

# Developing Tourism via Finnish – Russian Cross-Border Cooperation

Case studies conducted by  
Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences

Kari Kokkonen, Pekka Malvela (eds.)



# Developing Tourism via Finnish – Russian Cross-Border Cooperation

Case studies conducted by  
Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences

Kari Kokkonen, Pekka Malvela (eds.)

Publisher: Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences

Printing press: Tammerprint Oy, Tampere 2014

ISBN: 978-952-306-089-0 (nid.)

ISBN: 978-952-306-090-6 (PDF)

ISSN: 1239-9094 (nid.)

ISSN: 1797-5972 (PDF)

[julkaisut@xamk.fi](mailto:julkaisut@xamk.fi)

# FOREWORD

Kari Kokkonen, RDI expert  
Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences  
kari.kokkonen@kyamk.fi

Russia's economy has been developing quite well in recent years and decades. The middle class has been increasing its consumption steadily. However, the EU-Ukraine crisis has stalled this development and the effects have been immediate. One barometer has been tourism. The weakening rouble has frozen tourism to Finland. Eastern and South-Eastern Finland have suffered the biggest impact. However, domestic tourism might develop and take a different path.

For science, research and development conducted by Higher Education Institutions (HEI) it is natural to look beyond the crisis. Changes in consumer behavior and developments of new products in the tourism business create a major challenge on both sides of the border, including developing a visa-free zone and the entire range of vital focal areas. Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences can provide topical analysis and research-based recommendations for businesses, authorities and regions to continue developing tourism.

Tourism is developed in the fields of maritime and inland waters, cultural heritage, event management, accessibility in built environments and experiential learning of students.

Student exchanges and cross-border educational cooperation is a solid base to build upon. Research and development activities, supporting new businesses and developing older businesses are all essential to recovering from recession and making a change. Smart Specialisation of Regions is one of the key tools in Europe to gain smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The role of HEIs is essential in making a place-based strategic approach to economic development through targeted support for research and innovation.

In this publication, authors from five UASs in Eastern and South-Eastern Finland discuss their experiences and conclusions on developing tourism via cross-border cooperation with Russian universities and other stakeholders. We wish to encourage our readers into international cooperation in the field of developing tourism in its various forms to help us understand different cultures and to generate smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

# CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD</b>	3
<i>Kari Kokkonen</i> , RDI Expert Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences kari.kokkonen@kyamk.fi	
<b>SHARING KNOW-HOW AND CONCEPTS FOR ACCESSIBILITY ACROSS THE BORDER</b>	5
<i>Timo Ekroos</i> , ISAK Coordinator Karelia University of Applied Sciences timo.ekroos@karelia.fi	
<b>SERVICE DEVELOPMENT OF RUSSIAN TOURISM ENTERPRISES IN EU CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION – PROJECT COLLABORATION OF UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES IN EASTERN FINLAND</b>	12
<i>Jorma Korhonen</i> , Senior Lecturer Savonia University of Applied Sciences jorma.korhonen@savonia.fi	
<b>EVENT MANAGEMENT KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER FOR DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL INDUSTRIES AND TOURISM IN THE BALTIC REGION OF RUSSIA</b>	17
<i>Natalia Kushcheva</i> , Principal Lecturer in Tourism Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences natalia.kushcheva@mamk.fi	
<b>BOSS - FROM BORDERS TO SHARED SPACE</b>	23
<i>Ekaterina Miettinen</i> , Project Coordinator Karelia University of Applied Sciences ekaterina.miettinen@karelia.fi	
<i>Marja-Liisa Ruotsalainen</i> , Project Coordinator Karelia University of Applied Sciences marja-liisa.ruotsalainen@karelia.fi	
<b>DEVELOPING WATERBORNE TOURISM IN THE EASTERN PART OF THE GULF OF FINLAND</b>	28
<i>Mervi Nurminen</i> , Director, NELI North European Logistics Institute Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences mervi.nurminen@kyamk.fi	
<b>SAIMAA UAS STUDENT’S STUDY TRIP TO SAINT PETERSBURG – EXPECTATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS</b>	33
<i>Ilkka Lehtola</i> , Lecturer Saimaa University of Applied Sciences ilkka.lehtola@saimia.fi	
<i>Sirpa Sahinjoki</i> , Lecturer Saimaa University of Applied Sciences sirpa.sahinjoki@saimia.fi	

# SHARING KNOW-HOW AND CONCEPTS FOR ACCESSIBILITY ACROSS THE BORDER

Timo Ekroos, ISAK Coordinator  
Karelia University of Applied Sciences  
timo.ekroos@karelia.fi

## I. INTRODUCTION

Accessibility in built environments enables possibilities for everyone to live, study, work and exercise. Unfortunately this is not always guaranteed in practice. We encounter various different barriers if our abilities are in any way restricted. Accessibility in built environments means opportunities for everybody to cope more independently. Sharing the knowledge and good practices with disabled and elderly people themselves and increasing the accessibility competence of decision makers, planners, builders and investors is significant in promoting accessibility. Accessibility in built environments means not only easy access for elderly people or for people with disabilities but also high quality for everyone. The development of accessibility requires multi-disciplinary, user-centric cooperation and development both with common learning and assimilation of the new methods and practical realisations.

The needs and basis for developing accessibility are essentially similar in Finland and Russia. The Karelia University of Applied Sciences started cooperation activities in Russia in 2005. The premises and resources for this were provided by the Regional Development Programme in the Joensuu region, which is financed by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and hosted by the regional development company, JOSEK Ltd., between 2002 and 2010. The Centre for Innovations for Independent Living ISAK, ([www.isak.fi](http://www.isak.fi)), an expert unit for accessibility at the Karelia University of Applied Sciences, has been involved in promoting and realising several activities in cross-border cooperation during past ten years.

## **2. FUNCTIONAL HOME ST PETERSBURG**

In April 2009, a Functional Home model and information environment was opened in St Petersburg. This consisted of a model apartment, lecture room and exhibition hall for products supporting independent living and accessibility.

The Functional Home is located in the Professional Rehabilitation Center hosted by the City of St Petersburg's Committee for Social Development. Development and assembly of the concept was realised in cooperation with the City of St Petersburg, Centre for Innovations for Independent Living ISAK and fifteen Finnish companies, who equipped the model apartment with their products for promoting accessibility. The basis of the plan was an accessible model, information and exhibition environment that provides the foundation for an ensemble that serves experts from the social, health and construction sectors with disabled and elderly people and their relatives to recognise and find the existing solutions and ideas that are needed to promote accessibility for their clients or themselves. For Finnish companies, the Functional Home concept opened possibilities to strengthen their positions in the markets in St Petersburg and in Russia.

### **2.1 SURVEY OF THE MARKETS AS A BASIS FOR DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

The planning process of this model and information environment started on 2004 with the survey, "Market opportunities for products helping disabled and elderly people to survive independently in St Petersburg". This survey was realised in cooperation with ISAK, SPATIA - the Centre for Regional Research at the University of Eastern Finland and the St Petersburg Foundation for SME Development. The survey offered important knowledge about the background, relevant organisations and mechanisms of the markets in St Petersburg. This survey identified the key actors and organisations with whom common activities were later undertaken.

