showed me their work and studio providing creative workshops (master classes) for children and grown-ups. Their work is in short amazing and their studio had already been up and running for 3 years. Since there are several handicrafts workshops in Rovaniemi, it would be interesting to set up something together sometime! Some sort of system of workshop exchanges between Rovaniemi and Murmansk would be cool.

Fashion Designer Alexandra Gapanovich

Duffel miniskirts, lace and traditional Russian flower shawls! Oh yeah! at Studio Gapanovich, tucked away in a central block in Murmansk, I got to visit my first haute couture fashion studio, where one woman is behind collections of fine handmade jewellery and one-of-a-kind dresses straight off the runway.

Mr. Pink House

Another blast of colour in Murmansk was the Mr. Pink youth house of arts, media, film and home of close to 100 projects by local youths. The house operates on a basis of no politics and no discrimination and total openness is surely a key to its success.

This source of support and inspiration is a real gem hidden in the suburbs of Murmansk, a MUST to visit.

POTENTIAL FOR COOPERATION

Our business camp in Murmansk was really intensive and a privileged peek into Russian culture which one would not normally get when travelling as an average tourist or businessman.

That said, there is potential for tourism in Murmansk too. The city's weird attraction is in its old buildings, numerous Lenin tributes, abundance of inexpensive sushi restaurants, colourful graffiti, trolleybuses, bus stop grocery shops and surrounding nature.

Travelling as a group gave the opportunity to go where you wouldn't normally go, to visit people you wouldn't otherwise meet and hear stories you wouldn't otherwise hear. Northern Russia is no big scary monster behind shut borders but a place of really quirky talents and ideas screaming to be shared with the rest of the world.

As a newcomer in the city, I saw a lot of beauty despite the perhaps grey image the city may possess.

All kinds of interesting and independent entrepreneurship exist in Murmansk and potential for cooperation across the borders. This trip was a first step, the Young Innovative Entrepreneur project's Barents Business Festival was the second and then who knows!

Barents Business Festival showcased Young Entrepreneurship

The Barents Business Festival on the 3rd and 4th of June, 2014 was one of the main events of the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) -project. The event was held as a side event to the annual Barents Reunion. (See Barents Business Festival 2014; Barents Reunion 2014.)

The Barents Business Festival area gave our participants an opportunity to exhibit their businesses and talents. Overall about 20 entrepreneurs from all over the Barents Region had prepared their own exhibition stand in the festival area.

BARENTS REUNION CELEBRATED THE YOUTH OF THE BARENTS REGION

The annual Barents Reunion convention took place in Haparanda-Tornio, Peräpohjolan opisto, on June 3rd and 4th 2014. The topic for this year's convention was "Barents youth and young entrepreneurship". (Barents Reunion 2014.)

The keynote speakers this year were Micael Dahlen, the rock star Professor who is the author of six books and an internationally acclaimed speaker from Sweden, and Mato Valtonen, a well-known Finnish musician, actor and entrepreneur. In addition to this, there were several young entrepreneurs who got the chance to share their journeys as entrepreneurs during both days of the convention – one of them being Yngve Bergheim's from Ramsalt Lab, who had been an active participant in the YIE-project.

At the end of the first day's program of the Barents Reunion, the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project was presented to the audience. The project coordinators talked about project activities in each country and after that few of our success stories were presented. First Heli Huhanantti and Annika Konttaniemi shared the benefits they had gained by being a part of Lapland UAS's learning environment InnoBarentsLab. Also, a Russian participant Stepan Mikati introduced his and Dennis Kreminsky's new web-based citizen engagement platform called My City (see 2014).

Also, the founder of Ikea (and of Barents Reunion), Ingvar Kamprad, wanted to inspire the young entrepreneurs of the Barents Region by sharing his story as an entrepreneur.

This year's Barents Reunion also introduced a new kind of concept by organizing a Dragon's Den pitching contest for the young entrepreneurs (Dragon's Den in Barents Reunion 2014). One of the participants of the YIE-project, Matthew Lynch, won this contest with his his business idea, Norwagon. With this win, he was also rewarded as the young entrepreneur of the Barents Region in 2014 (Andreassen 2014).

BARENTS BUSINESS FESTIVAL WAS FILLED WITH YOUNG TALENT

The Barents Reunion's programme was only one part of the two-day event. The Young Innovative Entrepreneurs -project had a tent set up outside the event venue. In this Barents Business Festival area, our young and talented entrepreneurs had their own exhibition stands where they had a chance to present their businesses.

The diverse exhibition stands presenting the entrepreneurs' own expertise got a lot of attention from the Barents Reunion participants. As the Barents Business Festival tent was immediately beside the lunch area, just about everyone used their breaks to get to know the exhibition stands, and of course, the entrepreneurs behind them. So we can say that the Barents Business Festival area was a huge success!

All the visitors were also given a brochure that showcased the entrepreneurs and businesses that were presented at the Barents Business Festival (Barents Business Festival – Entrepreneurs' Presentations 2014). In this way they could get to know our entrepreneurs even later on if the time was too limited during the event itself.

After the Barents Reunion, the Barents Business Festival continued and was open to the entrepreneurs for a few more hours. First Martti Kankaanranta from the Regional Organization of Enterprises in Lapland, welcomed the YIE participants to the Barents Business Festival. After this, the entrepreneurs, introduced their businesses to other participants.

And before wrapping up the Barents Business Festival, we even took a little walk down memory lane. Some of the best memories of the YIE activities during the preceding few years were turned into "statues/photos" made of the participants. Thus the Barents Business Festival ended with great smiles and laughter.

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The background is a solid yellow color with several white, wavy, horizontal lines scattered across it, resembling stylized waves or brushstrokes. The text is centered and reads:

5
INNO
BARENTS
LAB

InnoBarentsLab – the Concept and Working Principles

InnoBarentsLab (IBL) is a physical and virtual entity where entrepreneurship and innovation are a daily activity performed by young people (students at Lapland UAS) and existing or aspiring entrepreneurs, experts and teachers, as well as all relevant stakeholders from the business world or public institutions. IBL has been developed and piloted within the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) project. The active development and work of IBL started in fall 2012.

It is important to have a physical environment where innovations can be further developed and innovative business cases can be piloted or launched, thus creating a support structure for businesses and projects. Therefore, the YIE project was initiated to establish and pilot the innovation lab network in the Barents Region under the working title InnBarentsLab and it was hoped that it will ensure a permanent support for cross-border innovative business development in the future.

TWO PILOT LABORATORIES FOR BUSINESS INNOVATION

During the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project period two cross-border business innovation laboratories were established and piloted - one in Rovaniemi, Finland (called InnoBarentsLab IBL), and one in Murmansk, Russia (called Youth Business and Innovation Laboratory). The aim with these labs was to have a joint campus area for cross-border business development that offers a physical (permanent) and virtual working environment, supervision and mentoring by experts from business and education across the borders. In practice the operational principles were similar in both labs, therefore, for the purposes of this publication, we will use IBL as an abbreviation for the labs in Rovaniemi and Murmansk. IBL operates as an independent unit under the umbrella of Lapland University of Applied Sciences in Finland and the International Institute for Business Education, MIBO, in Russia.

Various practices of support provision have been piloted and tested during YIE project. The aim was to ensure that the project practices would continue after the project ended and the IBL will carry on the function of supporting young cross-border entrepreneurial innovative initiatives during and after the project. These practices can later on be transferred also to other universities and institutions and thus it is hoped that new IBLs will be established in the future across the region. The network with existing innovation and entrepreneurship support institutions such as the Rovaniemi Development Agency LTd. and the Lapland Entrepreneurs Association in Lapland, Finland, and the Northern Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Murmansk, Russia, has been also activated in order to get region-wide support for and recognition of IBL activities.

CONCEPT OF INNOBARENTSLAB

The core aim of IBL is to provide an ecosystem for promoting entrepreneurship and innovativeness among young people. Additionally, IBL was born out of the necessity of supporting the cross-border business cooperation of young entrepreneurs in the Barents Region. Entrepreneurship and innovation promotion can take many forms and it can be implemented by various measures. IBL is considered as an additional method that contributes to the stimulation of youth entrepreneurship in the region.

As a method IBL reflects a blend of various existing models and practices of business support, such as Living Labs, business incubators and business hubs, while creating an approach most suitable for the given circumstances. The core philosophy behind the IBL is entrepreneurial learning by doing. The EU programme “Youth in Action” defines that a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. It makes them more ready to seize opportunities and turn these opportunities into business. (Young People and Entrepreneurship 2013.) The concept of IBL is based on the study of good practices during benchmark visits of similar entities, the study of available material, consultation with all relevant stakeholders and thesis work performed by students and the reflected results.

IBL does not directly reflect any of the existing Living Labs, however it borrows some of their features and philosophies. The Living Lab concept is still a rather new phenomenon and has been created in response to the search for a real-life context in research and innovation projects. The European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL) defines: “A Living Lab is a real-life test and experimentation environment where users and producers co-create innovations. Living Labs have been characterized by the European Commission as Public-Private-People Partnerships (PPPP) for user-driven open innovation. A Living Lab employs four main activities, which are 1. Co-Creation: co-design by users and producers, 2. Exploration: discovering emerging usages, behaviours and market opportunities, 3. Experimentation: implementing live scenarios within

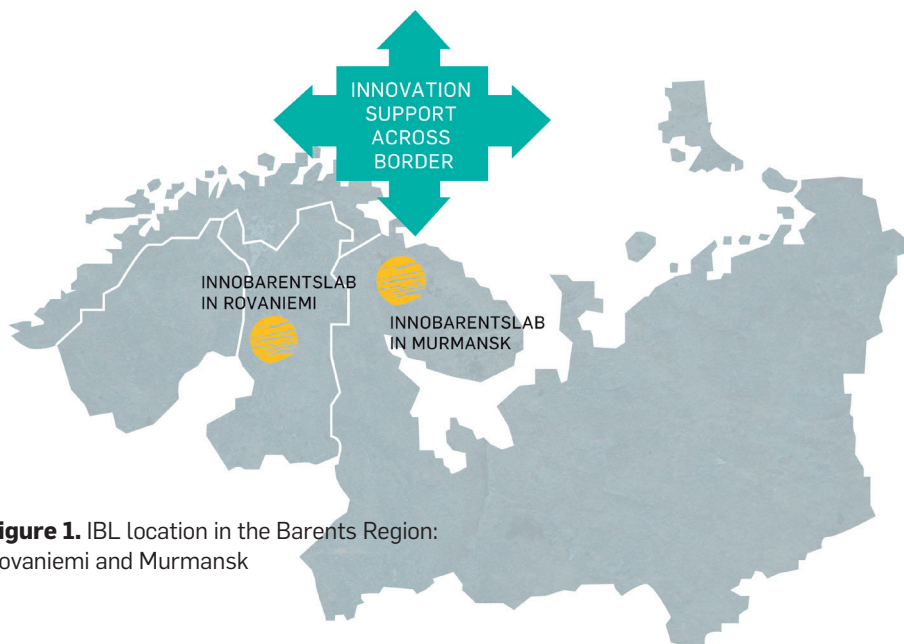


Figure 1. IBL location in the Barents Region:
Rovaniemi and Murmansk



IBL premises in Rovaniemi, Lapland UAS.

communities of users and 4. Evaluation: assessment of concepts, products and services according to socio-ergonomic, socio-cognitive and socio-economic criteria”. (ENoLL 2014.)

How then is IBL different from other similar Living Labs? While there is still a debate regarding Living Lab definition, it is clear that every situation determines specific circumstances that affect the modelling of a new entity. Therefore, instead of concentrating on defining the differences, IBL should respond to demands of existing settings: the target group and the location.

The target group of the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project consists of active and aspiring young and innovative entrepreneurs. Potential young innovative entrepreneurs are students of the university, recent graduates and young unemployed people who are looking for job opportunities, self-employment and career development. Additionally, the YIE project and IBL target international students with the aim to give young international talents a better possibility to integrate into the working life of the European High North.

The location of IBL is in Rovaniemi in Finland and Murmansk in Russia. Therefore, the key area of IBL operations can be considered the entire Barents Region (the northernmost parts of Sweden, Norway, Finland and Northwest Russia). The region shares several common challenges like long distances between settlements, sparse population and cold climate, while at the same time it also offers opportunities, such as a unique, wild nature, wealth of natural resources and talented, well-educated human capital.

The Finnish IBL received its own premises on the Rantavitikka Campus of Lapland UAS in Rovaniemi, which have been furnished as an innovative work space for the target group and all stakeholders. This article will mainly reflect the structure, operations and activities of IBL in Rovaniemi.

The IBL philosophy corresponds to Sunil Goose's statement that “Business success is a result of lessons learnt from past failures”. It is believed that young people and students need a space where to test their entrepreneurial abilities and not be afraid to learn from the failures.

To better understand the concept of the newly established IBL, InnoBarentsLab, the following principles can enlighten:

- **Lab** refers to the place for the experimentation – we can have good results from an experiment, or no results at all. Still we learn, gain new experience and grow. We then get to the next level, taking into account past failures looking for new solutions to the problem.

- **Barents** refers to the location if we think literally. Briefly, the Barents Region is a political and economic cooperation area of the northern parts of 4 participating countries: Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia. In our lab we aim at fostering cross-border cooperation among young people in the field of business development. On the other hand, it also refers to “exploring and discovering”. The Barents Region has to do with the Barents Sea which is named after the Dutch explorer Willem Barentsz, a leader of early expeditions to the far North in 16th century.
- **Inno** refers to the mind-set and the environment we are trying to create in our lab. In the lab all of us constantly advance the knowledge of innovations and try to apply different innovation tools in business processes. We do not declare ourselves innovators, but we clearly understand that innovation, innovativeness, creativity and alike concepts are the at the core of contemporary business life and therefore we want to know something about it and to apply an innovative-like approach in our daily operations.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF IBL

The starting point of IBL, as stated earlier, was to create an environment for students in the form of a physical and virtual entity where to experience entrepreneurship at local and at cross-border scale. When creating the IBL living lab, the basic concept was to offer possibilities for students to enhance their possibilities to either start up their own business, or gain knowledge of how to work on actual real-life business cases and projects. IBL offers a place where these ideas can develop in co-operation with the teachers and staff members of Lapland UAS or other experts. The structure of IBL was developed over 3 year try-out period. IBL was developed as a challenging and nice learning environment where students learn to understand more on how to deal with real life and how to take responsibility for their actions. Multidisciplinary and multinational teams are at the core of IBL.

The current structure of IBL functions as demonstrated in the picture (Figure 2). It consists of a core team, rotating projects by semester or study year, and several organizational elements.