### **2.2 FIVE YEARS OF DEVELOPMENT AND EXPERIENCES OF COLLABORATION**

The planning process for the Functional Home took about two years. There were several possible locations for this model and information environment. Some preliminary plans were realised before the location was found by the Committee for Social Development of the City of St Petersburg. When the plans for Functional Home were finalised, construction work started at the Professional Rehabilitation Center in 2008. The construction work was paid by the City of St Petersburg and the contractor was a Russian company. Renovation of the Functional Home was completed in April 2009. Finnish companies handled the delivery and installation of their products and equipment in the apartment.

The products aimed to demonstrate accessible door environments, special equipment for toilets and bathrooms, adjustable kitchen ensembles, safety products for fire prevention, emergency call systems, specially planned furniture in the kitchen, living room and bedroom, remote controlled blinds and special products for lifting and moving. The opening ceremony for the functional Home St Petersburg was held on 16 April 2009 and an influential audience from Russia and Finland was in attendance.



Figure 1. The Functional Home – a model apartment in St Petersburg consisting of products from Finnish companies enabling independent living and activities for disabled people (Adjustable kitchen ensemble, Kontiowood Ltd.) Picture: Timo Ekroos

The experiences and results gained from the cooperation in the Functional Home St Petersburg have been encouraging, both for the host organisation and the Finnish companies. The Functional Home achieved areal and national visibility and acknowledgement among professionals via several seminars and congresses. It is open to the public on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. It has also offered the participating companies new opportunities to find relevant partners and several cooperation possibilities in the markets. For ISAK and the Karelia University of Applied Sciences, this concept has also created extensive possibilities for cooperation in other areas and regions in Russia and strengthened cooperation and relations considerably with the participating Finnish companies.

### **3. LEARNING LAB FOR ACCESSIBILITY IN BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

Social wellbeing is one of the themes in the cross-border Karelia ENPI programme. Learning Lab for Accessibility in Built Environment ([www.karelia.fi/learninglabforaccessibility](http://www.karelia.fi/learninglabforaccessibility)) is one of the projects realised in it. The aim of the project is to promote accessibility competence among the participating organisations and make it visible through existing model environments of partner organisations and pilot environments that are planned and realised as part of the project.



The training and education modules established by the project form the basis for the common learning process. This was a cross-border Finnish-Russian project that connected seventeen partners and associating organizations from the programme area. The Lead Partner of the project is Karelia University of Applied Sciences/ISAK. The Finnish partner organisations are University of Eastern Finland, Kajaani University of Applied Sciences and Oulu University of Applied Sciences.

The Russian partners are Karelian Resource Center and Rehabilitation center ISTOKI from Petrozavodsk, the City Administration of Kostomuksha and the Professional Rehabilitation Center of St Petersburg. Associates of the project from Finland include seven companies offering products for accessible built environments. From the Russian side, the associated partners are the City Administration of Petrozavodsk, the Rodnik rehabilitation centre, the Shtrih engineering centre and the Karelstroimekhanization construction company from Petrozavodsk. The main aspects of the project are as follows:

### 3.1 PROMOTING ACCESSIBILITY COMPETENCE

Developing accessibility demands both skills and a positive attitude. Very often, accessibility is seen as single solutions rather than an ensemble that covers the whole life cycle, environments for living, services, working, hobbies, travelling and other things that are important for everyone



Figure 2. Common learning of accessibility requires exploring and knowledge of existing solutions (Lifting system in an exhibition hall in St Petersburg) Picture: Pentti Martikainen

in society. The main challenge in the promotion of accessibility is to influence the attitudes of people in charge: planners, architects, builders and owners of real estates. These abilities are also needed by experts in the social and welfare sector, as well as by decision-makers in cities and municipalities.

### 3.2 MAKING ACCESSIBILITY VISIBLE

Model environments that are planned, built and equipped in cooperation with rehabilitation centres, universities or service organisations have a remarkable role in guidance, receiving information and promoting the visibility of accessibility. Model environments present constructional solutions and equipped examples that can be utilised by customers themselves to support their daily living and needs independently. These model environments – Handy Home in the City of Kajaani, Enabling Home in the City of Oulu and Functional Home in St Petersburg – have been in use for several years. One aim of the project is to look for new possibilities to utilize these model environments more efficiently in cross-border activities. They have also been connected into the education and training modules of the project. A common learning process for accessibility will progress more effectively when lectures, interactive discussions and presentations have been realised in those practical environments.

The project will also include two pilot environments for accessibility. These pilots are located in the Petrozavodsk and Kostomuksha. The first is a charting apartment located in the Elizabeth center boarding house in Petrozavodsk that is currently under construction. The charting apartment will be equipped with special solutions for accessibility so that it will make possible to realise individual charting activities and plans for customers. These products are offered by the Finnish companies associated with the project. The second pilot will be located in secondary school number 2 in Kostomuksha. The plan will cover a certain part of the school that will be



Figure 3. Visualisation of preferred plans promotes possibilities for cooperation and realisation of accessibility solutions in practice (visualised bathroom of charting apartment in the Elizabeth center, Petrozavodsk)  
Picture: Mikko Matveinen

reconstructed to make it accessible so that it will serve students and visitors with disabilities. The pilot covers recommendations for constructional accessibility and equipping the new entrance, classrooms, toilets and other spaces included in the reconstruction.

### 3.3 PLANNING, TESTING AND LAUNCHING THE OPERATIONS MODEL FOR LONG-TERM COOPERATION

The “Learning Lab for Accessibility in Built Environment” project will be seen as a kick-off for continuing cooperation between the actors and areas across the border. The project will start the practical development of accessibility by offering the profits to the organisations participating in it. Profits shall be targeted and used as credits for the people who will primarily benefit from the results of this project. The Learning Lab for Accessibility is a common process that will progress during the project and continue after it. The first beneficiaries of the results are the citizens on both sides of the border but this model will also pay attention to the benefits for the public sector (cities, municipalities and other organisations responsible for accessibility in living and service environments), associations for elderly and disabled people and commercial companies offering planning, building and installation services and products.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

These activities have promoted cross-border cooperation and aroused interests also in other areas and republics in Russia. One example of this during the past two years is the cooperation between the Karelia University of Applied Sciences and the Agency for Social Development of the Repub-



Figure 4. Accessibility often means small things by which environments, attractions and services will be made accessible. It is merely a question of attitude and knowledge. Picture: Timo Ekroos

lic of Komi, which has resulted in the planning and installation of the first private welfare centre for the elderly in the City of Syktyvkar. Four Finnish companies are involved in offering their products to promote accessibility in the centre.

Accessibility development offers today and especially in future a wide range of possibilities for education and research activities and also for commercial cooperation in sharing knowledge and good practices between Finland and Russia. The Functional Home concept connects these aspects by offering a competitive platform for cross-border activities and promoting accessibility in the built environment.

Cultural, legislative and methodical differences between countries, regions and partners will be taken into account carefully in the development of cross-border cooperation. The most important thing is, however, to create an atmosphere of trust among the partners in order to be able to implement activities in practice and gain results. The achievable benefits of cross-border cooperation will be clearly shown for each organisation participating in these activities.

During the cooperation activities related to accessibility in the built environment, several possibilities have arisen for using this development in tourism environments and services. Preliminary negotiations have been already taken place with the State Committee for Tourism of the Republic of Karelia and with tourism resorts such as the Kizhi State Open Air Museum in Petrozavodsk. For tourism attractions, this cooperation will offer opportunities to reach new customer groups (for example, disabled and elderly tourists with families) and to increase the quality of surroundings and services for everyone visiting these resorts.

# SERVICE DEVELOPMENT OF RUSSIAN TOURISM ENTERPRISES IN EU CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION – PROJECT COLLABORATION OF UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES IN EASTERN FINLAND

Jorma Korhonen, Senior Lecturer  
Savonia University of Applied Sciences,  
jorma.korhonen@savonia.fi

## INTRODUCTION

This article discusses service development work for Russian tourism enterprises in Russian Karelia. The work was done within the RUNAT project in collaboration between the University of Eastern Finland and two Universities of Applied Sciences: Savonia and Karelia. The case is a good example of collaboration between higher educational institutions and regional development, which is one of the main tasks of Universities of Applied Sciences in Finland. The service development work was done in an innovative way as it was based on the research data measuring demand in generating regions.

The article consists of three parts: the RUNAT project will be introduced firstly. Secondly, the actions taken in the project will be presented and, finally, conclusions will be drawn. The conclusions discuss the success factors in the collaboration as well as the meaning and needs of cross-border cooperation.

## **I. RUNAT PROJECT**

RUNAT product development, development of market insight and e-marketing of rural and natural tourism all took place under the EU Karelia European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI) program's project. The project took place between 30 June 2012 and 29 June 2014. The project lead partner was the University of Eastern Finland (Aducate) and the project partners in Finland were Karelia University of Applied Sciences and Savonia University of Applied Sciences. The Russian partners were the Karelian Institute of Tourism, Petrozavodsk and St Petersburg State University of Engineering and Economics (UNECON), nowadays part of the St Petersburg State University of Economics (UNECON). Pohjois-Karjala and Pohjois-Savo were the target regions of the project in Finland, while in Russian the project region was the Republic of Russian Karelia, with a focus on the Petrozavodsk, Pryazha, Olonets and Medvedzhgorsk regions. (University of Eastern Finland 2012.)

The project aim was to provide research data on the demand for rural tourism in St Petersburg and Moscow. The third target area for data collection was Western Europe. Russians' interest in social media was additionally researched. The social media research subject was the most popular social media channel in Russia, VKontakte. (Karhapää-Puhakka and Suni 2014) The research results were exploited for service development work. The target for the service development work of Russian tourism enterprises, as well as some Finnish tourism enterprises, was to develop their tourism products, services, collaboration and marketing. Developing and increasing enterprises' know-how in product development, networking and marketing, especially in electronic marketing, were key goals of the development work. (University of Eastern Finland 2012.)

Savonia University of Applied Sciences and Karelia University of Applied Sciences were responsible for the service development work in the project. The author of the article worked in the project as a Project Coordinator and as a one of the three Trainers, two of whom were from Savonia University of Applied Sciences and one from Karelia University of Applied Sciences.

## **2. IMPLEMENTATION OF SERVICE DEVELOPMENT WORK**

The trainers have extensive knowledge and experience of Russian tourism business and culture, cross-border cooperation and tourism development work. Planning of the training programme was based on trainers' experiences and it was targeted to the needs of the enterprises to develop their service supply and other business areas. The training program was interactive and also included preliminary assignments for the participants. Feedback on the training program was collected continuously.

The service development work was implemented during training days and trainers' consulting visits in the Russian enterprises in the regions. Benchmarking and FAM trips were also included in the programme. Two-day training sessions was organised twice in each region: Petrozavodsk, Pryazha, Olonets and Medvedzhgorsk. The training sessions took place in December 2012 and in April 2013.

## 2.1 TRAINING SESSIONS

The first training session's topics were customer-oriented tourism service, customer orientation and its influence on tourism service development, production and service processes, and security and quality of services. The participants applied their prevailing services to theoretical frameworks, which have proven to be functional. The participants were active and the feedback for the first training session was excellent. The participants found that the given frameworks made service provision clearer to them and that the training session increased their knowledge of tourism services, processes, and service quality and security. The participants also realised the importance of these factors in their business. The participants then sent their service and product descriptions to the trainers for comments.

The second training session (two days) aimed to develop participants' existing services or to produce ideas for developing new tourism services. The research results were introduced during the session by the researcher from the University of Eastern Finland. The research results were applied to service development ideas. The participants had also already made a benchmarking trip to Pohjois-Karjala and Pohjois-Savo and they were able to apply information and experiences from the trip to their service development work. The benchmarking trip will be reported on later.

One idea was to create a tour for Finnish tourists in Russian Karelia based on networking in service supply. Other topics that were introduced in the second session were service quality and security issues. The organisation of waste management in Finland was also presented according to the participants' request.

After the second training session the participants sent updated service and product descriptions to the trainers for comments.

## 2.2 OTHER TRAINING PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES

The training programme also included benchmarking trips and FAM trips. The Russian entrepreneurs made a benchmarking trip to Pohjois-Karjala and Pohjois-Savo in March 2013. During the trip they visited different tourism enterprises and tourism resorts and met Finnish tourism entrepreneurs. The Russian participants found both the presentations and the discussions with Finnish entrepreneurs useful. They got a good impression of the level of tourism services in Finland and the level of tourism enterprises' collaboration at the destinations. The Russian entrepreneurs found that they got ideas for their service development work. They noticed that networking between tourism companies in Russian Karelia is poor compared to Finland.

After the benchmarking trip in Finland the participants wanted a similar benchmarking trip to be organised in Russia. It was organised in March 2014 in the project regions. The participants also found the trip useful as they got to know services in different regions of Russian Karelia and were able to talk to other entrepreneurs and plan collaboration.

The last phase of the training programme was consulting within enterprises in the regions in October 2013. The trainers explored the service environment, products and services, as well as other activities in companies. The trainers gave feedback and development proposals to entrepreneurs based on their discussions and observations during the trip.

In autumn 2013 and spring 2014 the training programme continued, both in Russian Karelia and in Finland, with the subject of electric marketing. The training programme was organised by the University of Eastern Finland. A small group of representatives from Finnish tourism companies made a five-day FAM trip in June 2014 to the project regions in Russian Karelia. The closing seminar of the project took place in May in Petrozavodsk.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

EU cross-border cooperation is necessary to increase collaboration between partners, develop services and improve the competitiveness of companies in the border regions. One of the tasks of the Universities of Applied Sciences in Finland is regional development. This type of project is therefore very well suited to the role of Universities of Applied Sciences. The willingness and need to develop tourism services in Russian Karelia is very high. The RUNAT project was innovative, while academic research data of tourist consumer behaviour and consumer behaviour on social media was applied to service and business development work. The roles of the project partners in the project were clear: the University of Eastern Finland was a provider of research data and the Universities of Applied Sciences (Karelia and Savonia) werepliers in the development work. Tourism development work in the border regions also faces challenges. Business culture is different on the both sides of the border. Networking and collaboration between the tourism companies in Russian Karelia is quite new and, therefore, uncommon. The operations of the public sector and its ability to support tourism development in Russian Karelia are different from Finland. Infrastructure, such as roads and buildings, is quite poor, although progress has been made in recent years.