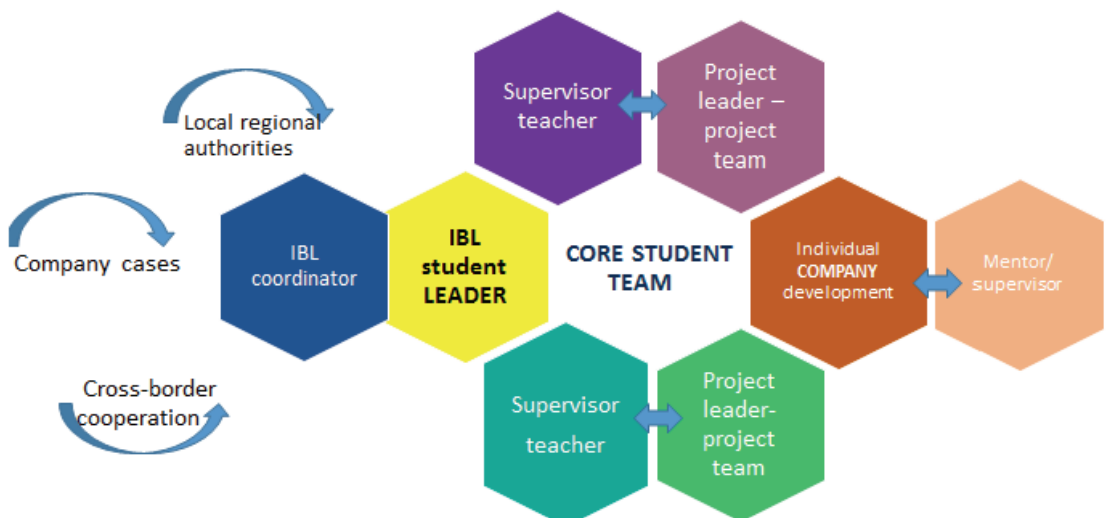


Figure 2. Current organizational structure of IBL

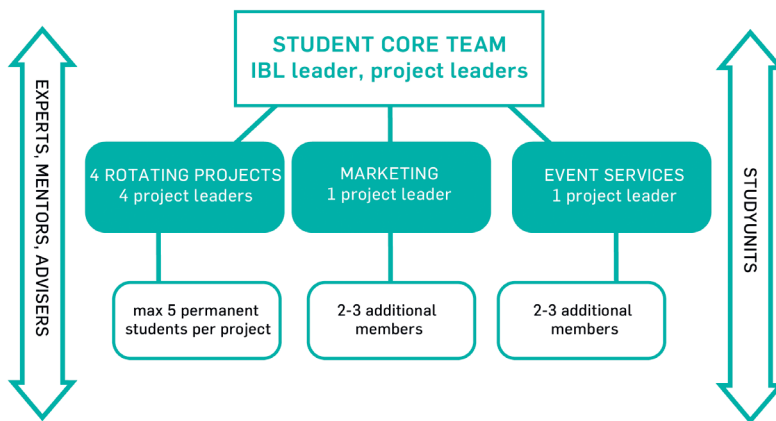


Figure 3. Daily work organization by project teams

IBL functions as a network organization and simulates real company organization. Main operation structure of IBL is thus coordinated by IBL coordinator (assigned Lapland UAS staff member), IBS student leader (selected by students members for each semester) and core student team.

Overall management of IBL is handled by the IBL coordinator. He/she is a staff member of Lapland UAS and works as IBL coordinator on a part-time basis. The task of the IBL coordinator is primarily to network with stakeholders and coordinate the overall work of IBL and its integration with the educational programmes. Networking with regional actors, such as local and regional businesses, authorities and the Russian IBL will help promoting the work of IBL, as well as bring in real-life cases for various development projects within IBL. On the other hand a good network will help also in supporting the establishment and development of companies initiated by IBL participants. Coordination of IBL work includes planning and monitoring of the implementation of real-life project cases, negotiations with teacher-experts in project supervision and assistance with the integration of project cases into education programmes, supervising and mentoring the entrepreneurial path. The IBL coordinator supervises the core student-participants team and the core group leader.

The IBL group leader is usually nominated from among students for a semester, unless agreed otherwise. The IBL student leader is selected from a previously actively involved student group. The leader's responsibilities are defined, so that he/she will lead and manage the work of IBL and has an idea/vision of what things are to be developed in the future. He/she will have a complete understanding of what is going on in all projects and is able to attribute resources where they are needed. The leader's tasks are not only limited to the "management", but his/her task is also to participate in the hands-on work with other teams. When a new leader is nominated, the previous leader will mentor the new leader in his/her work.

The core team consists of the IBL leader, project leaders and the leaders of defined units, as well as of possible additional experts. The team's task is to ensure smooth work within their part of the IBL and also to communicate with outside partners and companies. The team will have a maximum of 8 to 10 members, depending of the amount of projects and sub-teams within the projects.

Project leaders run approximately 4 rotating projects at the same time, depending on the selected projects in the IBL plan. The projects are usually those activities that evolve from cross-border matchmaking events, or projects that IBL living lab members have acquired in cooperation with working-life. Additional projects include the development of start-up business ideas, or the further development of the product/service of a company involved in IBL activities. Projects can also be living lab members' business ideas or business ideas given to IBL to be developed further.

The teams of project workers are an important part of the projects. The projects have about 5 students each, who are permanent workers and they will work under the supervision of the project leader. Their responsibility is to perform the tasks assigned to them and to ensure the success of the project together with the project leader. However, in the actual implementation phase of the project, the amount of project workers may increase, if a larger work force is needed. These extra workers are then loaned from the other projects within IBL. Sometimes the IBL business projects are integrated directly into a study unit and then the additional work can be tasked to the students participating in that particular study unit.

It is advised that new IBL members start working as team members and from there, if they wish, they can advance to project leaders and then maybe eventually to IBL leader. In each step the new students participating are guided and advised by the more experienced IBL members and in some cases by the experts and the IBL leader.

The IBL members will receive advice and help from the experts, mentors or advisers. These persons can be teachers, staff of Lapland UAS, actual entrepreneurs, or other experts regarding the task at hand.

AREAS OF OPERATIONS

IBL work is focused within defined areas of operation. The projects and business cases are prioritised based on these areas of operations, not excluding however other potential business projects. It should be noted that IBL development will be in progress until the end of project. Currently there are four main areas of operations around which the work is organized: Services, Innovation activities, Cross-border projects and Entrepreneurship path.

Services can be divided into three sub-service sectors in which IBL has specialized. First is international (cross-border) event organization, such as seminars, conferences, matchmaking events and other. The aim is to promote entrepreneurship and innovation among young people and across the border, as well as increase knowledge and skills in related spheres and create new networks. At least one cross-border business event is organized by IBL annually. Second is conducting marketing activities and research for various stakeholders. Students will gain hands-on marketing know-how through different business cases and companies will get good innovative marketing ideas and materials, as well as reliable data for promotional activities. The third service product offered and developed by IBL is language services. Lapland UAS has students from all over the world and the companies that want to become international can find good language help in IBL, as well as get a better cultural understanding of a specific culture.

Innovation is a constantly developing field. IBL carries out innovation workshops linked to given business cases and helps with product/service development with direct involvement of the

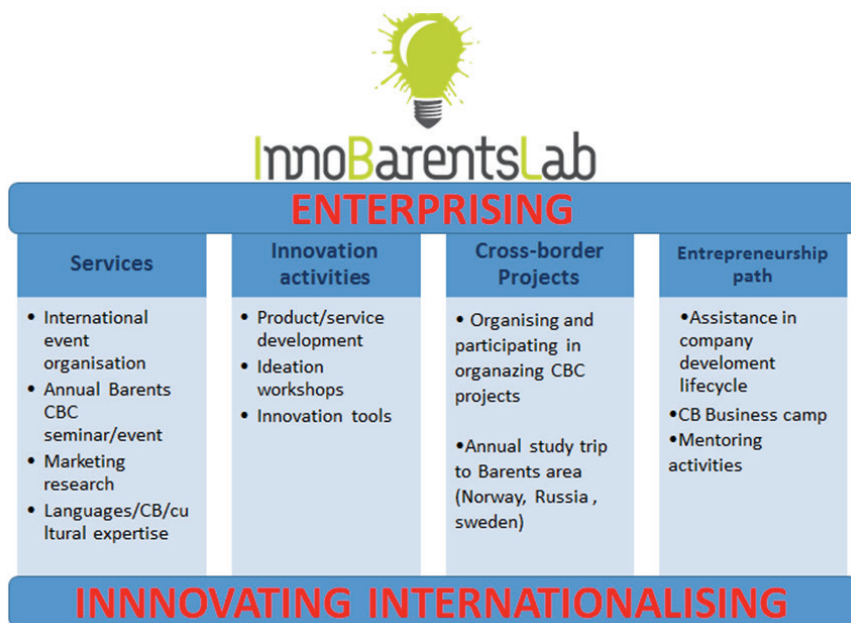


Figure 4. Areas of IBL operations

stakeholders. IBL has a set of ideation tools and practises various innovation methods. IBL aims to become a central point for ideation workshop implementation.

IBL focuses in particular on the development and implementation of cross-border projects. Bringing together young people from across the borders, providing country-specific training and organizing cross-border matchmaking and mentoring are among some of the activities to be performed. IBL also plans to organize an annual study trip across the Barents Region with the aim to learn about Barents Region culture, economy and industries, as well as widen the view regarding existing opportunities for business development.

The entrepreneurship path offers mentoring, supervision and assistance for those students who have the intention to start a business. The student will get organized supervision from the idea to its implementation and the process will become a part of his/her business studies. Also, existing student businesses can participate in IBL in order to get needed supervision or advice. Many times students that have a business can gain from the diversity of ideas of other IBL participants through ideation workshops or other activities. A student's business case can be a subject for further development within IBL.

IBL INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND INTEGRATION WITH EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

During the YIE project IBL became an integrated work unit of Lapland University of Applied Sciences. It continues its function after the project ended (December 2014) on similar principles as piloted during the project. The resources needed for the implementation of IBL are needed for the assigned IBL coordinator for general IBL planning work and negotiating and networking with outside stakeholders (support agencies/entrepreneurs/companies). It is estimated that the general coordination network will require 100 hours of work for each semester. The resources for

coordinating and mentoring various project work by students and young entrepreneurs are allocated in accordance with the implementation plan of the Degree Programme in International Business curriculum, which includes a direct integration of IBL work and a partial integration of IBL project work in various study subjects.

Direct integration means that the students are engaged fully in IBL project work as the learning method of a given course and gain full credit, usually 5 ECTS per course, by performing IBL real-life business and entrepreneurship projects under the supervision of the IBL coordinator, as a coach (teacher) of the unit.

Partial integration means that the course involves various teaching methods, among others IBL as a work method that gives an opportunity for students to work on some of the real-life business cases within IBL as a part of the course. In this situation the teacher responsible for the course unit and the IBL coordinator will plan the implementation of the course to identify the required amount of ECTS for completing the IBL business case and its integration into the course.

IBL business cases that are planned to be integrated into course are usually planned during the previous study semester and are coordinated with the head of the degree programme, as well as with the responsible teachers of the course units.

For each IBL business case and project, students fill in and sign a project work agreement, which is also signed by the IBL coordinator and the responsible teacher in case if the IBL business case is integrated partially in a course. The agreement defines the main tasks of the project case and its integration with the course, the time needed to complete the task and the estimated ECTS credit amount for the completion of the tasks. After the project has been completed, the student writes a project report and provides a timetable covering the time worked and tasks performed. Based on the report, a performance evaluation and the final outcome evaluation, the teacher will define the final amount of credits gained with the IBL business project work.

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Initiatives and Activities in the Finnish InnoBarentsLab

The starting point of InnoBarentsLab (IBL) was to create an innovative and entrepreneurial environment in the form of a physical and virtual entity, in which young people have an opportunity to experience entrepreneurship, to develop their business idea, to further innovate existing products or services of partner companies and/or come up with their own business initiatives and projects and to transfer the idea into real action. The target group in the piloting phase of IBL comprised mainly business and ICT students from Lapland UAS, Rovaniemi campus, as well as existing micro companies and SMEs from the region, that were actively involved in the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) project.

As a method, IBL reflects a blend of various existing models and practices of entrepreneurship promotion and development, such as Living Labs, business incubators, business hubs. However, neither of the models can be directly copied and therefore IBL has been developed by adopting good existing practices and adding own perspectives determined by given circumstances and perceived goals.

KEY FACTORS THAT DETERMINE IBL WORK

One factor that determines the circumstances of the operations of IBL in Finland is the location. Our location is the Polar Circle, Finnish Lapland, Rovaniemi city. If you are an outsider, the first thing that may come to mind is whether there is life out there in the far North? Yes, there is, would be our answer. But to make life more dynamic and vibrant, we need to employ different methods than those applicable in bigger cities or industrial regions. During the piloting and testing period of IBL within the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project we tried to figure out what would be the most suitable ways and methods to develop IBL, aiming to have an institution that would be a real innovative platform for young entrepreneurship in the European High North.

Another factor determining our activities are the aims and the strategy of the owner institution, that is Lapland UAS in this case. Among other things, the strategy of Lapland UAS emphasizes the need to link the education with working life, innovation and entrepreneurship. Thus, the key task for IBL became to incorporate these aims in a practical way. IBL now has become a student-run organization within Lapland UAS, which mirrors the actual activity of any real organization.

The third factor is the vision to keep the IBL doors open to any entrepreneurial activity within the school, city or the entire region. We also wish to have a strong partnership and cooperation with existing enterprises and to work on different development or innovation projects together

with the companies. Taking into account the fact that our region is an area of micro firms and SMEs with few large industrial companies, it became a priority for IBL to network especially with small companies and learn the “reality”.

The YIE project meant a unique opportunity for us to create valuable cooperation with companies run by young people, actual YIE project participants. We believe that it brought a twofold benefit for both target groups. For the students, aspiring entrepreneurs, it was an opportunity to see the reality of running a small company in the region and it was also an inspiration for the students of Lapland UAS to realize that there are many interesting opportunities. For the owners of small companies it was a very valuable cooperation in terms of getting relevant insight into their business and sometimes additional help in innovating and developing their products, or creating a better promotion of the services offered by the company.

The fourth factor that strongly determined the direction of IBL developments and activities was the wider objective of IBL to operate as a regional actor and influencer on entrepreneurial development in terms of the entire Barents Region. This factor probably became the most challenging, the most difficult to carry out, because there is probably no previous really elaborate model on how best to promote cross-border cooperation among young and aspiring entrepreneurs in the region. There seems to be a rather well-established cooperation among big companies and industries in the Barents Region, while real cooperation among small businesses run by young people is almost non-existent.

In order to find out the main reason for the lack of cooperation between small companies across the borders in the Barents Region, an elaborate research should be conducted. However, at the time of the YIE project operations, it turned out that young people are extremely open to cross-border cooperation once they discover the existing opportunities and like-minded partners across the borders. In search of good methods for stimulating cross-border cooperation, IBL carried out several cross-border projects described further down in this article.

PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES BY THE STUDENTS OF LAPLAND UAS

The core philosophy behind IBL is entrepreneurial learning by doing. During the piloting phase of IBL, we decided to take on board everything about enterprise and innovation. Thus every initiative, case or project that seemed to be relevant in terms of the goals of IBL, became a pilot case in IBL. Innovating, solving problems, experimenting, learning by doing, many times making mistakes, but also succeeding became a routine practice in IBL. In line with the statement by Sunil Goose: “Business success is a result of lessons learnt from past failures”, students had an opportunity to go through different stages of entrepreneurial activity.

It is difficult, or almost impossible, to learn about the hurdles and challenges that come in the way for an entrepreneur without any actual experience. New experience gained through facing those challenges will help entrepreneurs, aspiring entrepreneurs, or simply employees in the companies to envisage potential problems and to find and implement a solution for existing problems.

IBL organizational innovation

The first stage of actual entrepreneurial activities in IBL was about the creation of the organizational structure of IBL. The structure was not determined by teachers, or some experts, it was the job of the first student team that volunteered to work in IBL in the fall of 2012. This was one of the best experiences for students; to apply organizational theory in practice and define what would be the format of the newly established institution. It was created by using the approach of a networked organization and, since this is a rather new organizational phenomenon, it was and still often is rather confusing for the core group to realize what the chain of command and structure of IBL operations are. Therefore, organizational innovation is an ongoing project within IBL.

From semester to semester the students analyse what worked well and what did not work. A survey or study is carried out in order to define what could be an improvement or beneficial change in organizational structure. The rotating leadership every new study semester, gives an opportunity for the selected so-called “CEO” to learn all necessary leadership skills and to realize that leadership is something that can be learnt through very the demanding and challenging process of organizational management.