The willingness of Finnish tourism enterprises to develop tourism products in the border region and collaborate with enterprises in Russian Karelia has decreased continuously in recent decades. The use of social media in tourism marketing and knowledge of Russian consumers' behaviour and their behaviour on social media are poor. Factors affecting the operational environment and factors influencing the ability of enterprises to conduct business need to be considered while planning and organising training programmes for tourism entrepreneurs. Extensive experience of cross-border cooperation, as well as knowledge of the business environment and companies, helps in planning.

The global political and economic situation has changed rapidly since the project was completed. During the project, a visa-free zone between the European Union and Russia was discussed, but not any more. Sanctions and the political situation in Ukraine are now in the headlines. These have affected the opening of new cross-border cooperation programmes this year. The opening will be delayed.



The crisis will hopefully be short and we will be able to make a new start to cross-border cooperation. A visa-free zone would enormously increase the number of Russian tourists in Finland and vice-versa. At the moment, both are suffering from the global situation. Russian Karelia would increase its attraction as a nature and cultural tourism destination. This would happen not only in Finland but also in the rest of Europe. To meet increasing demand, there are major challenges to develop services and the service environment, and to reach European standards. Services need to be customer-oriented and segmentation and creation of customer profiles (personas) are important to make marketing effectively using the right electronic channels. There is a lot to do – when the global situation makes it possible.

## REFERENCES

Karhapää-Puhakka, S. & Suni J. (Eds.) 2014. The Attractiveness of Rural Tourism Destinations in the Republic of Karelia and Eastern Finland. Aducate Reports and Books 1/2014.

University of Eastern Finland 2012. Grant Contract. External Actions of the European Community. Karelia ENPI CBC Programme 2007–2013. Grant contract identification number 2011-02-KA300.

# EVENT MANAGEMENT KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER FOR DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL INDUSTRIES AND TOURISM IN THE BALTIC REGION OF RUSSIA

Natalia Kushcheva, Principal Lecturer in Tourism  
Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences  
Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management  
natalia.kushcheva@mamk.fi

## INTRODUCTION

Cultural industries are increasingly becoming important components of the modern economy and knowledge-based society due to their impact on the enrichment of communities. The growing interest in cultural industries and their rapid acceptance as a fairly general model for addressing development problems at the economic and political level have contributed to cultural industries becoming a key component in the formulation of economic policy and strategic development planning.

Apparently, there are few – if any – study programmes in the Baltic part of Russia that train professionals for the regional event industry. In Soviet times, training of such professionals was closely associated with the ideological (political) system. This collapsed totally in the late 90s, followed by dissolution of the institutions responsible for training specialists to run public events and mass actions. As time goes by, the opportunities for education in the field of event management and also for in-service training of practicing specialists remain very limited. Those that take event management training courses, as well as the companies that employ event managers, certainly recognize the value of comprehensive training as opposed to shortcuts.

## I. CULTURAL EVENTS AND HERITAGE TOURISM

Big cities and areas accommodate many cultural events that can play a major part in promoting the image of the event destination, during and after the event itself. All local actors, and especially SMEs whose activities are related to tourism, can greatly benefit from such events. Indeed, cultural and sporting activities constitute one of the main motivations in the choice of tourist destinations. The empowerment of the “civilisation” of “leisure” contributes to the development of this leisure tourism (increase in spare time, increase in purchasing power). Approximately four fifths of European tourism may be “of leisure type” (European Commission, 2007).

Cultural heritage and tourism have gone hand-in-hand since the very first days of leisure travel. Cultural and heritage tourism refers to tourism where arts, culture and heritage form a key attraction for visitors and the focus of their activities. Some argue that all tourism is cultural heritage tourism, since all tourism involves people (culture) in a setting with (natural and/or cultural) heritage. Festivals attract culture tourists to local community events to promote cultural exchanges between tourists and residents. UNEP suggests that cultural tourism is boosted by the development of festivals and events (UNEP, 2002).

Cultural and heritage products make a trip to Russia unique and memorable for tourists. They provide the word-of-mouth stories that bring return guests. This is a key way for companies to diversify their product and stimulate the local economy. Interaction with local people and cultures is often the highlight of a guest’s visit, thus helping to attract a broader clientele and encouraging guests to stay longer. There is a widespread belief that domestic tourists and business tourists are not interested in cultural products. But it is already known that most of the special events in the cultural sphere have historically originated and been organised for the residents—they are the key players in the events and dominate in the formation of their revenue component (OECD 2009). Thus we could say that cultural events play a huge role in developing domestic tourism.

In Russia, the domestic tourism market is very uncertain. Russians are accustomed to travel, at least within the borders of the federation, and indeed within those of the historical Soviet Union. According to Rutramarin, the total value of the Russian tourist market in 2013 was USD 45 billion with 12% growth on the previous year (Rutramarin, 2013).

Some cities and areas of the country are high-volume tourism destinations, such as Moscow, Saint Petersburg and Sochi. The number of domestic visitors in Russia is considerable and these figures show an increasing trend. In 2013, Russians made 13.2 million domestic trips (RosStat, 2014). Russian domestic tourism is expected to grow by 4.3% in 2016. Domestic tourism revenue growth is projected to be 4% by 2016 (NeTour, 2014).

Nowadays, in the Baltic region of Russia, emerging markets for leisure, tourism and arts businesses have created demand for real professionals in event management. Local traditional cultures, as well as arts festivals, parades, shows and concerts, attract growing numbers of tourists to the Republic of Karelia and the City of St Petersburg, thereby increasing the need for skilled managers capable of organising demanding tasks such as logistics, security, public relations, marketing, fundraising and volunteer coordination.

What is clear is that tourism is growing and will have an increasing impact on cultural heritage. In the forecast, “Tourism: 2020 Vision”, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) predicts that cultural tourism will be one of the five key tourism market segments in the future and notes that growth in this area will present an increasing challenge in terms of managing visitor flows to cultural sites (UNWTO, 1999).

Event management is one of the best business opportunities for the aspiring entrepreneur. Requiring relatively little capital, a creative and exciting venture has the potential for unlimited income. Event management is an exciting business with huge income potential. It is a large and growing industry with many niches, from multimillion-peso concerts and glitzy corporate product launches, to simple weddings. For those looking for a business to start with limited capital, this venture may be a passport to success. But before investing in this business, you must first make an honest inventory of your personal skills and capabilities. This venture demands a person with strong time management skills. You must be organised, hands-on and detail-oriented. Despite the seemingly glamorous nature of this business, it is extremely stressful and requires a lot of hard work. Every event needs a mind, a person or a team, who carefully and creatively makes it possible. Event planners have more than backstage passes to everyone’s momentous events—they help their clients make these events memorable.

## **2. PROJECT CASE**

The impact of a cultural event on the sustainable tourism development of a destination strongly depends on the qualification of the professionals working before, during and after the event. The project, “Promoting event management training programmes as a resource for developing cultural industries and tourism in NW Russia”, was financed under the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) within the Programme for the Baltic Sea Region, and is aimed at satisfying demand for event management professionals in the leisure and arts business in Baltic Russia in order to increase cultural tourism in the targeted regions (Karelia and St Petersburg). The project was undertaken to contribute to building capacity for training professionals in the field of cultural industries and event management based on a Danish/Finnish/Norwegian model. It ran for two years with seven partners and the main activities were held in Karelia and St Petersburg. The project goal was attained mainly by developing and running study modules for students and in-service training programmes for event managers working in the Baltic Region of Russia to improve the relevant competences and skills, and also by piloting the models with a “Campus Festival” in Petrozavodsk and St Petersburg as a tool for promoting the students’ diploma projects and ideas into the cultural life of territories.

The following outcomes were successfully completed by the project partners:

- Five new study modules on event management were created, piloted and approved at HEIs participating in the project
- The professional competences of 50 professionals working in St Petersburg and the Republic of Karelia were improved via the in-services training programme
- Three study visits were organised to Mikkeli, Roskilde and Lillehammer
- Four Campus Festivals (two in St Petersburg and two in Petrozavodsk) were organised in 2012 and 2013
- 1000 copies of a brochure containing valuable recommendations for regional development in the field of creative industries and cultural tourism were published (the link is in the reference list)

These developmental and piloting processes were based upon the EU best practices in the field of cultural industries and cultural tourism, as well as on the mobility of students, artists, art producers and cultural managers. This project promoted the image and attractiveness of the City of Petrozavodsk and St Petersburg as favourable destinations of cultural tourism.

There were also many other projects and activities held in the area. But such projects can only scratch the surface of cultural industrial development and are limited in terms of their broader impact on tourism. The impact of these problems is possibly more apparent in Karelia and other parts of Northwest Russia, where Soviet-trained cultural sector professionals are far from the latest trends of Moscow and St Petersburg, than in those cities with a strong tourist industry and at least a nascent cultural industry. Superficially it is most obviously apparent in the marketing and presentation of heritage organisations, where one might expect their prominence in cultural policy concerns to be reflected in presentation. These days, higher education and training of specialists in event management is fragmented and outdated.

### **3. IDEAS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Event tourism is a good option for developing destinations but it is extremely important to link the concept of sustainable development with the planning process of the event and community plans. Cultural events are not always conceived and organised in order to benefit sustainable regional tourism development. Those events are often organised as isolated actions, unrelated to regional economics and tourism development.

Often they are not designed as opportunities for reinforcing partnerships between local actors or SMEs. It would be nice to consider the impact of these activities on local development and job creation. Event organisers should increase the association for all regional actors—local authorities, inhabitants, SMEs, tourism representatives, educational institutions for fully achieving integration in a regional development strategy. This process is not possible without highly trained professionals.

In the current context of competition between tourist destinations, the hotel and catering offer is no longer enough to provide a sufficient competitive advantage. The tourism competitiveness of a destination relies strongly on its offer in leisure, culture, sport and the environment. This leisure offer makes it possible to better develop the regional natural and cultural heritage. The tourism offers must thus be more imaginative to bring “something extra” compared to other destinations. The expectations as regards tourism have changed: holidays are increasingly supposed to be a moment of discovery (cultural, environmental), of acculturation, informal education and maintenance of good health (in particular in relation to the ageing of populations). Therefore, it is logical that only professionals could provide tourists with cultural and natural heritage experiences.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

Cultural events are an important element of the cultural tourism ‘package’. They offer the tourist additional reasons to visit a place over and above the regular cultural product offered. As a result they can be the key factor in the tourist’s decision to choose one destination over another (Kushcheva, 2013). Furthermore, many cultural events take place in both large towns and small villages that might not of themselves feature on the cultural tourism ‘maps’ of many visitors.

Events provide an opportunity for the local people to develop and share their culture, which create a sense of the values and beliefs held by the individuals in a local community. Enhancing the cultural and heritage offering through sharing cultural stories and history with tourists and promoting historic places in a community can create a richer, more memorable tourism experience and boost the bottom line.

Joint activities with regional tourism, event and educational institutions would lead to institutional capacity building in training professionals in the field of event management and cultural tourism in the Baltic Region of Russia. The local authorities responsible for cultural development could partner with cultural tourism operators to produce recommendations that could be utilised better for regional and municipal development strategies in the field of creative industries and cultural tourism. Only then would growing numbers of tourists be willing to attend the cultural events and bring a valuable impulse to regional development.

## REFERENCES

Cultural and sporting events: an opportunity for developing tourist destinations and the tourist industry (European Commission, 2007). Available at [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/files/studies/msc\\_events/mcs\\_events\\_handbook\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/files/studies/msc_events/mcs_events_handbook_en.pdf) (Accessed 15 October 2014)

Developing best practices in event management. MAMK free-form publication, 2013 Available at <https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/65968/URNISBN9789515883858.pdf?sequence=1> (Accessed 14 October 2014)

Federal State Statistic Service (RosStat). Available at [http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat\\_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/publications/catalog/doc\\_1139821848594](http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/publications/catalog/doc_1139821848594) (Accessed 16 October 2014)

Kushcheva, N. (2013) Developing cultural tourism through festivals and events: MAMK free-form publication, 2013. Available at <https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/65968/URNISBN9789515883858.pdf?sequence=1>

NETOUR “Tourism in Russia”. Available at [http://www.netour.eu/wr-resource/ent17/1/FINAL\\_Tourism%20in%20Russia.pdf](http://www.netour.eu/wr-resource/ent17/1/FINAL_Tourism%20in%20Russia.pdf) (Accessed 15 October 2014)

Russian Travel Market Insights (Rutramarin) <http://en.rutramarin.ru/home> (Accessed 17 October 2014)

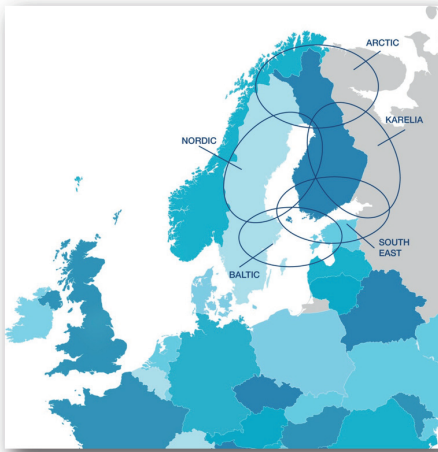
The Impact of Culture on Tourism, OECD 2009

UNEP (2002) Available at <http://www.uneptie.org/pc/tourism>

UNWTO (World Tourism Organization). 1999. Tourism at World Heritage Cultural Sites: The Site Manager’s Handbook. WTO: Madrid

## FROM BORDERS TO SHARED SPACE

**BOSS** Raja-alueiden  
TKI-verkoston  
vahvistaminen



Ekaterina Miettinen, Project Coordinator  
Karelia University of Applied Sciences  
ekaterina.miettinen@karelia.fi

Marja-Liisa Ruotsalainen, Project Coordinator  
Karelia University of Applied Sciences  
marja-liisa.ruotsalainen@karelia.fi

## INTRODUCTION

The project *From Borders to Shared Space – BOSS* strengthens co-operation between universities of applied sciences and the working life in the border districts. This is realised with the help of new implementation models within research, development and innovation. The objective is to build a steadily developing RDI partnership network for the border districts and to discover new operations models for the co-operation between universities of applied sciences and the working life, together with seven other universities of applied sciences operating in the geographical border districts (Boss 2013, 3). Karelia University of Applied Sciences focuses on the border districts of Russia. The districts of the Republic of Karelia and the south-eastern metropolis of St Petersburg are its special focus area. The duration of the project is 1 January 2014 - 31 December 2015. Each



participating university of applied sciences has their own budget and specific procedures to reach the joint goals.