As in any business or organization, there is a need to develop a strategy, have an own marketing and promotion campaign, plan the actions of the organization and manage human resources. Therefore, participating students have the opportunity to be involved in different departments of an organization and support their theoretical knowledge by doing practical marketing projects, including the development and maintenance of basic social media platforms, carrying out marketing research projects, sales and networking and many other projects related to the IBL development as an institution and a business.

Event management – seminars and workshops related to northern entrepreneurship

Given the opportunity to study any kind of entrepreneurship at the start of IBL, the core team decided to focus on organizing seminars related to innovation and entrepreneurship and especially the “northern” aspect. It became the first project of the core team of IBL students to organize such a seminar or event as an annual project with the aim to promote entrepreneurship and innovation ideas among young people in the northern regions. Inviting successful young entrepreneurs, as well as experienced entrepreneurs, as keynote speakers and organizing innovation workshops lay at the heart of this kind of annual event. In addition, the aim was to make it international with the content in English and, of course, the focus was on the entire Barents Region. As a result, during the project period between spring 2012 and fall 2014, IBL organized a variety of seminars and workshops. The events listed and described below (some examples of IBL events) were fully carried out by the students participating in IBL work with minor supervision from the experts – teachers or external experts in the field.

The YIE Information Seminar in September 2012 was the starting point for event organization by IBL participants. The seminar was attended by 140 young participants, the aim was to persuade young people to participate in YIE project activities and networking events and to join the IBL work. Several important topics were introduced by experts from the field in order to increase

interest in and awareness of entrepreneurship and innovation. Eija Jussila-Salmi, a business adviser from Rovaniemi Development Agency Ltd., raised the questions in her topic “Should I be an Entrepreneur? How to Start?”. Julia Chechulinskaya, a project manager from Santa Park Ltd., explored the topic “Innovation as a Tool for Business Development”. Real business and innovation cases were presented by young entrepreneurs. Janne Konttaniemi, administrative director at Arctic Connect Ltd., and Maxim Narbrough, the designer for Treeform Ltd., were able to inspire young people in the audience about wide entrepreneurship opportunities in the North that need to be explored better.

The YIE matchmaking event organized in November 2012 was executed over two days, at three locations: Tornio, Haparanda and Rovaniemi. The part of the event held in Rovaniemi on 16.11 was planned and implemented entirely by the IBL student group. The main focus of the day was an ideation workshop, which at the end of the event created a better understanding of what support exists for young entrepreneurs in the region and what could or should be improved and what role IBL could take in supporting young entrepreneurs. Swedish, Russian, Norwegian and Finnish experiences were shared in working groups by using a tree diagram in each group for reflecting on the ideas presented.

The Northern Stars seminar on 8 May, 2014 was one of the most successful events organized by the IBL group. The main topic of the seminar was “Creative Entrepreneurship in the North – Crossing the Borders of our Imagination”. During the day more than 100 participants in the audience had an opportunity to learn about innovation and finding business solutions that work for the individual at the start-up stage. Many students dream of starting their own business, but the actual entrepreneurial career may be a big mystery. Already during studies it is important for them to get a realistic peek at the successes and failures of real-life business people.

An additional task was to utilize international business relations in the area. The participants learnt that quick inspiration may not last a whole career, but it is possible to develop tools to continue finding new sources of inspiration as an independent entrepreneur. In the afternoon the organizers engaged participants to take part in innovation and ideation workshops, challenging them to reach for new incentives, also in the most unlikely ways. The entrepreneurial spirit often springs from challenging circumstances and environments like those found in the Arctic. Therefore the innovative business ideas presented by the speakers were especially encouraging. Sami entrepreneur Anu Magga, owner of Luoston Porosafarit; Lieven de Rycke from Arctic Light Hotels and Kåre Tormod Nilsen, CEO in K-To-9 Ltd from Norway brought a new spark to the seminar auditorium and inspired the audience with stories of the most crazy and unrealistic ideas becoming reality.

By organising these successful events, IBL participants gained a good reputation among regional stakeholders and therefore IBL students were hired again for large regional event management activities. Several years in a row, IBL students helped in organising the Arctic Business Forum – the largest annual Barents and Arctic regional industry event. In 2012 and 2013 IBL was involved in organizing a Recruitment event for Russian speaking job seekers in cooperation with Rovaniemi Regional Development Agency Ltd. These cooperation activities are a good example of how IBL is interfacing with regional business life. It opens many doors for active IBL members in terms of their careers and their business development, as well as being great hands-on learning.



Individual initiatives by IBL members

IBL participants, members and active students, are encouraged to come up with their own business or project ideas and to put the idea into action. There is a variety of examples of students eager to carry out their own project and test a business idea. Some examples referred to smaller projects, such as organising various activities for other students of Lapland UAS like an Outdoor Activity day for the freshmen of Lapland UAS, or a Multicultural Day to promote internationalization on the campus.

Another example included testing or improvement of a business idea. So, Annika Konttaniemi, IBS student and core team leader in IBL, initiated and implemented the project “Koukussa-Hooked” during the Arctic Design week in February, 2014.

This is what Annika said about her experience implementing her own project idea:

“At the beginning of this year I woke up to the fact that the Arctic Design Week 2014 is soon approaching! I thought this year might just be right for being bold and creating something new. Thanks to the project management skills acquired while studying at the Innovative Business Services and working with InnoBarentsLab I felt an urge to test these skills in reality. Having a background in art education, I had previously been involved as participant of the annual Design Boutique showrooms, but never actually as a producer of a single event, my very own thing. My personal interests and hobbies at the moment are deeply rooted in knitting, loom weaving and crochet, basically any technique that involves yarn and design, and thereby I’ve often found myself at TAITO Lappi, Rovaniemi’s crafts center of the national TAITO Group, (the Finnish Crafts Association).”

An idea sprouted in my head: over the past few years crochet has become wildly popular all over the world and this rather traditional technique is used especially in contemporary interior design. I approached TAITO Lappi's generous and friendly staff with the idea of a non-stop open doors crochet workshop that would stretch over the entire Design Week in the spirit of "New Day – New Technique!" In the workshop, participants would be introduced to a new technique every day and get instruction in it.

The goal of the crochet project (soon named "Hooked!") was simple: get as many people as possible to participate who are interested in crochet and community, and get as wide a representation of different age groups as possible; basically invite the whole community to try their own design skills during the design week.

The partner choice was natural. TAITO Lappi agreed to provide a space and any other possible resources. Päivi Tahkokallio, chairwoman of the Lapland Chamber of Commerce Design Board generously offered her expertise and assistance thanks to her personal interest in the cross-communal aspect of the project. Design belongs to everybody!

Setting up the workshop space we strove to create a living room-like environment for people to feel comfortable in, a bit like at home. The instant success of the workshop was stunning and had us organizing the event completely gob-smacked! In addition to some of the school classes invited to join, ladies came from far and wide to crochet with us! Especially the "pop-in for 5 minutes, or stay the entire day" -aspect of the workshop seemed to hit home with people and soon we had repeat customers, those who loyally sat with us for the entire week eagerly biting into any and all new crochet challenges we presented them with. Local media noticed the event as well. As we started the workshop on Monday, by Wednesday both the local NPR, Lapin Radio, and the printed media, Lapin Kansa, joined us to cover the story of dozens of women of several nationalities and different native languages sitting together over easygoing chit-chat and crochet.

Limited resources do not necessarily mean limited popularity. The whole week was a remarkable team-effort from a handful of people who inspired hundreds to join us. I am convinced that new friendships were made over this week and that alone moves me to tears."

As a result of this testing event Annika is now more seriously considering having her own business and has decided to focus on the practicalities of a business set up, such as making a business plan and do the relevant research.

Annett Pée, owner of Mimosa Arctica Ltd. company, is also a business student at Lapland UAS. She came to our university with a previous background in international law, but as a business lady felt that she was lacking the necessary business skills. When she engaged more actively in IBL activities, it seemed that she was somehow lost with her current products. After some ideation activities within IBL, and thanks to the network created during her work in IBL and YIE, she managed to expand and strengthen her business. The students who were involved in the project of product and promotion development with Annett on the other hand had a great opportunity to learn the realities of an actual business, especially in northern conditions. Annett shared her insight: "With IBL I got the possibility to meet people in an international environment, to network. It helped me to understand, that there is another way to do business in a creative organic way together with your partner, client or customer. It is not one-way, it is together, a give

and take in return and it helps all to develop and to become the person you could become, to get the business that fits best and to get the product which meets the needs. At IBL meetings I started a personal development process, which is going on.”

Projects in cooperation with local businesses

YIE networking events were an excellent platform for creating networks with local and regional businesses and local and regional authorities. Promoting IBL activities and engaging local businesses in them is as relevant as any other IBL activity. For local companies IBL became an innovation and business support resource, while for the students involved in the business development projects it was practical experience that serves as added value to the traditional class room education. Close cooperation through various development projects was developed with Rovaniemi Development Agency Ltd, Urbanid 3D development company from Kemi, Arctic Connect Ltd. in Rovaniemi, Jo-Jo Media in Tornio, Sijaishaltija Ltd. and many other local businesses as well as the businesses in Russia, such as Star-Dome, Handicraft Studio ARTishock, mycity.io and others. Joint cooperation projects include marketing research as well as marketing planning, product and service development, regional promotion events for the companies and B2B local and cross-border events.

Multidisciplinary cooperation – Northern Lights, project case

IBL aims to create a multidisciplinary environment for the future working life and to have a variety of innovation projects across various disciplines. During the YIE project, the IBL trial period, the sub-project called “Northern Light” Information System” was initiated and carried out. The project was dedicated to the Northern Lights phenomenon. It had multiple aims such as simulating northern lights on a computer, predicting the northern lights and educating people about the Aurora Borealis. However, the main aim at the current moment is to implement an alarm system informing about the visibility of the northern lights in a certain area via SMS and Twitter, preferably as a paid service. The project engaged business, tourism and IT students as well as IT and Business teachers. Additionally, cooperation was sought with various stakeholders in the field – organisations and companies that might have an interest in the project, for example, Sodankylä SGO, the Arktikum museum and a local Astronomy Club. IT students with their teachers worked on a prototype alarm system for Northern Lights, while business students supervised by marketing teachers carried out the marketing research in order to define the market potential for the northern lights alarm service as a commercial product. The participants in the project expressed very positive feedback about the cross-disciplinary cooperation. The work will continue as an integrated project case within the study programmes of Innovative Business Services and Information Technology.

Initiatives of the Russian InnoBarentsLab

The Youth Business and Innovation Laboratory (IBL) was opened at the International Institute of Business Education (MIBO) in 2009. The main idea was to unite those students of MIBO who wanted to start their own business and to give them the knowledge and skills that will enable them to become successful entrepreneurs. The core membership of the laboratory was made up of students from the Faculty of Economics, who studied entrepreneurship.

Since 2012 the laboratory has had new opportunities for development within the framework of the Young Innovative Entrepreneur (YIE) project. Where originally the laboratory was aimed at MIBO students, its new focus of activity is on innovative business ideas produced by the students of other universities and young entrepreneurs of Murmansk and the Murmansk region, as well as on promotion of joint projects initiated by young people from Russia, Finland, Norway, and Sweden.

The work of the Youth Business and Innovation Laboratory can be divided into 4 actions:

1. organizing trainings for young entrepreneurs
2. consulting support
3. preparation for contests of business projects
4. dissemination and promotion of entrepreneurship among the youth

VARIOUS ACTIVITIES IN IBL

The IBL team includes 20 permanent members. In addition to that, about 200 other people have been annually involved in its work. During the period from March 2012 to December 2014 the following types of activities were organised by the Youth Business and Innovation Laboratory:

The training for young entrepreneurs “Resource support for creative projects” was held in December 2012. The coaches were Elena Zubritskaya and Elena Skiotis. The training was aimed at searching inner resources for the development of personal traits that are valuable for a successful entrepreneur, such as flexibility, creativity, and argumentation. In April 2013 a meeting of the IBL members and the YIE project coordinators took place at MIBO.

Egor Gapanovich, entrepreneur, winner of the contest of young entrepreneurs in 2011 and mentor for IBL in Murmansk, presented several new promising business projects of young entrepreneurs from Murmansk. One of them was the business project “The School of Fashion and Style” by the Murmansk fashion designer Alexandra Gapanovich. This talented young lady has been one of the most active participants in the project activities and events.



The Youth Business and Innovation Laboratory (IBL) in Murmansk

The training “Preparation and Defence of a Business Plan” was organized in May 2013, so as to further develop the competences of the young entrepreneurs who participated in the regional contest named “Business Project KPD (Efficiency)”. 16 young entrepreneurs (4 of them were participants in the YIE project) took part in it. The training was supervised by Anna Dochkina, PhD, associate professor, head of the Department of Entrepreneurship and Innovative Business Technologies at MIBO and professional business trainer in marketing, advertising and promotion. As a result, 13 business plans were worked out and presented during the regional contest.

In October 2013 the business training “Marketing Solutions for the Market of Goods and Services” was organized. 30 entrepreneurs (including IBL participants) took part in the event.

In November 2013 a series of workshops devoted to the problem of personal financial planning was launched. The series included 8 workshops. Two of them – “How to Create a Personal Financial Plan or Money is Always Available” and “Development of a Personal Financial Plan” – were arranged in 2013, the others were held in 2014.

The members of the laboratory volunteered and took an active part in organizing and conducting the following events for entrepreneurs in Murmansk:

- the conference “Small and Medium-Sized Businesses in the Implementation of Strategic Programs of the Murmansk Region” (2013)
- the International Business Week in Murmansk (2013, 2014)
- the conference “Opportunities and Risks of Russian Business in WTO. Special Aspects of the Murmansk Region” (2013)
- the Murmansk Tax Conference (2013).

In 2014 one of the most fascinating projects of the IBL – the Business Camp – was implemented in Murmansk. The meeting of the Finnish and Russian young entrepreneurs resulted in joint

projects that were later presented at the Business Fests – in Tornio in June 2014 and in Rovaniemi in October 2014. The projects “My City: a crowdsourced urban planning platform” by Dennis Kreminsky, the creativity studio “ARTishock” by Viktoria Timofeeva, project “The School of Fashion and Style” by Alexandra Gapanovich and “Star Dome” by Maria Sviridova raised a lot of interest and attracted the biggest attention.

In December 2014 the first lectures from the educational series “Peculiarities of Doing Business in the North” were held.

In December 2014 Larisa Bilous, PhD, associate professor at MIBO, delivered an on-line lecture “Peculiarities of Russian Business Culture: How to Do Business in Russia” for participants of IBL at Lapland University of Applied Sciences. She spoke about general factors that should be taken into consideration by those who want to do business internationally, and also focused on the specific features of the Russian national, business and corporate types of culture.

The lecture “Innovations and Myths of Innovations: Finnish Experience” by Anzelika Krastina was devoted to the analysis of present-day stereotypes about business and innovations and also included a practical training in ideation. The lecture was held in Murmansk on MIBO premises and was attended by more than 40 people – students, academia and entrepreneurs.

FUTURE OF THE INNOBARENTSLABS

From our position as YIE project coordinators our perspective is that it is important to keep the established connections and partnerships and continue our efficient cooperation with Lapland University of Applied Sciences through the development of new types of joint activities.

The IBL leaders from Rovaniemi and Murmansk: Anzelika Krastina, Elena Zubritskaya and Elena Skiotis, have already worked out a plan for 2015 which includes the organization of a summer or winter school for young entrepreneurs, continuation of the educational series “Peculiarities of Doing Business in the North”, joint research work and preparation of publications that will consolidate the experience and achievements of IBL.

Cross-border Project Experiences in InnoBarentsLab

There appears to be a rather well established cross-border cooperation in terms of large industries such as the mining, oil and gas industry, fisheries and others. However, there seems to be very little or almost no cross-border cooperation among small enterprises from young entrepreneurs.