President Petri Raivo of Karelia University of Applied Sciences (Karelia UAS) says that the defined development objectives for the Russian focus area are the development and commodification of services and expertise. Additional factors in strengthening expertise are consumer behaviour and networking competence. (Raivo 2014, 3) Karelia UAS manages several operations that are realised in co-operation with Russian universities and businesses, as well as their support organisations. These organisations refer specifically to administrative entities that enable unrestricted progress with the various actors in Russia.

In August 2014, there are 85 registered full time students at Karelia UAS who are either Russian or whose mother tongue is Russian. Of these, a significant proportion has chosen the English language Degree Programmes of International Business or Design. There are also individual students in the Degree Programmes of Health Care, Nursing, Communication, Tourism, and Environmental Technology.

Anneli Airola's publication in spring 2014 (2014, 24) shows that of all Karelia UAS's Finnish key partners, 21 have shown interest in improving their Russia expertise. Airola reports that businesses need international communication and marketing skills, as well as multi-cultural expertise, which means they need to offer training for their staff. The lines of business of these key partners can be roughly divided into forestry, information and communications, health and social services, industry, construction, and arts, entertainment and recreation (Statistics Finland 2014). A survey realised within the BOSS project in autumn 2014 shows that export businesses in the Joensuu region have decreased export to Russia during the past year. The challenge has been the sensitive political situation and sanctions, the final effects of which cannot yet be estimated.

In the BOSS project, Russia expertise includes native students' participation in project studies with commissions from interest group partners, key partners, operational partners, and alumni. **The BOSS project enables expert exchange to strengthen networks and to increase mobility. The objective is also to implement productive, efficient RDI co-operation models that strengthen working life oriented operation.** (BOSS 2013, 4) Operations for the BOSS project in autumn 2014 include a survey focusing on the needs related to the business operations of the Finnish key partners of Karelia UAS and North Karelian tourism entrepreneurs.

## NEW PRACTICAL TRAINING MODELS

In September, the project staff and teachers visited Russia, the Republic of Karelia, and partner institutions in Petrozavodsk. The objective is to concretise the co-operation in order to realise student pair practical training within the Degree Programme in Tourism and Degree Programme in Music, for instance. Future goals include contacts with other actors within the region of Republic of Karelia, particularly with organisations operating with these businesses. The representatives of Karelia UAS were Mikko Lahti, Lecturer in Tourism; Sanna Kurki-Suonio, Principal Lecturer in Music; Ekaterina Miettinen, Project Manager of BOSS; and Maria Vorobjeva, Project Trainee. The objective of the visit was to agree on joint tandem training or student pair practical training

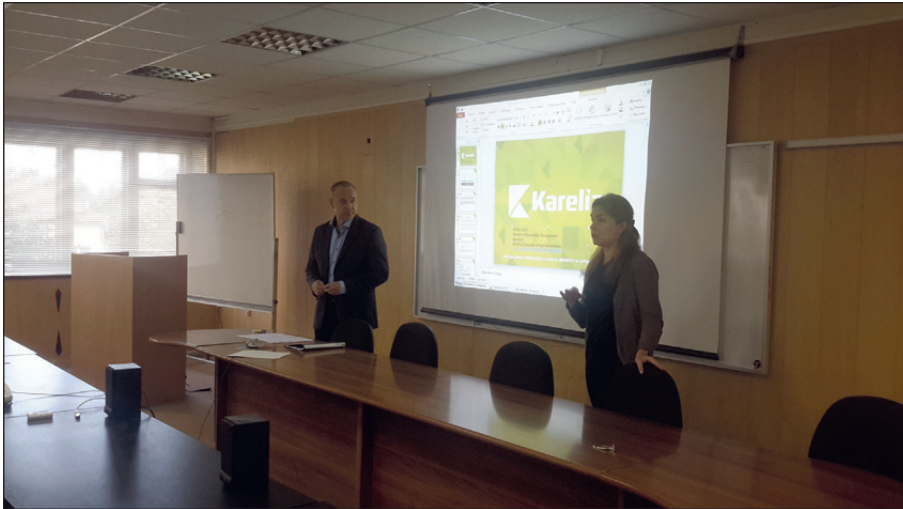
periods in the region of Petrozavodsk, to be implemented in summer 2015. The representatives also acquainted themselves with potential businesses and accommodation options for the three-month practical training placements. At the introduction events at the partner institutions, the students showed interest in completing their practical training in a business within tourism in North Karelia.

The tandem practical training can be completed in Finland or in Russia. The idea behind this type of training is that the students from each institution form a team. They complete their practical training together, possibly completing different tasks, but still in the immediate proximity of one another and at the same time. The term used for referring to this type of training is job sharing. The common language between the students would usually be English. In the course of the practical training, the students' language skills and knowledge of professional terminology would develop, as would the skills of the employers' representatives. Karelia UAS has experience with hosting international students who come from countries with an authoritative management style. It has been noted that working with a Finnish student promotes adopting socio-cultural customs in the working life in Finland, which makes the introduction to the new culture much faster. In addition to the benefits for the students, the employer community as well as the mentoring teachers will benefit from this *internationalisation at home* as the work requires becoming better acquainted with a foreign language, professional terminology, and different cultures.

Mikko Lahti, Lecturer in Tourism at Karelia UAS, gave an information speech at Petrozavodsk State University about the possibilities of practical training for students in tourism and about practical training in Finland as a part of their own university studies.



Picture 1. Students of the Petrozavodsk State University listen to information about practical training.



Picture 2. Mikko Lahti and Maria Vorobjeva telling about training in Karelia UAS.

During the visit, the representatives mapped out practical training and co-operation potentials with Petrozavodsk State Conservatory within the Degree Programme in Music. From the point of view of Karelia UAS's music education, the training placements could be considered as a part of a field work course organised as a part of summer studies as well as tasks managed by the Institute that functions within the Conservatory. These tasks may include recording archive transcription.

Karelia UAS has previous experience in organising training exchanges within several degree programmes. Tandem training with a Russian student or being appointed a personal student tutor in the co-operating institute may increase Finnish students' willingness to opt for a practical training placement in Petrozavodsk. The most important obstacle, at the moment, for student exchange is the lack of courses offered in English. Accommodation for the Finnish student, however, can be arranged through the co-operating institution for the duration of the training period.

Co-operation between Finnish and Russian partners requires knowledge of culture, social structures, and modes of action, which facilitates dissolving prejudices. Finnish higher education students do not often choose student exchange or practical training in Russia, and the obstacle is usually lack of knowledge of Russia and the existing possibilities. Tandem or student pair training aims at reducing these obstacles and increasing the international competence of Finnish students.

## CONCLUSIONS

The joint plans related to cultural tourism studies within the Degree Programme in Tourism and the Degree Programme in Music would benefit from further discussion. These studies would grant added competences for the students in the Degree Programmes in Tourism and in Music.

Among Russian students, there is still interest towards practical training exchange in Finland. However, accommodation during the training causes issues. In 2013, Karelia UAS completed a survey in which North Karelian tourism businesses were asked about their readiness and interest in offering training placements for Russian tourism students. The businesses will be contacted based on their survey answers.



Picture 3. From the left: Dean of the Tourism faculty of Petrozavodsk State University, Vladimir Shevchenko; Maria Vorobjeva, Sanna Kurki-Suonio, Mikko Lahti, Ekaterina Miettinen.

## REFERENCES

Airola, Anneli (2014). Elämä on yhtä oppimista – Näkemyksiä kansainvälistymisestä Karelia-ammattikorkeakoulun avainkumppaniyrityksistä. Karelia-ammattikorkeakoulun julkaisu B:17. From Borders to Shared Space (2013) – BOSS –hankesuunnitelma

Raivo, Petri (2014). Karelia-ammattikorkeakoulun Tiedotuslehti 1.

Tilastokeskus (2014). Saatavissa: <http://www.stat.fi/meta/luokitukset/toimiala/001-2008/index.html> (viitattu 2.10.2014).

# DEVELOPING WATERBORNE TOURISM IN THE EASTERN PART OF THE GULF OF FINLAND

Mervi Nurminen  
Director, NELI North European Logistics Institute  
Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences  
mervi.nurminen@kyamk.fi

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Gulf of Finland has unusual environmental conditions, increasing traffic and winter conditions that make it vulnerable to accidents.

Improving maritime safety is important to protect the environment, to ensure efficient and economical maritime transport and to develop maritime tourism and yachting.

Developing voluntary search and rescue (SAR) services, training rescue volunteers and strengthening the co-operation between operators are important factors that contribute to enhanced safety at sea.

The RescOp project combines the efforts of Finnish, Russian and Estonian experts to enhance overall safety in the Baltic Sea.

The sailing and boating possibilities have changed during the last 20 years in the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland and several international water tourism projects have been carried out in last ten years. Cargo volumes are increasing along with sailing and boating, which is also increasing the risk of accidents.

## **2. MANAGEMENT OF MARITIME SAR**

In terms of risk management, a simulation tool for analysing the performance of rescue fleets was developed and applied to both Finnish and Russian waters. An interactive tool was developed to support future strategic fleet planning for the RescOp project. The research focused on prevention and preparedness. The research was concerned with risk management related to maritime transport, the vessel traffic system, the maritime safety culture and the human factor, as well as winter navigation training, developing methods to combat oil and developing simulator cooperation. Developing the risk simulator network between Kotka, St Petersburg and Tallinn is a central task for maritime safety cooperation. A trilateral simulator rehearsal will be arranged where a probable marine accident on the Gulf of Finland and the joint rescue operations are planned and simulated. Project-level cooperation in maritime search and rescue related issues has already been initiated in several projects.

## **3. COMPETENCE OF CREWS NAVIGATING IN THE GULF OF FINLAND**

The Gulf of Finland is a congested area with limited depths and a lot of cargo traffic, which makes the advantages of cooperation between Finland, Russia and Estonia obvious. Joint simulator-assisted exercises between the project parties and VTS operators were one of the RescOp project's goals.

The exercises provided:

- A real life, practical learning environment
- Real human interactions
- Language training

The development of the tourism industry in coastal areas and the increased number of boating and yachting tourists has been tightly linked with maritime safety, communication skills and voluntary maritime rescue services.

In RescOp WP3 Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences has been focusing on developing actions for "Russia's Voluntary Maritime Rescue Society in Kronstadt" (RVMRS).

This has been an important common issue. A customs clearance point for leisure boaters was opened in Kronstadt last summer and the Russian inland waterways were opened to international boats last June. Interest in Russian waterways is constantly increasing. If safety issues are handled professionally and people can receive reliable information about maritime rescue and safety operations, they will be more willing to visit the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland. The Finnish Boat and Sailing Association has published instructions for leisure boaters entering Russia. The instructions include information about Russian inland waterways and services of guest marinas. The instructions were published in spring 2014 and were updated recently.

Voluntary maritime rescue services often supplement the official SAR organisations maintained by national authorities. It is an especially important service for leisure boaters; their minor problems, such as engine breakdown, can very often be handled by volunteers. In the Gulf of Finland, boating is an increasing trend.

The voluntary maritime search and rescue service has existed in Finland for more than 100 years. The Estonian Maritime Rescue Organization was established in 2010 and the Russian RVMRS was founded in 2008.



“Sailing”

#### **4. DEVELOPING WATERBORNE TOURISM IN THE EASTERN PART OF THE GULF OF FINLAND**

Sailing and boating possibilities have changed during the last 20 years in the Gulf of Finland as a whole and in the eastern part of it in particular. What is the situation today and what do sailors think of the sailing opportunities? There has been a lot of positive influence on leisure boating development, such as the open border between Estonia and Finland, which opened the entire Gulf of Finland to boaters without customs clearances. The Saimaa canal and Lake Ladoga, as well as recently opened Russian inland waterways, are a big attraction to sailors, who have already made 13 squadrons from Kotka to St Petersburg. In last ten years Kymenlaakso University of applied Sciences has worked with Kotka maritime centre and others to complete several international waterborne tourism development projects between Estonia, Finland and Russia. Leisure boaters often feel that they do not get enough information about projects and are not asked for their opinions on the required and expected service level.

A large number of proposals are still awaiting fruition.

## 5. SUSTAINABLE WATERBORNE TOURISM PROJECT

Two years ago, a Maritime Assembly took place at the Vellamo maritime centre in Kotka. There were approximately 50 participants discussing new ideas, how to improve safety and services for the increasing number of leisure boaters in the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland.

Together, we agreed to run a project to develop the small harbours on the Gulf of Finland to ensure a safe and reasonable route for leisure boats to sail round the Gulf of Finland.

The aim of the project is to increase waterborne tourism in the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland by improving safety, services and joint marketing of small ports and marinas.

The targets are:

1. Increase the accessibility of the region by enabling safe fairways
2. Jointly develop sustainable business activities for waterborne tourism
3. Increase awareness of tourist attractions via joint marketing activities
4. Optimise the economic potential of waterborne tourism while minimising the harm caused

The project consortium, which includes Finnish and Estonian partners, has been agreed and the next steps are as follows:

- Budget planning
- Negotiations for co-financing
- Negotiations with service providers
- Detailed WP planning (by WP coordinators)
- CB launch event in Helsinki on 28 October 2014
- Meeting in Turku on 6 and 7 November 2014

If the project is funded by the Interreg Central Baltic programme, it will start in summer 2015 and Russian partners will be included as associates in the first stage.

When the next CBC program is finalised we hope that we will also be able to include our Russian partners in project tasks and connect the inland waterways of all parties. The project is very large and has significant commercial and environmental value for all participants, coastal tourism and maritime safety.



“Narrow routes”



## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The situation in the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland today is that everyone, regardless of nationality, can sail practically everywhere in Finnish and Estonian waters and visit the islands and marinas. On the Russian side, part of the route is open for sailing and some harbours have been opened between Vyborg and St Petersburg, but still more information is needed and expertise and safety have to be improved in mutual cooperation.

If we aim to increase the number of leisure boats in the Gulf of Finland we need to identify opportunities to sail around the Gulf of Finland and to be able to overnight safely every thirty miles at a harbour with services such as fuel stations, electricity and clean water. The biggest challenge will be the opening of Gogland and other Russian islands to leisure boaters and other tourists. Until some of these challenges have been solved the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland will not be ready to greet the increasing number of tourists coming to the area.