The task of IBL from the beginning of the project was, among other, to pilot at least four potential cross-border project cases initiated by young people, to have at least some starting point to test what works and what does not really work and why. It must be noted that a good practice, or an example which could serve as a guide for actual cross-border projects initiated by young entrepreneurs did not exist at the time.

The project had the resources to support the implementation of such projects by covering basic costs such as travelling and accommodation for cross-border initiatives. However the biggest challenge was to find the companies or initiatives that would be interested in cross-border cooperation, taking into account the little resources small companies or start-ups have in their development stage.

Due to the limited resources within the project, as well as the piloting nature of the activity, it was decided in the project to implement cross-border cases within IBL cooperation between Finland and Russia. The practices of implemented cross-border projects were then disseminated among all project participants and possibly experience gained in Finnish-Russian cross-border cooperation among small young business people will be utilized also in other parts of the Barents Region in future projects.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACROSS THE BORDERS – TEDDY BEAR PROJECT

The first cross-border project within IBL was carried out by IBL students in Rovaniemi in December 2012. The group of students were encouraged to think of some cross-border project initiative or idea that they would be ready to plan and implement in practice. The task was integrated with the project studies of the business student group from Lapland UAS. The project requirements were: it should be a relevant and entrepreneurial activity, it should solve a real problem and it should have the cross-border cooperation component.

Among many ideas the winner idea was the project called “Teddy Bear”. It was a cross-border social entrepreneurship example. The student team working on this project reflected the project idea: *“We heard from the news in Finland about the lack of toys for children in hospitals in Murmansk, Russia and decided that we could do something about this problem. So, we collected*

the toys and delivered them to Murmansk. This project could be also called a social innovation, as it required a lot of creativity from collecting the toys and then delivering them across the border to the final users – children in the Murmansk hospital, who, sadly, have to spend their Christmas and New Year celebration of in hospital.”

The Prisma shopping centre in Rovaniemi was the cooperation partner in Finland which helped to organize the process of collecting the toys. It was a great success, people were very actively donating new and used toys (in good shape). All the toys were then delivered to the Murmansk children's hospital and shared among the children on New Year's eve. The IBL team carried out the project from its initiation to the final implementation stage, which required travelling to Murmansk and delivering the toys to the hospital. Hopefully the toys of Finnish children sent to Russian kids made Christmas time a bit happier for the little ones.

CROSS-BORDER BUSINESS PROMOTION – BUSINESS CAMP MODEL

The initiation and implementation of single cross-border business projects seemed to be a “mission impossible” at the beginning. Many relevant lessons were learnt from the first “Teddy Bear” project. IBL was searching for an effective model to promote cross-border business activities among young people. Good practices were studied from available information online, as well as in benchmarking visits in the region and abroad. IBL came up with the idea of organizing and testing the concept of a Business Camp. The first Business Camp carried out in May 2014 targeted small companies and aspiring entrepreneurs from Finland. The announcement regarding the event was published in The Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) media, shared publicly and via email. The announcement reflected the main aim of the event: “The Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project and its unit InnoBarentsLab (IBL) in Finland, together with the partner in Russia (MIBO) will organise a Business Camp in Murmansk, Russia during week 21, 19 thru 23 May 2014.”

The aim of the event was to support young entrepreneurs (or entrepreneurs to-be) in exploring Russian markets and/or find partners and establish closer cooperation in Russia in related business fields. The camp was aimed at those young entrepreneurs and companies who were interested to have a close future cooperation in the Murmansk region of Russia in their field of business. Therefore, companies or students who were applying for participation in the event had to be able to explain their particular interest in Russian markets and/or finding good partners in Russia.

Once the participants were selected, the Russian partner was to find for them a matching partner with whom they would meet and work during the Business camp. Depending on the field of operations and their particular interest, they got the best possible partner from a similar or defined industry. If necessary, they would have a mentor and translator assisting them in the cooperation work. Selection criteria were based on the eligibility and justification/motivation for participation. Active participation in previous YIE activities was considered as an advantage. Equal representation of Rovaniemi, Kemi and Tornio areas was to be taken into account. The “First come first served” principle was applied in the case of selection of equal applications.”

In total we received 18 applications. The minimum was to have three to five businesses, i.e. participants for testing purposes in order to fulfil the obligations according to the YIE project



plan and test the model of a Business Camp. All applications that were received, reflected high motivation and interest in cross-border cooperation with Russian companies. However, due to the financial limitations, only the ten best applications were selected.

Russian IBL partners then looked for potential matching partners in Russia, in the Murmansk region. From 19 to 23 May, 2014 the Business Camp in Murmansk, Russia was held. The programme of the business camp included one day of business training under the motto “How to do business in Russia - cultural, political and economic aspects” conducted by IBL in Russia and the Northern Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Murmansk, Russia).

The next activity was a matchmaking workshop in which participants were introduced to their matching partner and given the task of the day to work on an IBL-modified version of “Business Model Canvas”. The aim was to have a joint tool for better understanding each other’s products/ services offered, strengths and weaknesses, cooperation opportunities and short term and long term cooperation strategies. Additionally, participants were given an independent time for the companies to work on their own programme. At the end of the business camp, participants had to report the results and their future cooperation strategies. The event proved to be really fruitful.

Viktoria Timofeeva, the owner of Handicrafts Studio ARTIshock from Murmansk and Annika Konttaniemi, IBL leader and handicrafts entrepreneur from Finland decided to create a joint handicrafts workshop and master class in Finland, which as a show case was then carried out during the YIE concluding event and Business Festival on October 30th, 2014, in Rovaniemi.

The representatives of the creative sector: Joonas Makkonen, the owner of Jo-Jo Media company, Hiski Hämäläinen, the owner of Hiskin Nettivideot Tmi, Heli Huhanantti, dance creator from Rumbita Ltd. matched with Russians Ivan Dubovskiy and Natalia Kolesnik, who also represent creative industries. Together they initiated the idea of creating a joint festival for

creative people in the Barents Region, as well to look into the possibilities to have an event during the Arctic Design Week in February, 2015. There was also an idea born to create a professional, joint, cross-border short film. Actual preparations for the joint film project are currently taking place and the filming group from Finland will travel to Murmansk in December, 2014 to carry out the actual filming together with Russian partners.

Representatives of the consulting sector Niko Abong, owner of StraTarget Consulting, Outi Lehtiniemi, aspiring entrepreneur in the event management sector and Annett Pee, owner of Arctic Mimosa Ltd. from Finland created valuable partnerships with Russian companies represented by Olga Pokrovskaya, owner of the Murmansk Language School, Anna Karmazina from the Murmansk Consulting Group and Maria Petrova, a private consultant. Miia Mäkinen (MKS Illustration) from Finland found a partner from Russia in the ICT sector – Dennis Kreminsky, the owner of Profutum.ru and mycity.io.

After the Business Camp, Finnish participants were asked to participate in a survey. The answers to the questions are summarized in the following paragraphs.

First, participants were asked to provide the main results of the business camp. Generally the outcome for the participants was positive, as these few answers point out:

“The business camp was an excellent idea to boost the concrete and fruitful cooperation between innovative young entrepreneurs. As we learned during the trip, you need to visit Russian partners regularly in person to establish real and long-term relationships. Only through these strong relationships can you cooperate comprehensively. The best thing about the trip was the excellent program full of new learning experiences and time with the partners. The partner chosen for me was not necessarily the best for my business but we had some good cooperation ideas nevertheless.”

“I was very pleased with the Russian contact provided by the partners in Murmansk. They had put a lot of effort into finding a suitable contact fitting to my business interests. As a result of the Murmansk Business Camp I now have a very reliable and like-minded business contact in the Murmansk area and we have already found a common business idea that would benefit both of us.”

The participants were asked about concrete short term and long term plans for their joint business projects and ideas. Each of the respondents was able to give a concrete answer regarding the future plans, however, due to the business confidentiality the answers cannot be revealed publicly.

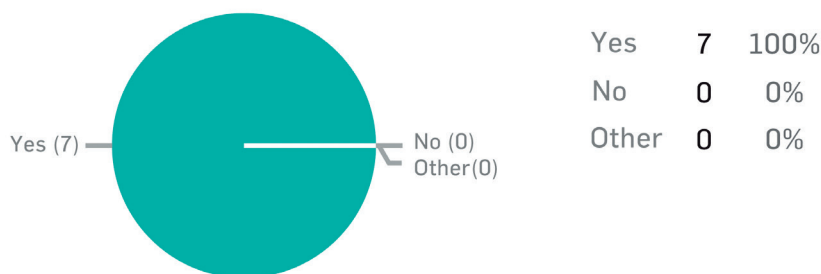


Figure 1. Participants' willingness to continue cross-border cooperation

Answers to the question “Was the Business camp entirely beneficial to you and your current/future business?” demonstrated the importance of such events as the Business Camp. Here are few answers by the participants:

“Learning about business and culture in Russia should be very beneficial for my business in the future, since I live very close to the border. Now I also have contacts there and it can help a lot!”

“Now I have real persons as real contacts in Russia and it is much easier for me now to contact them and start to create new business ideas or whatever I have in my mind concerning operation in Russia or with Russians. Getting personal connections is essential! During the business camp we already created completely new services combining my own business ideas and my contact’s business ideas.”

The next question was: “Did the Business Camp enhance the possibilities for you to cooperate across the border, in Russia?” The trip and organized connections were seen as a good entryway to continue cooperation, as this following feedback shows:

“Finland and Finnish companies, even young ones, still have prejudices towards Russian businesses. Those were definitely broken on my part during this trip. Hearing about Russian business culture and expectations, taking part in a seminar with the older business generation, wandering around and learning, as well as being with the chosen partner and other young innovative entrepreneurs supported and helped in overcoming these prejudices. Young people are very similar in all countries. The future is in the young innovative and passionate people! We learned that Finland is not exploiting the Russian innovation potential and market enough. Finland seems not to know how to enter the market and know the Russian business culture. These kinds of trips are absolutely important and necessary in order to have fruitful cooperation in the future!”



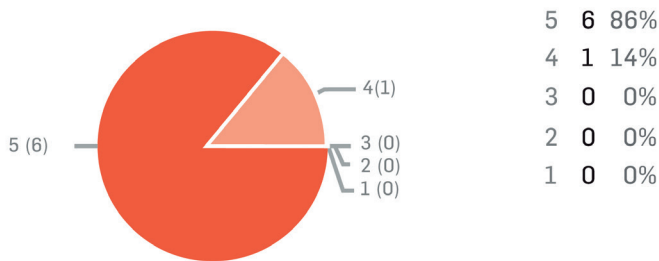


Figure 2. Participants' overall assessment of the Business Camp (5 being excellent, 1 being poor)

In conclusion it can be said that young people need just a little support and encouragement from more experienced experts or support institutions for any kind of cross-border activity. The Business Camp model proved to be very successful in its first attempt and certainly proved to be a very useful tool to kick-off business cooperation across the border.

There are concrete results, new initiatives and concrete continuation actions already in place. IBL plans to organise the Business Camp as an ongoing annual activity in close cooperation between both labs, Rovaniemi and Murmansk, as well as widen the operation of the Business Camp in the future to the entire Barents Region.

The Stories by Students – Some Experiences in IBL

The story is about the fear...or overcoming the deepest fear! The fear of an action that will result in failure, disappointment, frustration and judgement. Entrepreneurship and innovation is about overcoming that deepest fear! One will overcome it only through action, by getting out of one's own comfort zone – the traditional class room. “Come and act!” – is our slogan in InnoBarentsLab (IBL). Business success is a result of lessons learnt from past failures. IBL is a safe place to fail! This is what I hope will add to the traditional learning of our students. Not necessarily all of the IBL participants will become entrepreneurs, but certainly all of them will become entrepreneurial in some respect; the skill that will be needed in their life in any kind of endeavour.

This unique opportunity to give students a possibility to experience innovation and entrepreneurship outside the traditional class-room setting has been my personal dream as an educator. At the tender age of 25 I established my own company, learned entrepreneurship by overcoming the bumps in the road and only later I realised that it had been the best learning experience one can have. To create such an environment that would give the students a possibility to gain real-life experience and at the same time combine it with academic studies was possible in the ENPI Kolarctic project “Young Innovative Entrepreneurs” by creating the unit called InnoBarentsLab. Many students gladly joined in on the journey full of risks and unexpected turns. Here are the stories of some experiences...the journey of overcoming the fear continues!

“We are all meant to shine as children do. It’s not just in some of us; it is in everyone. And as we let our own lights shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

(From the movie Coach Carter.)

JANNE KONTTANIEMI (FINLAND), FORMER IBL LEADER

Entrepreneur

IBL is an environment, where students can challenge themselves with real work cases. Being one of the founders, I was also was a previous leader of the IBL community. Most of the time my role was supportive, but I did not lead any project for lack of time. My main task was to put IBL on the map from a student perspective and to form an idea, how IBL would run projects in practice.

Through IBL I have had the possibility to meet various people and companies, so that I could expand my existing networks in areas that I never thought about before.

ANU HUHANANTTI (FINLAND), IBL FOUNDING MEMBER

Graduate of Lapland UAS

IBL can be described as a group of enthusiastic and innovative people as well as a place, where you can create new business ideas, utilize your strengths in real-life business cases and learn about entrepreneurship in a fruitful and unique way. I am one of the founding members of IBL. Being a student of the Innovative Business Services degree programme at Lapland University of Applied Sciences, I had a possibility to tangle with real-life cases and businesses, by solving their problems. The idea of IBL was born during the process of working on such business projects in a particular place, where the group could focus on it even more professionally. That is how “our way” got started. However, in 2012 within the ENPI Kolarctic project “Young Innovative Entrepreneurs” we continued to develop this idea, by putting it into action, thus IBL was founded. I am happy to have been a member of IBL from the beginning and having helped to make it real. IBL helped me to get new useful contacts across the borders. Moreover, I have learned what it takes to be an entrepreneur. Also, I got my current job through IBL.

KASTRIOT HASANI (KOSOVO), IBL LEADER OF THE FALL SEMESTER 2013

Graduate of Lapland UAS

IBL is a place where fun and knowledge merge into one. One of the projects, that I was working on when I was a first year student, was named “Young Innovative Entrepreneurs”. InnoBarentsLab, in turn, was an important part of it. The main idea was to start some communication, creating a strong connection at the same time. Also, the purpose was to contribute actively during a variety of activities and cross-borders projects. To sum up, I would maintain that I tried to bring all of my positive energy to my team, as well as to the whole IBL group, so that they appreciated my initiative. IBL gave very good opportunities to everyone who was a student. IBL is a place where new students come to try themselves, by doing experiments. In addition, students need to join IBL in order to activate or even develop new skills and experiences that are valuable for their future carrier.

ANNETT PÉE (GERMANY), ACTIVE IBL MEMBER

Lapland UAS student and Entrepreneur

Inno Barents Lab is a place where you can work together with others on an idea and experiment where your strengths and talents lie and what can you do so that an idea becomes true. IBL is an interesting place, especially for young students who believe that all theory is grey and who want

to experience practice in a safe environment. With IBL I got the possibility to meet people in an international environment, to network. It helped me to understand, that there is another way to do business in a creative organic way together with your partner, client or customer. It is not a one-way street, it is a process of mutual give and take and it helps everyone to develop and to become the person you could become, to get the business that fits you best and to get the product which meets the needs. At IBL meetings I started a personal development process, which is going on.

ANETE KRASTINA (LATVIA), FORMER IBL PROJECT TEAM LEADER

Graduate of Lapland UAS

In IBL you learn by doing, as you are involved in different projects, be they business or career. I joined IBL after I came back from the USA. I'm glad I ended up in IBL, because it allowed me to be as active or as passive as I needed to be. I was helping to organize events and seminars. I was a part of the marketing team and I organized IBL's cross-border project called The Teddy Bear Project. Doing all these small projects was a learning process all the way. The first thing I learned is that in business there is no task that is below you. Even creating a logo in the marketing team was more complex a task than one would think.