# SAIMAA UAS STUDENTS' STUDY TRIP TO SAINT PETERSBURG – EXPECTATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Ilkka Lehtola, Lecturer  
Saimaa University of Applied Sciences  
ilkka.lehtola@saimia.fi

Sirpa Sahinjoki, Lecturer  
Saimaa University of Applied Sciences  
sirpa.sahinjoki@saimia.fi

## INTRODUCTION

Planning field trips is always challenging, especially when you plan them in an uncertain and variable time. Uncertainty results from new students, an unknown partner, an unpredictable learning environment and a large city with logistical challenges.

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences organizes a course entitled “Tourism in the Neighbouring Regions” (“Lähialuematkailu”) (3 ECTS). The course is intended for first-year students of tourism and hospitality and is available as an optional course. The requirements for the course are an interest in the Russian language and culture, and in Russia and Saint Petersburg as tourist destinations. The structure of the course consists of theoretical lessons in Finland and a study trip to Saint Petersburg.

Students' perceptions and expectations for the trip were not studied in depth before departure. The focus had been more on organizing a successful trip with an interesting programme. We were trying to balance the supply and offering of hospitality organisations, Saimaa UAS' interests and intuition of a good way of implementing experience-based learning and experiential learning.

As part of this course, 34 students in the first and second years of their degree programmes in tourism and hospitality were given questions about their expectations for the study trip to Saint Petersburg, which took place at the end of November 2014, their thoughts about Saint Petersburg as a tourist destination and how they prepared for the trip.

Students wrote about Saint Petersburg's image, places, eating and shopping, transportation, expectations and comparisons with their other experiences, mainly in a positive tone. Other expectations that they mentioned related to meeting people and possibly making friends, the university and educational system with teaching, university life, Russian language, culture and manners. They prepared for the study trip by preparing documents needed for the trip, searching for information about Saint Petersburg, Russia and Finland, getting acquainted with travel arrangements and accommodation, and preparing their presentations for the hosting university.

## **I. EXPECTATIONS AND PREPARATIONS FOR THE STUDY TRIP**

Students were asked about their expectations about Saint Petersburg as tourism destination, the content of the study excursion, and arrangements and preparations students made before the study trip.

### **I.1 EXPECTATIONS ABOUT SAINT PETERSBURG AS A TOURISM DESTINATION**

*“Saint Petersburg is a very interesting city and located so close, but still I haven't found out any information about it.”*

Students wrote about the image, places, eating and shopping, transportation, positive/negative expectations and comparisons. They found Saint Petersburg to be a historical city that has many things to see. The city was expected to be beautiful during the winter or summer time. The Hermitage museum was one of the places that was mentioned many times. Saint Petersburg was mentioned as culturally rich city. What they knew was that there are millions of people from all around the world, so it is a very international place. Some of the students had expectations of the local cuisine and possibilities for shopping. The transportation that they expected to use was taxi, bus or metro while moving around city because there is so much traffic and they expected it to be difficult to drive around. Saint Petersburg is a much cleaner and safer place for tourists compared to Moscow.

*“Saint Petersburg is a big, crowded, noisy and cool place where lots of people go on holiday, especially for cultural holidays.”*

## 1.2 EXPECTATIONS ABOUT THE STUDY EXCURSION TO SAINT PETERSBURG

*“My expectations for the trip include: It’s going to be neat/awesome.”*

One student mentioned meeting people and possibly making friends, the university and educational system with teaching, university life, Russian language, culture and manners. Many students said that it would be interesting to meet Russian students and even to make friends with them. Students expected to familiarise themselves with the Russian school system and the differences compared to Finland, and to gain experiences of interesting lessons. They were interested in seeing university facilities, lunch and the type of studying life that local students have. Learning culture, manners and language was mentioned several times.

*“And it’s going to be eye-opening (because I have never been to such a big city before)”.*

## 1.3 ARRANGEMENTS AND PREPARATIONS THAT STUDENTS MADE BEFORE THE STUDY TRIP

*“I searched for information about Saint Petersburg on the internet and talked about the city with friends who had already been there.”*

Students said that they prepared the documents that they needed for the trip, searched for information about Russia and Finland, got acquainted with their travel arrangements and accommodation, thought about how to succeed in time management, made preparations for their presentations at the host university and searched for information about Saint Petersburg. They checked the validity of their passports and applied for visas and travel insurance. They looked for the locations of interesting places, read our schedule and considered how they would use their spare time. It was important to consider how much money is needed, where to change money and what the best exchange rate is.

*“We were supposed to prepare to say things about our school, as well as project-based learning and projects we have done.”*

## 2 CONSIDERATIONS

Looking round Saint Petersburg in a few days gives only a superficial idea of the large city. It is possible to choose the “Top 5” destinations or attractions to see – the Hermitage museum is number one. Other destinations may include the Church of Saint Isaac, the Church of Spilled Blood and the Kazan Cathedral. Russian cuisine is extremely diverse and nourishing and its origins go back centuries. Those destinations are all within walking distance from each other, making them easily accessible independently.

The dining scene is a mixture of traditional restaurants recreating the atmosphere of Imperial Russia and modern, trendy establishments appealing to the new generation of affluent Russians. Cuisines from the former Soviet republics in central Asia and the Caucasus are well represented and sushi is nowadays very popular in Saint Petersburg. The number of restaurants is somewhere between 4000 and 5000, which gives enormous choice for all – as well students with low budgets. Places for shopping vary from small, cosy shops, local fairs and markets to huge shopping centres. Saint Petersburg has an extensive system of streets and railway services, as well as a tram and metro system, complemented by taxis. Increasing numbers of private cars make the city's rush hours very bust in the mornings and late afternoons. For students, the Saint Petersburg metro is the most convenient way of reaching places – and the cheapest.

Russian students have always been very hospitable, which has surprised our students. Independent Finnish students are not used to somebody guiding them to new places. Several of them made friends and have met these friends since. Differences in learning cultures, manners and hierarchy have been always matters of lively discussion.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

As mentioned earlier, the study trip's preparations focused on organising the trip, initiating cooperation with the partner university and preparing the documents that were needed for the trip. All of this took a lot of time.

We teachers should always remember that study trips are an important part of experiential learning and memorable pedagogy. We should consider study trips more pedagogically.

It would be great if we were always able to go through students' expectations and plan the assignments according to Kolb's learning theory, considering students' learning as a whole process. At its best, learning on study trips should be a "goal-directed, conscious and holistic growth process, which would offer the possibilities to learn by experiencing. At the same time the group in the study trip supports while facing new challenges". (Lehtonen 1998. 97–98)

One should remember that joy and recreation from experiences are part of experiential learning and memorable pedagogy. During study trips, students have the opportunity to gain experiences in our neighbouring country and enjoy themselves.

Could it be possible for us, as teachers, to challenge ourselves to plan and execute even more experimental and memorable study trips where learning by enjoying is taken into consideration?

### **REFERENCES**

Lehtonen, T. 1998. Kunnioittava kohtaaminen elämyspedagogisessa työssä. In T. Lehtonen (ed.) *Elämän seikkailu*. Jyväskylä: Atena, 97–98



KYAMK  
University of Applied Sciences