While organizing events we all learned the importance of delegating - every small or big detail was important for a better outcome, so tasks needed to be delegated. Having gained a lot of hands-on experience in IBL, I am glad that as a mentor now, I am able to share my experience with the newer members.

OUTI LEHTINIEMI (FINLAND), FORMER LEADER OF EVENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

Entrepreneur, Graduate of Lapland UAS

IBL is a unique cross-border entity in which you are encouraged to find your talents and guided how to use them in the business world. It was established in order to help young entrepreneurial-minded people to find their strengths and passion. We were given free hands to create our own projects according to our fields of interest. New ways of thinking and doing were the name of the game. One of the fields on which IBL concentrates is Event Services and I was chosen to be the leader.

I have 15 years of working experience in very demanding customer service in an international environment and I was looking for a chance to merge my experience into my studies. Through Event Services projects I have been able to practice my skills, gain experience, create a valuable network and I made a priceless connection across the borders. With the support of IBL I will become an entrepreneur and my playground doesn't have any borders!

Say Yes! – My Path to InnoBarentsLab

When I began at InnoBarentsLab (IBL), I was a second-year business student in the Innovative Business Services programme. By my second year of studies, however, I was sad to notice that my interest in business studies was fading fast. After all, I had a previous degree in art education, so business was a long shot for me anyway, or so it seemed at the time.

At that particular time in my life, it was actually so bad I might not have continued with my studies after the Christmas break, had I not participated in the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs conference in Kirkenes in November 2013. Those three days spent by the Barents Sea, interacting with other students and entrepreneurs from Norway, Sweden, and Russia opened my eyes to a new kind of approach to doing business. Well, perhaps not such a new approach for those already familiar with concepts like "innovation", "start-ups" etc. within business studies, but for me a whole new tray of opportunities seemed to open up. You see, one of the biggest reasons I was losing interest in my studies was that I didn't see how what I was learning in courses set in the curriculum could be combined with my past education and personal interests. After all, I was working on a business degree in order to add to my core competencies in art and culture.

During the fall semester of 2013 I had just had the course Human Resource Management with Anzelika Krastina, and the course contents had struck a chord within me.

Some time during that autumn, I started thinking about being a lecturer someday, a trainer, or even work with HRM. Krastina, who was also a project manager in the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project, suggested I join IBL, and it wasn't until much later in the spring of 2014 that I realized I was getting to practice most of my professional interests there in a very real way. And so I decided to continue my studies and further decided that spring I would say "Yes!" to every challenge that would be set before me, in other words, be a Yes! -man.

PERSONAL GOALS AND HIDDEN TRACKS

Due to the early ending of the previous IBL leader Kastriot Hasani's studies, I jumped in head first in the middle of the school year. It turned out non-problematic, as there was much planned for the spring already and students were eager to get involved.

A previous team leader of IBL recommended I sit down and write some kind of mission statement for the near future of IBL. What should be the direction in which I drove IBL, and how could we do projects that would get us in that direction. Some of my ideas ended up being just wishful thinking, some were left for the future, and some were accomplished on a smaller scale than originally intended. I learnt most of human resource management is sometimes hidden underneath seemingly random activities and events.

Instead of having a set list of goals to reach beforehand, I ended up setting goals for myself along the way. Situations and resources in working life are ever-changing and, as those changes are quick, they demand an ability for quick response. I resulted in developing some tools for myself to be able to keep up with those changes, as I could see I would get overwhelmed and unable to function very quickly if I didn't.

As far as personal goal setting goes, I didn't realize just how important it is until I spoke to Lieven de Rycke (Arctic Lights Hotel marketing manager and endurance athlete) in the midst of organizing the Northern Stars seminar. Until then I had just set goals within different projects, but now I try to set goals on a longer time spectrum too, and I promote doing that to everyone, especially in IBL and those dreaming of entrepreneurship.

HRM OR HUMANS! RESOURCES. MANAGEMENT?

So there it is, the three-letter abbreviation which I referred to in the introduction, Human Resource Management. Within IBL the well known acronym does not carry just its traditional meaning which according to the online Business Dictionary is: "The process of hiring and developing employees, so that they become more valuable to the organization. Human Resource Management includes conducting job analyses, planning of personnel needs, recruiting the right people for the job, orienting and training, managing wages and salaries, providing benefits and incentives, evaluating performance, resolving disputes, and communicating with all employees at all levels. Examples of core qualities of HR management are extensive knowledge of the industry, leadership and effective negotiation skills." (BusinessDictionary.com)

Humans?!

This part comprised the enthusiastic IBL students, whom I apparently had at my full disposal now, and all the business owners and partners IBL was supposed to either continue working with, or reach in the near future. This scared me the most, because I do not regard myself as a so-called people-person. I am not typically extroverted and find it difficult going up to people and starting to chit-chat in a formal manner. But for some reason, when I have an agenda, an idea I want to relate to people, I manage to push the fears to the back of my head. I decided to use set-agenda meetings as much as possible in IBL weekly meetings, to have a thought-out work plan or idea to get across to the team. Of course, that was not always possible.

Resources.

The great part with IBL is how dynamic it is at its best. Everyone loves a Tuesday afternoon when everyone is crammed into our room and the space is loud (or quiet) with people busy working. Quickly it became apparent that our best resource were the multi-talented students themselves and their will to go to great lengths to get something done; of course, some more so than others. It took a month or two from the beginning of the year to show just how much skill we were carrying aboard. That is why it is essential, that programmes like IBL have continuity. In a UAS study programme that lasts on average three to four years, it may take a semester or two for a student to step up to discover and be discovered. What a shame if the opportunities to explore those talents ended there. Also, what if you know you have something you would like to still learn



in school, but it isn't directly offered in the school curriculum? An opportunity to practise theories and test ideas in a safe environment, still away from working life, is valuable and made possible in extracurricular programmes. IBL just happens to be supporting independent entrepreneurial behaviour, in whatever form the students are comfortable with. Students should be encouraged more to step outside their comfort zones.

An additional resource at hand was the school, Lapland UAS as a whole (which of course during 2013-2014 was undergoing large changes evolving from Rovaniemi UAS to Lapland UAS, adding the Kemi-Tornio campuses to our resources), the opportunities Kemi and Tornio bring to the table are yet to be fully explored by the coming generations of IBL students.

Management!

"There are no bad teams, only bad team leaders." This scary saying was haunting me somewhere in the back of my head in the beginning. However, sometimes students just need more rather than less trust and faith put in them, because, when they are given things to take care of, they will most likely do it. It helps if the work also has a sense of purpose to it, even if you have to read between the lines or get a bit creative to see that purpose. And fireworks really start to happen when that work is somehow related to the student's personal life and experiences and plans for the future! Students are fully capable of managing larger projects when it really comes down to it. All the seminars and events organized by IBL since its beginning prove that. I will be so bold as to say that when there is a lack of responsibility in student work, it is because of lack of faith placed in them. The purpose of school work may not be obvious for them in every assignment, but nonetheless students should be taught to practice self-management. In the few innovation workshops I held for students in March the emphasis was on self-management and time

management. Even in obligatory courses students should keep in mind the bigger picture of what they may want to do with their lives after graduating from school, what their goals and ambitions are.

THE IBL TEAM – WHAT IS IT AND WHAT MAKES IT TICK?

In January-February 2014 IBL consisted mainly of students from the Innovative Business Services programme, class of -13 and -14. There was a large majority of Vietnamese and Chinese, Russian and Finnish students. There were also students from Latvia, Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey and Germany. It is safe to say we were multicultural indeed. Even more nationalities have been present in the past and will surely be present in the future again.

What makes IBL tick is a more difficult question to answer. I don't know. You never do with people. Good planning is important, but sometimes it seems no planning in the world is enough. Organizing people to work a certain way may still be like driving a plane with no pilot's license. Do one thing and the consequences may be completely the opposite of what you expected.

THE BEAUTY OF ALUMNI INVOLVEMENT

Within IBL its founding students, alumni from the first year of Innovative Business Services, class of -10, are still active. Their participation provided enormous support, especially thanks to their expertise in event planning, and we were able to benefit from their previous work methods and connections in similar projects.

Having alumni involved adds a great deal to the spirit of what we are trying to do at IBL. It reminds us that we are not in a void and we are not calling into the dark and most importantly that what we are currently working on will hopefully not go unnoticed. Sharing is an important asset. And besides, nobody wants their hard work to vanish into nothing, and I have met no people in the IBL room yet that wouldn't be happy to talk about what they have found functional in the past. The wheel does not have to be reinvented each year and progress becomes inevitable. The several generations of students involved in IBL at any given moment (again, the average study time at a UAS is relatively short) ensures that there is a good volume of human resources available at all times of the year. Also, new students see that they are a part of a bigger picture, which of course is highly relevant to ensure a good level of motivation. And good motivation again leads to a quality outcome.

IBL is a community, a body of students, a living creature, and not just a one-time occurrence. What the IBL team can and cannot do at any given time depends on several things, such as the type of skill sets we have available, what events are in demand and what fits with the current school curriculum, as we can also earn credits there.

INNOBARENTSLAB BUILDS CONFIDENCE IN ONE'S ABILITIES

The most important characteristic in entrepreneurial behaviour is to never stop to ask for someone's permission, but to just do it. All of last spring's work and effort sprung from the

students' own desire to do something cool together. Some of us bonded among the sometimes tedious tasks and became friends in addition to coming a couple of steps closer to being future professionals. Because I knew one of my weaknesses is impatience when working with other people, I made a conscious effort to talk to people more on a personal level. Working with people you know and care about is not only fulfilling but also makes you want to accomplish more! It also helped us keep deadlines.

While school teaches business administration and numbers, etc., IBL teaches survival skills in working life. Something troubles me more and more as I get closer to graduation. What if, when diploma day comes, things don't go my way? What if I don't land my dream job. Or before that; what the hell is my dream job anyway?

That happened to me once, after my first degree, and I froze completely. I still don't know what I will do when I grow up, but at least now I'm looking for an answer and gathering experiences. I try to be resourceful, I say yes a lot more. IBL activates everyone involved to do the same.

IBL allows for a safe environment to test your professional skills, and discover strengths and weaknesses. The most obvious benefit of that is being able to list these traits in a job application and elaborate on them in a job interview, so that, when you find yourself rambling on about your very special people management skills to a potential new boss, you know it is a portrayal of your true abilities and not just wishful thinking. That confidence in your abilities is exactly what education should give us and what programmes like InnoBarentsLab help fulfil.

YIE's participant

Liisa Koivisto, Kide Solutions,
Finland



Hello there! My name is Liisa Koivisto and I'm a software entrepreneur in Tornio, Finland. My company Kide Solutions makes language learning games for an App Store and also has software called DUUO for multilingual communication. DUUO is used, for example, at the Outokumpu steel factory to help the personnel to communicate with truck drivers with whom they don't have any language in common. I also work for a souvenir company called Happy Orange where I design, purchase, import and sell souvenirs.

Being part of this project has given me a lot. I have gained a lot of contacts and friends and got ideas that may someday become a business in cooperation across borders. It has also been great to get to know other participants from Finland and we have had a couple of very interesting ideas that we could implement together.

I think the best thing about YIE was the international aspect. The project brought the Barents Region close to me and made it realistic to look over the borders for collaborators and customers. I live in Tornio and northern regions abroad, such as Kirkenes and Murmansk, are closer to me than the capital of Finland. This project has made me more ready to cross the border in business.

Another great thing about this project was to meet multidisciplinary people. New ideas are born within gatherings like this. I got so many ideas and inspiration from this project and I think so have many others too. I'm used to meeting people of my own line of business and this project brought together people with different professions, which was absolutely great. I think collaboration of multidisciplinary people provides huge benefits to business.

In my opinion projects like this are important, as they bring people together and let them realize the opportunities and potential that lies here in the Barents Region.

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6 CON CLU SION

Young and Innovative Project

When the Barents Region was facing dramatic demographic changes and the migration of the youth from the North to the South for better opportunities was a common problem in all four Barents Region countries, something had to be done. The solution to this challenge was the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project.

It was clear that the Barents Region already included a vast amount of innovativeness and talented youth as well as entrepreneurs. Everyone had a common goal to cooperate inside the region and in this way make the Barents Region more interesting and vital for the youth of the future.

The Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project took its first steps on March 22nd, 2012 after a long period of planning. The leader of the pack was Lapland University of Applied Sciences from Finland and other partners came from Sweden, Norway and Russia. By sharing ideas and thoughts, the partners set up an ambitious aim for the project: to facilitate cross-border cooperation, to create a region-wide support system that will enhance the development and implementation of innovative business ideas across the borders by young entrepreneurs in the Barents Region.

The target groups of the project were young entrepreneurs and future entrepreneurs. And so began a search to get the most exciting, innovative and fresh, outside-the-box-thinking group of young talents to join the project. And what a group we found! Participants represented widely different areas of expertise and different countries. However, enthusiasm and commitment were the same regardless of the person.

It must be pointed out that nowhere in the Barents Region did such a unique entity for young cross-border business cooperation exist. The project had to make sure that young, active and potential entrepreneurs who were willing to cooperate across the borders would have all possible support to innovate together.

By providing a region-wide support system, the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project enhanced the development and implementation of innovative business ideas across the borders. Once inspired, young people tend to come up with great innovative business ideas. In order to make their ideas work, there is a need to provide support for the actual entrepreneurship and innovative idea development in practice.

International matchmaking events organized in Finland (Tornio/Haparanda/Rovaniemi), Russia (Murmansk) and Norway (Kirkenes) brought all the participants together, which resulted in amazing new business ideas. As time went by, ideas and networks also changed into tangible cooperation between entrepreneurs of the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project. We had

provided a common ground for our participants to meet each other and learn from each other. With their own activity, commitment and interests, newly formed friendships were turned into business opportunities.

Although the story of the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project reached its final chapter on 21 December 2014, the tale is by no means over. Networks and friendships formed during the project will carry on and continue to make the Barents Region more vital for future entrepreneurs. The foundation that the project has laid for the innovative entrepreneurial activity amongst young people will have a long-term impact on the region. So this is not an end, this is a beginning.



Project Results and Achievements

Before the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) project was launched, we had promised to deliver certain results to the financiers at the Kolarctic ENPI CBC programme, eventually aiming to support the economic and social development of the Barents Region by facilitating innovative entrepreneurial initiatives by young people in order to contribute to the growth of employment and entrepreneurship in the region. Our specific objective was to create a region-wide support system that would enhance the development and implementation of innovative business ideas across the borders by young entrepreneurs in the Barents Region.

The key elements in the development of the support system were the creation of the cross-border network, training and education, development of the InnoBarentsLab (IBL) environment in two countries and increasing awareness. The ten partners, later 9 after the Finnish universities were combined, worked together and with other regional actors to solve the challenges of the region. The various activities within the project, e.g. skills development, matchmaking, mentoring, business festivals and other events, benchmarking, and building the InnoBarentsLab were to tie in with each other, forming a complete project. Each transnational event included experts and key actors from the business arena, who supported matchmaking and increasing the skills of not only participating businesses, but also teachers, project staff, business supporters and students, our future potential. In addition to interactive face-to-face events, YIE also enhanced virtual collaboration.

As this article was written during the project's lifetime, we still haven't collected all quantitative evidence concerning our aims from our partners and participants, but indicative results, partially based on indicators collected at the end of 2013 and during summer 2014, demonstrate, for example, the following:

RESULT INDICATOR	EXPECTED FINAL RESULTS	CUMULATIVE RESULTS
Number of <29 years of age that will participate in activities	200	450
Number of people participating in activities	200	500
Number of participating in long-term activities	40	175
Number of cross-border networking operating between SME's	10	9

The project did not have the specific aim to enhance gender equality; however, more than half of the participants were female.

Based on feedback collected from core participants, one of the most beneficial events was the third matchmaking event in Kirkenes, Norway, with a high-class pitch training and the design-thinking workshops.

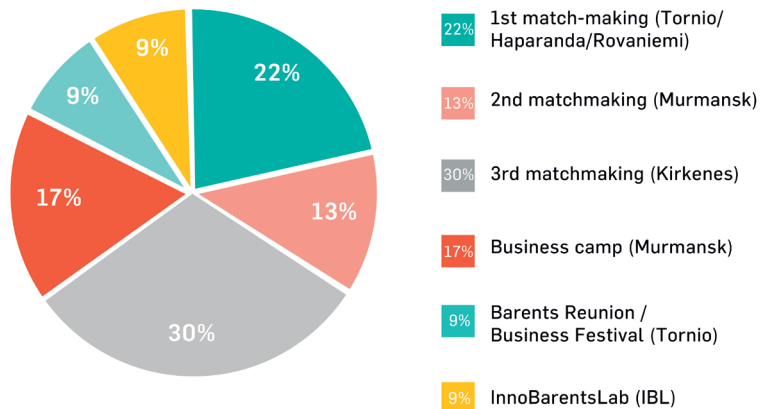


Figure 1. Which one of these activities did you find the most useful?

With an eye to the concrete outcomes in the target group, while half of the feedback group was made up of students and employees, and the other half consisted of entrepreneurs, the results of this type of project are positive. The concrete outcomes of participation in the project within the feedback group:

- Ideas: 69%
- Products: 13%
- Services: 30%
- Collaboration: 57%
- Something else: 4%
- Nothing significant: 13%

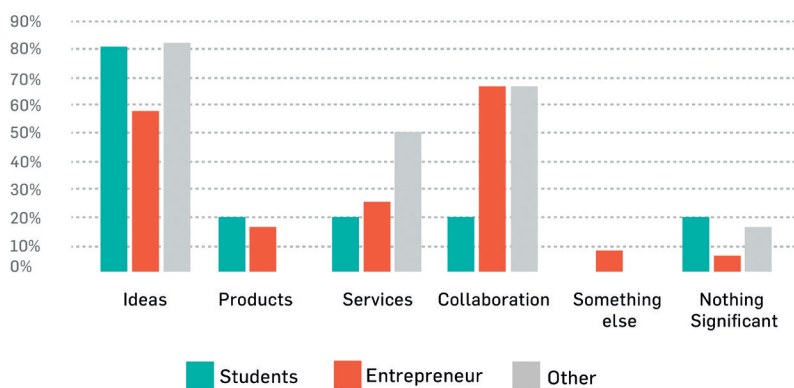


Figure 2. The chart shows the concrete outcome of the project divided over students, entrepreneurs and others

Among clarifications, people told they had developed new products that were even already successful, established their own company, or found a business partner, etc.

The skills development within the project varied a little depending on the activities the target group participated in, but, surprisingly, most people felt that they had experienced at least a slight improvement even in skills that were not included as such in training activities during the specific events. We asked about the following skills: language, marketing, presentation, pitching, design thinking and/or innovation, how to set up a business, where to find support, entrepreneurial legislation, networking and other skills. In general, the evaluation of improvement as scores was between slight improvement and notable improvement. However, what the target group valued the most was networking with other participants. 87% of the group responding to feedback questionnaire found the project useful concerning their future plans in business. 91% found new contacts among other participants, and they planned to keep in touch with them. The notable difference between students and entrepreneurs was that, unlike the students, all the entrepreneurs who answered the questionnaire made new contacts, which highlights the value of networking among entrepreneurs.

The most positive change concerning the development of entrepreneurial skills was among the IBL students, as they had even more training and collaboration activities organised, while practical business cases were integrated into their studies. The IBL will continue its activities as part of the daily activities of Lapland University of Applied Sciences in Finland and the International Institute of Business Education (Russia). The two IBLs have also established cooperation in virtual training.

Participants were also asked about project impact, and almost half of them, mainly entrepreneurs or employees of businesses, responded that the project had changed operations very positively.

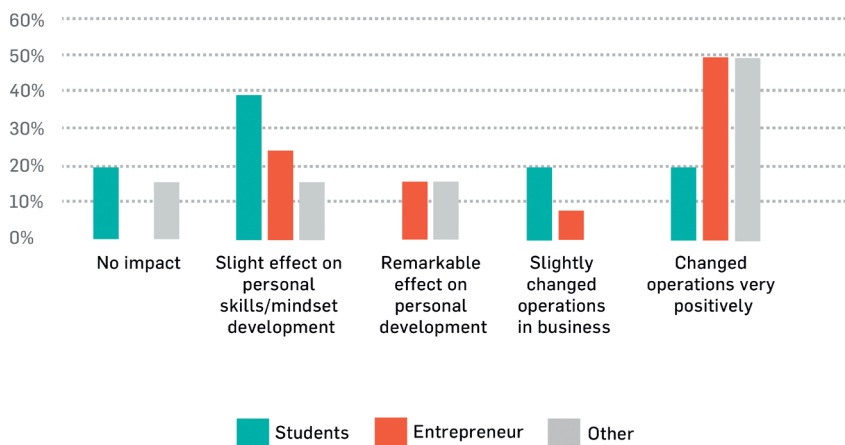


Figure 3. How would you rate project impact on yourself in general?

Mentoring activities received very positive feedback, and they will also continue after the project's end within some of the organisations in different regions. During the project we produced mentoring videos, guidelines and brochures to support the mentoring activity (see *Get valuable knowledge from a mentor!* 2014; *Mentoring* 2014; *Share Your knowledge as a mentor!* 2014).

The sustainability of project results was seen as important both by financiers and partners. Not only businesses, but also more formal organisations were expected to learn new skills and develop their activities. The feedback we collected from project staff representing the organisations involved indicated that 90% felt that they had improved their skills concerning cross-border cooperation. 80% of the personnel did increase their personal network concerning support for entrepreneurs, and these skills remain within the partner organisations. 90% also felt that they had improved their knowledge of how to support entrepreneurs. During the project, we also published a study on business support called “Support – A Vital Tool for Young Innovative Entrepreneurs in the Barents Region” (Krastina 2014).

We also asked if and how the project staff will continue supporting entrepreneurs in the future, and 70% already had some plans concerning it, either connected to their daily activities or to spin-offs of the project, or to new projects initiated during the YIE project. 70% felt that there had been development within their own organisation and that this had made it easier to support young entrepreneurs, one of the common justifications being the development of the IBL environment.

The challenges in the project have mainly concerned involving young entrepreneurs and students in project activities, especially in Sweden. However, one of the key success factors has been the strong commitment of the long-term participants as well as the partners. The feedback from participants shows that face-to-face meetings have been highly important in building trust among the participants. Also, virtual environments have been successfully utilised in communication.

So, a lot of cooperation has been established in the form of different business-related projects and other spin-offs, and the possibilities that the YIE project provided for its participants were seen as unique in the region. Mirroring the targets set in the application, we can already tell that we have achieved what we promised to deliver, and that even more progress can be expected in the future as different activities and collaboration continue.

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YIE's participant

Viktoria Timofeeva, ARTishock,
Russia

In our cosy studio we teach children and adults different types of handicrafts: decoupage, scrap-booking, manufacturing of flowers from fabric, textile dolls and toys, modelling of polymer clay, making soap and natural cosmetics, beading and many others.

I took part in the Barents Business Festival, 3rd-4th of June 2014. I like this kind of projects, it is a great opportunity to meet interesting people from all over the Barents Region, to find out about peculiarities of business in other countries, to develop joint projects and to share experiences.

My expectations from this project were to meet new people, to show my studio, the work of our masters and to find out if handicrafts are popular in neighbouring countries. All expectations were fulfilled. Thanks to this project, we received an invitation to the Arctic Design week, which will be held in Rovaniemi. We got acquainted with handicraft studios in Finland, and discovered popular types of art in the Barents Region.

There were a lot of interesting activities within this project. The atmosphere was friendly and comforting.

I think that there shall be more of this kind of projects. As a suggestion, it would be nice to have a possibility to work as one team with other entrepreneurs of the same interest/business field and to develop a joint sub-project, to make a plan for its implementation and, as a result, have an exhibition or festival with support from the YIE project.

A big thank you to the organizers and the participants of the project!

Spreading the Word - YIE in Social Media

Today the distances between people can be reduced by employing the possibilities offered by the internet and social media. In the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) project the participants came from all over the Barents Region, so it was very important to figure out how to create a feeling of unity between each and every participant, regardless of the geographical distances.

BLOG PAGE AS A USEFUL PLATFORM FOR SHARING INFORMATION

At the start of the project a homepage was produced. This homepage included, for example, practical information about the project and the project partners. However, it was not seen as a quick and versatile place to share information about the project activities. For this reason a blog-site was also opened.

We decided to use the free blog platform offered by Google, and the page was produced under the name yieproject.blogspot.fi. Google Blogger was perfectly suited for the purposes of the YIE-project as it offered possibilities to publish not only text but also photos, videos etc. There was also a chance to create different pages as part of the blog site, and this option was used a lot. Until October 2014 a reader can find information about YIE on the following pages:

- [Main page](#) → news and ads about different YIE events.
- [What is YIE?](#) → short description of the project and contact information.
- [YIE Russia](#) → descriptions of the Russian participants.
- [YIE Norway](#) → descriptions of the Norwegian participants.
- [YIE Finland](#) → descriptions of the Finnish participants.
- [YIE Sweden](#) → descriptions of the Swedish participants.
- [Mentoring](#) → information about the mentoring possibilities within the project.
- [Stories](#) → Entrepreneur stories written by the YIE participants.

The blog page was developed and enhanced during the project period. At first it only included the main page, that is, the news about different project activities. After the first matchmaking event we also saw an opportunity to use the blog page as a platform to introduce all of the YIE participants. An individual page was created for each of the project countries, and on these pages all the participants from that country were presented, including photos and short descriptions.

Later we developed the page even further by adding general information about the project on the page "What is YIE?". Furthermore, pages were created for mentoring possibilities and also for the participating entrepreneurs to share their stories.

FACEBOOK HELPS TO REACH A WIDER AUDIENCE

Facebook and other social media have provided projects like YIE with new possibilities to reach their target audience. If we had only used the blog page, we would have had to rely on the activity of the participants. If they wouldn't have followed the page actively, we wouldn't have got the attention we wanted and needed.

In August 2010 YIE joined Facebook. A community was established under the name of "Young Innovative Entrepreneurs" and can be found in the address www.facebook.com/YIEproject.

By using Facebook, we expected to reach our participants and other target groups more quickly and effectively. As most of the people nowadays use Facebook as a part of their everyday life, the updates can be seen in the personal newsfeeds of all of our followers. In this way people don't have to search for information themselves, but the most recent information is right in front of them as they are using Facebook for personal or professional purposes.

In the beginning of the year 2013, a Facebook ad campaign was organized to get more followers for the YIE community. A social media expert, Mikko Manninen from Koivu Interactive, planned and executed this ad campaign, and as a result there was an increase of about 100 new followers of the community in only a few weeks (see Fig. 1).

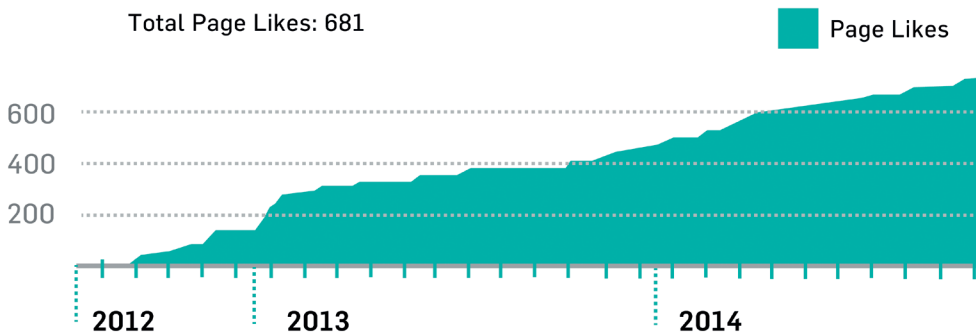


Figure 1. The increase of the amount of followers of the YIE Facebook community has been ongoing since the early days (data according to Facebook-statistics 27.8.2014)

The people how like your Page

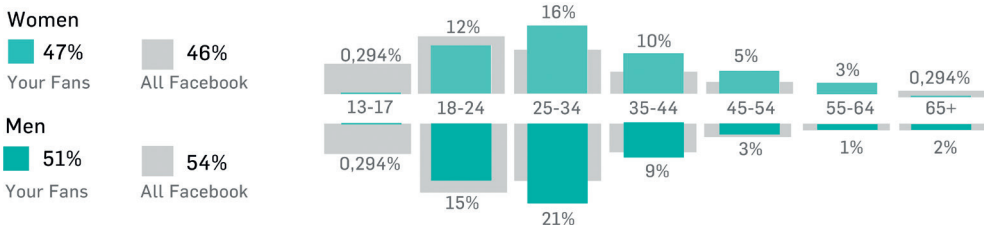


Figure 2. YIE's Facebook community has attracted the right target groups (data according to Facebook-statistics 27.8.2014)

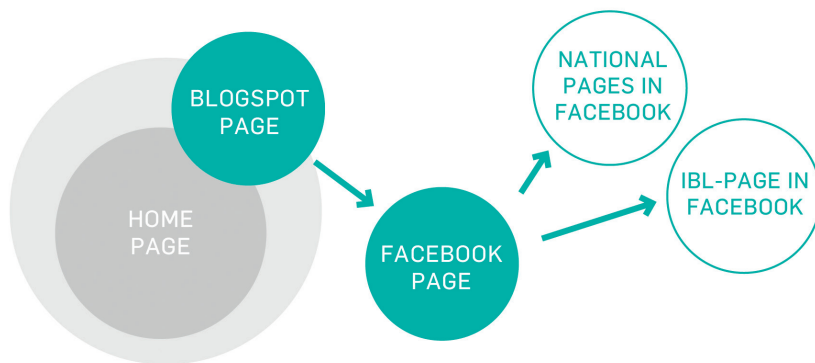


Figure 3. Relation between different online media used in the YIE project

After this, the increase of the followers has been more stable, however ongoing. By the middle of October 2014, we already had a total of 681 followers. At first, an ad campaign was needed to spread the awareness of our Facebook page. As the project went forward and a lot of different events and activities were organized, also the knowledge about our social media channels increased. This was seen as a natural and consistent growth in the number of the followers.

By analysing the data about the Facebook community, we can see that we have reached the target audience quite well. As is presented in the Figure 2, our 681 followers are divided almost equally over men (51 %) and women (47 %). It is also great to see that most of our followers are in the age between 18 to 34 years.

LINKING THE MATERIAL BETWEEN DIFFERENT ONLINE PLATFORMS

The starting point for sharing information was that whenever there were any activities occurring in the YIE project, a short news story was added to the blog page. The Facebook community served as a secondary platform, so all of the news that was published on the blog was also linked immediately to the Facebook page (see Fig. 3).

The link between the blog and the Facebook community was even further enhanced by adding the Facebook-panel on the blog page. In this way the blog visitors immediately got to know about the existence of the Facebook community and in the best case visited and started following the community.

Some news and actual messages were only shared via Facebook. For example, if there were some important deadlines or sign-up dates, the participants were reminded about it in Facebook. Also, interesting news provided by other media was linked to our Facebook page. News concerning our participants and their enterprises was of course linked to Facebook, as it was a simple way of showcasing the talented youth of the Barents Region.

In Facebook, one can also create Event-pages that allow the marketing of the event to the right audience and to invite people to the events. We utilized this opportunity in most of our event

advertisement. It was a good channel to give the participants new information about the events and also follow the amount of participants that was going to attend a certain event.

Unfortunately, the Facebook community turned out to be a mainly one-way communication platform, where we informed the followers about recent news. There was but a quite small amount of publishing from the followers' side. Because of this, we took the opportunity to create some smaller Facebook groups that would give room for more interaction between the project staff and the participants.

For example, in Finland a closed Facebook group was founded for the Finnish participants. National events and other activities were promoted on this page and it was open for all kinds of discussions, also between the participants. In addition to these, InnoBarentsLab has its own Facebook community.

A look back – Coordinators' Views on the Outcome of the Project

LOOKING TO THE PAST AND TO THE FUTURE

During the project time went fast. At the beginning of the project the activities concerned more or less planning and organising the project group of partners and recruiting project coordinators. Soon the first matchmaking event was organised and we as organisers could see our participants face-to-face. It was exciting to see how they reacted and what kind of feedback they would give - after all, it was important that the project met the needs of our participants.

In the end it seemed we had a positive response and it was most exciting to see people taking their chances and “bonding” with each other. Maybe the most exciting and rewarding was to see young company owners plan future collaboration in the middle of the night.

It was obvious, we took a risk when taking the decision to take on board entrepreneurs from all areas of expertise. The only thing that really connected all our participants was the Barents Region and their wish to stay and work in the region by looking at the opportunities across the borders. Of course, one uniting thing was also the definition of “young” or “youth”, but this was quite broadly defined, so as not to limit our participants too much.

My own experience of the project is based on the preparation and start-up phases. During the second year of the project I went on maternity leave and Eila Seppänen took over my position. It felt like we had just started everything. And so it was. Leaving my position wasn't difficult, even though this project was like a child to me. The project was left in trusted hands.

It was interesting to see how everything went during my absence. What kind of results there were in the end. The final event: the Barents Business Festival was coming and there were new initiatives like the Business camp organised by IBL students. I also heard about the new spin-off project, the Barents ICT Cluster. It seemed like a really interesting initiative and more importantly it was set up by our active young entrepreneur, Yngve Bergheim from Ramsalt Lab.

We started our collaboration with several events, like the “Youth Conference” in Hammerfest and the “Barents Reunion” in Tornio-Haparanda. The idea was to cooperate with different events within the region and in the meantime disseminate information about “Young Innovative Entrepreneurs”. Cooperation was also important when establishing a basis for continuation of the project's main activities, like “matchmaking”.

Connecting and collaborating with other events has been rewarding in many ways. One interesting occasion was when Yngve was awarded “Young entrepreneur of the year 2013” and the same time “Entrepreneur of the year 2013”. This happened at the Barents Reunion conference. We

were also honoured by Mr. IKEA Ingvar Kamprad's speech to our participants at the end of the Barents Reunion. He was very inspired by our project. The following year we were invited to participate in the Barents Reunion planning committee. In the year 2014 the theme was "Young entrepreneurs". This was one of the important events we have been involved in and we are hoping that in the future we could join in many other events and conferences to gain influence and to be visible.



FINAL THOUGHTS

It has been some fantastic years of both participation in and coordination of Young Innovative Entrepreneurs. The project has in many ways fulfilled and satisfied my expectations, but it has also presented several surprises.

Before we started the project, I expected to meet interesting people and to build a network of entrepreneurs in the region. I did not expect to get an employment opportunity directly related to the project. By being both participant and coordinator in the project, I got a good insight in what young entrepreneurs want to accomplish in such projects. My experience is that what most young entrepreneurs valued the most were the networking opportunities and the opportunity to get to know the region. I did not expect that the project would facilitate so many spin-offs. Norwegian participants have established cooperation with several other participants from other countries, and some examples are the companies Rein Film, Ramsalt Lab and MuApps. Another spin-off is the new ICT-development project, Barents ICT Cluster, which started with a cooperation between the Norwegian and Russian participants Yngve Bergheim and Dennis Kreminskys' ICT companies. The pre-project will in the first year map and develop the possibilities for collaboration between the ICT sectors in the four Barents countries. The goal is to create a main project with a sustainable ICT Cluster in the Barents.

Personally, the project has provided me with opportunities, as well as challenges. We have been encouraged to take initiatives, solve problems, communicate, collaborate across borders, to speak in front of hundreds of people and to get out of our comfort zone. It has been a valuable experience to actively take part in the project. I think the countries in the Barents Region are in many ways different, but I was surprised to experience the similarity of the people living in the region. We face many of the same challenges daily with extreme cold in the winter, huge geographical distances, sparsely populated areas and emigration to the big cities. I also appreciate

that the project made it possible to meet on a personal as well as a professional level. We have learned about our neighbours, and have seen that we are actually all the same; we only live on different sides of the borders.

Thank you.



WHAT WE HAVE AFTER ALL IS SAID AND DONE

The three years of the project flew by like a single day. During that time many people took part in the project's events and activities. A huge amount of work was done. I am proud to say that we have practical results. Our work was not in vain. Entrepreneurs from the Barents Region found common issues, common ideas and decided to develop together. Even students who took part in the project activities and had just a rough idea of who to be and what to do, got the idea and elaborated the strategy and registered as entrepreneurs.

To my mind, the biggest benefit the project brought the the participants was a possibility to meet people who had achieved great results in the field of business, to listen to their success stories, to talk to them in person, to learn how to pitch from a real investor and to receive immediate feedback from him, to share good and bad experiences from one's own practice and to receive feedback on ideas and products.

During the project activities we had a combination of theory and practice in every event, learning by doing is a great approach in general, as we all know. I believe that the project activities helped to get a better understanding of what is required in the region and how to act in order to be more effective and efficient. Personally, I feel like the YIE project was a big step forward for me. It required a lot, but I also received much more than I thought, experience wise, I met many talented people and had a chance to make new friends.

There were some talks about youth outflow from the Northern to the Southern parts of our countries. It was a pleasure to meet a lot of talented, creative and innovative people from all over the Barents Region who were passionate about their work and truly motivated to get new contacts to extend their ideas, to find partners and to stay here in the North.



THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS AT THE END OF THE PROJECT

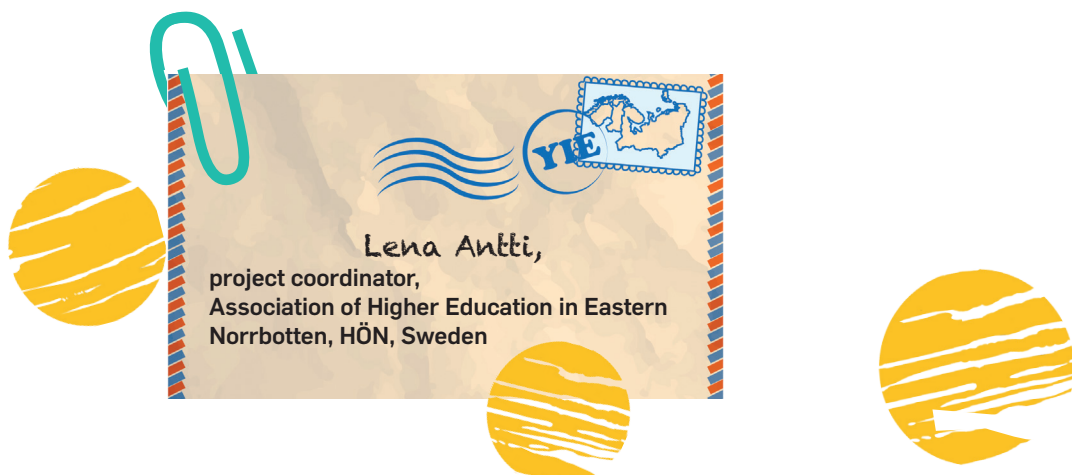
The main deviation from my expectations was the lack of long-term participants. We discovered that there were many young up-and-coming entrepreneurs, but it was not easy to tie them to the project. Not because they were uninterested, but because they changed direction and priority with time. So one challenge was to handle drop outs and newcomers during the project period. This fact also affected the planned mentoring program and the Swedish ambitions of involvement in InnoBarentsLab activities.

The project has been valuable to the participants and really successful for some of them: those who really connected and started to work cross-border in their business. The matchmaking conferences have been great with really skilled professionals sharing their experiences. In my opinion the conference in Kirkenes with the pitch training guided by Steinar Hoel Korsmo, Founder and President of Seed Forum Global, was the most outstanding event; both to the participants who took the opportunity to improve pitching their business idea, but also to the audience who could follow the process. I and probably all of us got new insights from this “pitching lesson”, which will be useful in our future work.

Being part of this project has given me a network involving universities, companies and associations in four countries. Since we got to know each other well, it is and will be easy to get in touch with each other for professional issues and future collaborations. I guess all of us; both partners and participants have been enriched by experiencing cultural similarities and differences in business life and in how we behave as people.

Experiences from this YIE project will be utilized in my future work with young people and collaboration projects. My knowledge has improved when it comes to preconditions for cross-border entrepreneurship and when considering future projects.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Lead Part for excellent work and to all partners for good collaboration and friendship.



The background is a solid yellow color with several white, wavy, brushstroke-like lines scattered across it, primarily on the right and bottom edges.

7 FUTURE PRO SPECTS

Business Cooperation strengthens the Barents Region

I like to compare the Barents Region to other regions in the Arctic. We are the most populated region in the Arctic. There are cities with a lot of inhabitants and we have an infrastructure that is working within the countries without any huge problems. However, because distances and lack of better cross border networks, we tend to focus on our own countries instead of finding cross-border possibilities within the region. And on top of that, when we educate people in the north, they tend to migrate to the southern parts of the countries after they have graduated.

We have communication difficulties when travelling between the countries because of the lack of communication routes. Compared to the rest of Europe where communication across borders is almost as well developed as internally in each country, our region is facing a lot of obstacles.

YIE AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

I joined the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) project as a participant in the very beginning. I wanted to extend my network across the borders and meet other like-minded entrepreneurs and maybe find partners to do business with.

My expectations of the YIE project at first were that it would be more about education and we would be trained to be better entrepreneurs. That, of course, didn't happen directly, as I later found out that it wasn't the project's main aim. But what it absolutely did help me with, was to grow my business network – a network that is extremely important for my company, Ramsalt Lab. Having so many connections now over the whole region is really valuable for us. The networking part of the project became much better and much more important than I could have ever imagined.

I have participated in all of YIE's main conferences, i.e. the matchmaking events, and also in the national activities that we had in Norway. At the first matchmaking event in Tornio-Haparanda and Rovaniemi, I met Dennis Kreminsky from the Russian web development agency called Arctic Turn. This was the starting point for a successful cooperation between our companies. By the end of 2014 we had done around ten projects together as partners with Arctic Turn, making websites together for mutual clients. And there's four new projects that we are currently starting. Because of the YIE project, we ended up having very good connections in Russia and in Finland as well.

Ramsalt was also fortunate to get the Barents Entrepreneur of the Year award in 2013, and that was also a consequence of participating in the YIE project. On account of that award and the attention that came with it, Ramsalt Lab has gained wider recognition. For example, a Norwegian

business newspaper that yearly nominates people for the best leader in Norway chose me as one of the best five in Northern Norway. The attention from the award surtently helped putting Ramsalt on the map.

We have also been invited to give speeches to university students, we participated in conferences talking about the Barents Region and how we cooperate here and sharing the story of Ramsalt Lab and our path to the Barents Entrepreneur of the Year award. Also, these things would never have been possible without the YIE project.

ICT CLUSTER AS A SPIN-OFF OF YIE

There are new projects that are spawning from the YIE. For example, we are now working with the Barents ICT Cluster. It's a new project in which we build on top of what we've learned in the YIE project. Now it's focused on one industry, the ICT industry, and it's aim is to bring together networks that already exist in the Barents Region but that are not connected across the borders. We would like to exchange workforce and ideas and to open markets across the borders.

We need organizations and we need projects that help us turn our heads to the West and East, not only to the southern parts of our countries. In Northern Norway we are mainly focusing on petroleum and fishery and in Northern Finland it's mining, it's hard to cooperate in these sectors,



YIE's project coordinators **Morten Brugård** and **Saila-Inkeri Puukko** are celebrating **Yngve Bergheim's** awards

because you need a lot more infrastructure when realizing cross-country cooperation in those kinds of industries. Yet with ICT, the only thing needed is an internet connection and you can work from anywhere. And it deals with services, nothing physical that you actually need to transfer across borders. For these reasons, ICT offers new and easier ways for cross-border cooperation.

THE BARENTS REGION NEEDS NETWORKING PROJECTS

I see a bright future for Ramsalt Lab. Thanks to YIE project, we have managed to be a more international company and have a nice network across the borders. In general, though, we all know that the Barents Region is not doing that well compared the rest of Europe. At least what we could do is to bring people together and connect them and in this way build a strong region.

Actually, before joining the project, in my company we never thought about doing business in countries like Finland or Russia. Somehow, it was not even in our mind. We were more geared towards the South and Central Europe and the United States. Probably the same goes for most of the businesses in northern Finland and Sweden – we don't realise the potential of the Barents Region in business cooperation.

I believe that we need to use more resources on activities like YIE has offered. Building strong relationships and strong networks that are sustainable across the borders doesn't happen by itself. We have to realise that we need help to build those networks.

A network could easily be constructed locally, for example inside Tromsø, but it's really difficult to build a network across the borders. We need to have projects like YIE where someone can take a lot more responsibility and facilitate the actions. Since there are long distances, a lack of people and other challenges in the Barents Region, I think it's very important that our governments see that facilitating projects and network facilitators are essential to maintaining a healthy and prosperous business community in the region.

There are lots cooperation possibilities in the Barents Region and I'm sure we've only just seen the start of it. The way YIE focussed on the young entrepreneurs was an extremely good idea and it's working effectively.

Arctic Networks and Opportunities

Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) twice was invited to participate in the Barents Sea Youth Conference that is held annually in Hammerfest, Norway (see BSYC 2014). In 2013 we sent 20 participants and in 2014 we had 9 participants from Finland with us. Most of our participants were students and we also had a few young entrepreneurs. The goal of the conference was to collect students from the Barents Region to work on group projects, meet business people and create more opportunities for dialogue among themselves.

Almost everybody in our group was in Hammerfest the first time. It was quite an experience to see and feel this quite unique environment. We got a wide range of presentations during visits to industrial facilities. We learnt much about big industrial projects that were currently going on. We also got information about plans for future projects. Everybody was quite unanimous that the employment and business opportunities in the Hammerfest region are enormous.

A big part of the conference were the workshops. During the work it was nice to notice how the social skills of students improved for many reasons. First of all, the teams had members from the different countries, so the different working cultures met each other. Social skills are needed to combine the different ways of working. Second, foreign languages created a positive challenge. Before the workshop some students were a little bit sceptical about how do they would manage to work in a foreign language. After the workshop they related that it was a positive and encouraging experience. They realized that the message can get through, even though their language skills aren't perfect. These experiences will surely encourage them to use foreign languages in their work in the future. Also the motivation to study languages was strengthened.

The workshops and the conference as a whole offered a great opportunity to establish networks. In business life, networks are important and their importance is increasing. International networks are often needed to open up different kinds of business opportunities. The YIE project has also stressed the importance of networking.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A GLUE COMBINING COMPETENCES IN THE BARENTS REGION

In the conference it was noticeable that the strategy of Lapland UAS (Figure 1) has profiles and areas of emphasis that are very relevant for the enterprises in the Barents Region. Firstly, one area of emphasis is safety and security. The Arctic environment and conditions pose various challenges to safety. Safety knowledge and expertise are the key factors to minimize risks, so that challenging industrial activities are made possible, for example, in the Barents Sea. Planning and managing

safety through the cooperation of many organizations can be more effective than working alone. Nowadays, information security is more important than ever. In the YIE project ICT companies were also involved and they surely had some knowledge of information security to share.

Managing distances is also emphasized in the strategy of Lapland UAS. The Barents Region is sparsely inhabited and distances are long. It is important to notice those things, so that business can be profitable. Logistical solutions have to be optimized. Especially, modern information technology has to be utilized very effectively. These technologies were essential for the coordination of YIE project. For example, information was shared by using many different tools (e.g. Dropbox, Facebook, blogs). Nowadays, there are many business ventures in which location and distance are irrelevant. These kinds of companies were also involved in the YIE project.

The third profile and area of emphasis is intelligent use of natural resources. The Barents Region's natural resources are very important to the region's welfare. Still, they don't create welfare by themselves. People's high level knowledge and skills are required, so that natural resources can be used intelligently. It's important to analyse how natural resources can be utilized productively and sustainably. When talking about natural resources, people often think only of raw materials (e.g. ore, oil, wood). However, the whole environment should be considered as a natural resource. For example, there is a great potential for growth of the tourism industry in the Barents Region. Companies in the tourism industry should see each other more as partners than as competitors. Together they could develop products that could be very attractive. Projects like YIE can help entrepreneurs to meet new possible partners.

Arctic cooperation and cross-border expertise is also written in the strategy of Lapland UAS. The YIE project is a great example of Arctic cooperation. Especially, when the target group is young entrepreneurs there is a great probability that cooperation will continue in the future too. That is significant, because sometimes great ideas can be buried when the right kind of expertise is not available nearby. This kind of problems can be solved when people are used to seeking

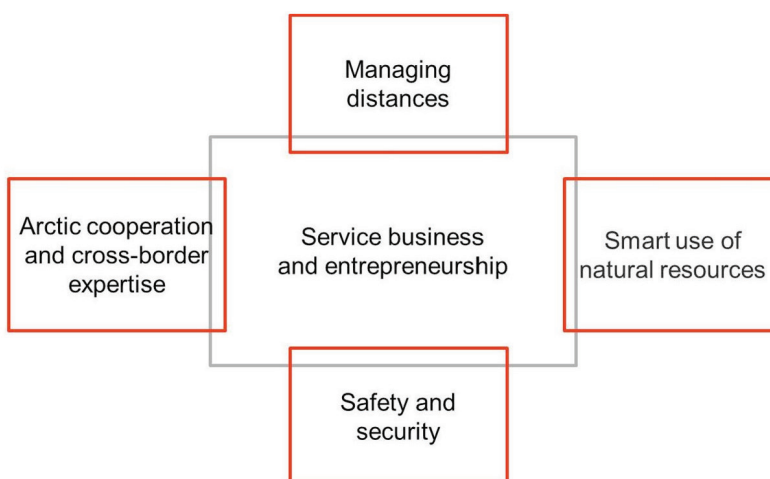


Figure 1. Profiles and areas of emphasis (Lapland UAS strategy 2014)

expertise and partners from another country. YIE has built the culture of cross-border cooperation, which is important.

Service business and entrepreneurship is the fifth and central area of emphasis in the strategy of Lapland UAS. It is included in the other four emphasis areas. Entrepreneurs create jobs, which are very important to our region and its welfare. It is therefore necessary to encourage people to become entrepreneurs. One important thing is to help them to discover business opportunities. Entrepreneurship is not easy, so support is needed. Projects like YIE have a significant role to develop support systems for people who are considering to become entrepreneurs.

As in the strategy of Lapland UAS, entrepreneurship can be the “glue” that combines all different competences to improve the Barents Region. YIE has created a “glue” between young, or potential entrepreneurs who are willing to do business across the borders. That is a great way to exploit Arctic opportunities.

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Towards better Entrepreneurship in the Barents Region

Lapland University of Applied Science's strategic emphasis areas are: managing distances, smart use of natural resources, safety and security and Arctic cooperation and cross-border expertise. Service business and entrepreneurship is the central emphasis area of the strategy. The R&D&I (research, development and innovation) department of the school of Business and Culture focusses on these themes. The emphases are taken into the development process with partners on national and international level.

There are plenty of projects at Lapland UAS that focus on the development of entrepreneurship. Through these projects the organization has had an opportunity to develop and maintain an entrepreneurial attitude and culture which is highly valued in working life. An entrepreneurial organizational culture encourages every individual to think and act in a creative and responsible entrepreneurial way.

Entrepreneurship at Lapland UAS is a strategic focus area, defined from a descriptive value approach and a business development perspective. The organizational entrepreneurial culture and related entrepreneurship development activities through teaching and projects act as an example to students and staff. Entrepreneurship is an important component of economic development, which is particularly important in times of economic downturn.

The Young Innovative Entrepreneurs (YIE) project promotes entrepreneurship by promoting entrepreneurial thinking in higher education and creating networks between entrepreneurs and young people who have an entrepreneurial spirit. Promoting entrepreneurship means, for example, creating a positive entrepreneurial climate at every level of the university, fostering an entrepreneurial attitude, as well as incubating new businesses and developing existing enterprises. The policy of the YIE project has been to encourage and inspire university students to explore their own entrepreneurial disposition and sharpen their entrepreneurial skills.

Through the project, participants have been enabled to play an active role in achieving social and professional success as part of the YIE community. In general, when speaking about policies for the development of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial attitudes, there is a lack of community. The YIE project is significant for its community building, taking into account that young people appreciate and want an active community. The YIE project participants were made part of a supportive entrepreneurial community. In addition they participated in a variety of educational and functional activities to promote professional growth and entrepreneurial attitudes. In particular, participants had the opportunity to explore entrepreneurship in the Barents Region business environment.

The Barents Region is in many ways significant and regional cooperation has adapted over time. Lapland UAS has taken into consideration the importance of the Barents Region in its own organizational strategy and practical co-operation and development activities have been implemented via different projects. Through the YIE project cooperation, community and networking between students and enterprises in the Barents Region have been strengthened. New, creative services and product development ideas have been implemented during various YIE partner meetings and challenges due to distances have been managed via virtual channels. A genuine interest and commitment to the cooperation was required from the participants to create a cooperative and positive development atmosphere.



As a notable demonstration of the importance of cooperation in Barents Region business environment, the YIE project organized the Barents Business Festival (BBF) event in connection with a Barents Reunion event. Thus, the YIE project offered a shared stage to the participants, on which to bring out the positive possibilities of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial collaboration in the Barents Region and to present their skills and their companies.

The BBF event involved experts, business advisors and funding agencies. The Barents Business Festival was an event where participants were able to explore many actions and possibilities at the same time and an integral part of the festival was the sense of community and networking and sharing information. During the BBF event participants could get advice from financing experts, meet new partners and find experts, who could give tips and ideas for business development.

The best part of the BBF event was to meet other like-minded people, create networks, develop new forms of collaboration and exchange ideas and experiences. A lesson learned from the BBF event was that every entrepreneur/student/participant is worthwhile to be networked with others. It is sometimes hard to go it alone, but from the network one can gain strength and encouragement to carry on.

Positive trends in the Barents Region show that the cooperation so cherished in the YIE project will continue through a variety of projects and research programs, via teacher and student exchanges and by maintaining continuous contact with the networks. The best results will come when there is a genuine interest in development work and cooperation and a willingness to get to know partners across the borders.

A Look to the Future, what's next?

Europe needs entrepreneurs for growth and increasing employment. It seems that especially small and medium-sized companies (SME) are the key to success, when providing employment opportunities for an increasingly large part of the population (Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan 2013, 3). This is more than a fact in the Barents Region which struggles with geographic and population challenges.

A lot of support is needed to make our region a better place for entrepreneurs and the work is on-going. The Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project has been one initiative trying to improve the entrepreneurial environment in the Barents Region, but more and continuous activities are needed, also in the near future.

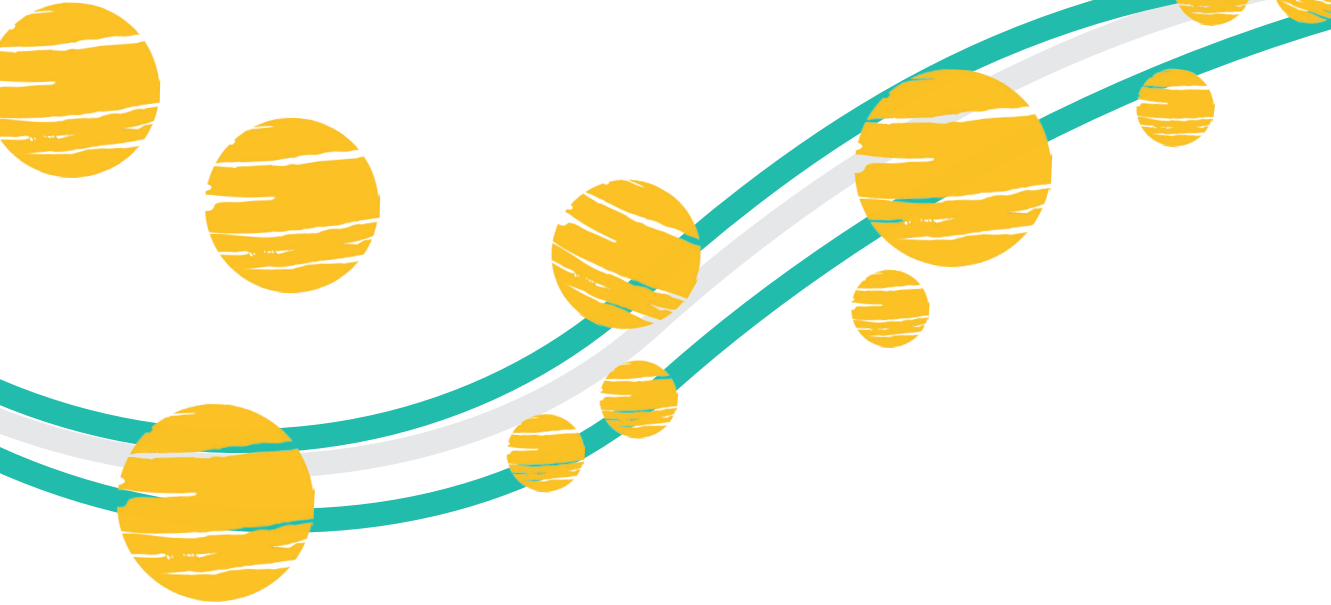
One of the cross-cutting needs is the cultural change of the entrepreneurial environment. A positive attitude towards entrepreneurship is crucial. Maybe one of the most important activities is entrepreneurial education. It is said that children can learn to appreciate entrepreneurship from the beginning of their education. With the help of an entrepreneurial mind-set it becomes easier to transform innovation into action. (Think Small First 2008, 5)

This leads to the fact that there is still a lack of funding opportunities and innovation capacity. New and more effective supporting mechanisms should be developed to address that. Guidance and education for different forms of finance and "pitching" are needed. (Think Small First 2008, 12.)

Exchanges of entrepreneurs across the borders are seen as important and should be encouraged (Think Small First 2008, 16). New markets across the borders in the neighbouring countries are a possibility for new businesses and maybe even for new innovations. This has also been the idea behind YIE. The language and cultural barriers can be overcome with the help of new initiatives.

It needs to be remembered that even in the challenging environment of the Barents Region there is a lot on offer, for example, in the fields of Arctic and cross-border know-how. These issues need to be highlighted and we should consider what could be done to expand this capacity.

One interesting aspect is that innovation strategy has become more prevalent in the Barents Region and, for example, Russia is ready to double its investments in innovation strategies by supporting the export of high-technology and strengthening internationalisation in the fields of education and research. Also a start-up culture is flourishing in the North (Finland) and is



recognised even outside the Barents Region. (Ministry of foreign affairs 2014, 9, 12). The culture of start-ups should be developed further as a common cause with other Barents countries.

THE STORY CONTINUES

During the project we have been honoured to observe, how big a difference it makes to young people if their dreams and ambitions are supported by education providers and other stakeholders, and how they enjoy meeting like-minded people and networking and doing business with them. It is crucial for the success of the Barents Region to enable this type of support also in the future. Training, mentoring, consultation and facilitation of cross-border cooperation and innovation development are definitely a way to increase the competitiveness of the region. Not only because our own children might want to stay here instead of moving to urban cities, but also because we could attract more talented people to move to the Barents Region.

Anyway, the end of the project is not the end of the story, although we might live happily ever after. As the world is changing fast, it is important not to relax and trust solely on already developed support means. We need to keep following up what else is needed in the region, what type of innovations take place in other parts of the world, and how we could gain even better results by investing in our young (potential) entrepreneurs. After all, return on investment continues several years, hopefully tens of years, in the Barents Region.

We are looking forward to developing the partnership and finding new solutions in supporting the region. From the beginning it has been obvious to us that we must continue our networking activities by collaborating with other stakeholders and matching international events, regional actors and other projects together. The YIE project has been actively seeking opportunities to connect young and potential entrepreneurs at the already existing events. The project has participated in events like the Barents Sea Youth Conference in Hammerfest and the Barents Reunion in Tornio-Haparanda. With the help of already existing contacts and the partner network there is a possibility to keep the YIE network alive. New solutions towards continuation

and expansion of the project activities have been on-going from the start of the project to beyond the project's life time.

Exciting is that, in addition to the project results, spin-offs have emerged from actively involved participants. One example of these spin-offs is the Barents ICT Cluster, which aims at connecting ICT sector companies in the Barents Region. We are also expecting new spin-offs coming up in the near future.

At the end of 2014 we are in the middle between new and old when speaking of project continuation. The old EU-programme is ending and new ones are starting. The initiatives to enlarge and expand the project are and will be investigated. Several possibilities are forthcoming; some examples are the ENI Kolarctic programme, the Barents Sea programme (BSR) and Horizon2020. A vision of the Barents Region meeting the Baltic Sea is one of our initiatives towards the Baltic Sea Programme. This is an interesting and new initiative, but also challenged by long distances and vast areas.

Some initiatives towards ensuring the continuation of the YIE network have been secured in co-operating project proposals, for example, to find ways to eliminate barriers to the business sector in the region. The creation of "critical mass" through increased accessibility of support to a diversified customer base and wider connectivity to a base of potential collaborators with whom joint business and product development ventures can be co-created should be achieved by overcoming existing skills barriers through regional and transnational learning and support.

And, of course, actions integrated into partner organisations' daily routines during the YIE project will continue beyond the project's lifetime, e.g. InnoBarentsLab and mentoring, as well as various business support activities.

In the end it is all about the people inside this YIE network. The project has offered a possibility to meet people across the borders, to create connections with other stakeholders and to share information about different funding instruments in the Barents countries. When looking at all the things achieved in the project, it seems these possibilities have been utilized and new partnering and ideas, even new businesses, have been established both regionally and across the borders.

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The Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project is a support system for young innovative entrepreneurs and future entrepreneurs in the Barents Region, that aims at developing new contacts, business ideas and an entrepreneurial mindset across the borders. It focuses on making the Barents Region more attractive as a place to stay and do business in.

In this publication we describe the background, implementation and outcome of the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs project. As the cross-cutting theme of the whole project has been creative thinking and innovativeness, this publication breathes the same spirit.

Young people want and are willing to work towards a vigorous Barents Region in which young entrepreneurs see more possibilities than obstacles. One way to obtain this vitality can be personal relationships, adequate support tools and cooperation in the region. By sharing the experiences of the project staff and participants, this publication shows that the youth believe in the future of the Barents Region.



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