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Involving Oulu UAS students in incoming staff mobility

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In autumn 2017 a new way of arranging an incoming staff exchange was applied in the Department of Natural Resources. Department's long-term cooperation partner Grampus Heritage and Training Ltd ran an Erasmus Plus project PRIDE (Partnership for Rural Improvement and Development in Europe). Within the framework of this project eight British guests visited Finland. Their study visit consisted of lectures and field trips. They were welcomed by Oulu UAS staff but during the field trips they were hosted by two Oulu UAS Natural Resources students. The students received credit points for developing their organisation, communication, language and interaction skills.

PRIDE-project

[Grampus Heritage and Training Ltd](#) is a non-profit organization located in Cumbria in North West England. They run projects concerned with culture, heritage, archaeology and the environment. One of their projects is [PRIDE](#), an adult education staff mobility project. PRIDE has several hosting partners all over Europe who welcome trainers from other countries. One of these hosts is Oulu UAS. Within the framework of PRIDE two staff members of Grampus Heritage and Training and six trainers and advisors from [National Trust](#) (photo 1) from the British Lake District took part in a study visit in Oulu and Kuusamo region to learn about Finnish natural and cultural landscapes, access to nature and the ways of taking care of nature and natural resources. The National Trust group consisted of a project manager, general manager, estate manager, an advisor and two rangers.



PHOTO 1. National Trust group (photo: Rachel Forsyth)

Study visit program

The aims and the program of the study visit were set in collaboration between the staff of Grampus and the Department of Natural Resources. The itinerary was planned in an AC meeting with Grampus representative, Oulu UAS representative and agreed on by the National Trust group leader. The program included an introductory day and lectures at the Department of Natural Resources. Later the guests visited Rokua Geo Park Visitor Centre, Oulanka (photo 2) and Syöte National Parks, Kuusamo Forest Management Association and Kierikki Stone Age Center. During these visits the guests met and discussed with their Finnish colleagues. They also visited two farms and Koiteli rapids, took the Pieni Karhunkierros Trail in Oulanka and experienced some berry and mushroom picking in Rokua. The costs were covered by Grampus from Erasmus Plus funding.



PHOTO 2. Oulanka National Park (photo: Rachel Forsyth)

Students' input

From the beginning it was decided that the practical arrangements, i.e. finalizing the schedule and arranging the transportation and accommodation during the field trips, will be made by Oulu UAS students. The possibility was offered to third year agronomist students. From the ones who showed interest, two students were chosen based on their previous studies and personal interest in nature, hiking and other nature related hobbies. They also had the required language skills and driving licence.

During the field trips the students drove the group with a hired van and guided them. This made it easy for the guests to enjoy their tour without having to worry about the timetable, being in the right place at the right time or finding accommodation or place for lunch or dinner. It was all taken care of by the students. The students also introduced the group to moving in nature, hiking, berry and mushroom picking and explained about the Finnish way of fishing and hunting. Both students are experienced in these activities and they also prepared themselves in beforehand by gathering information in English.

Benefit from study visit

The students got study points. They learned a lot about British way of taking care of nature and environment as they participated in the discussions between the guests and their Finnish colleagues. They developed their organisation, language and intercultural interaction skills. The week also added to their self-confidence.

The Department of Natural Resources was able to allocate its staff resources better while the students took care of the practical arrangements of the visit. For the department the benefit lies also in contacts to a working life organization in the field. The potential for practical training was

discussed and the lecturers learned about British nature conservation and nature use. The Finnish organisations visited by the guests expressed their appreciation for a chance to meet and discuss with their British counterparts. Oulu UAS was thus able to further their internationalisation as well.

One of the guests, Project Manager Rachel Forsyth from National Trust, compiled a report of the tour where she wrote:

My lasting memory of Finland will be how connected people are to the natural environment. They have a concept called [Everyman's Right](#) which allows anyone to ski, cycle, hike, forage and camp. You can hike and berry pick and then take advantage of a formal fire pit in the woods (firewood supplied). It is a stark comparison to the burnt out cars and litter our ranger teams are regularly faced with, but gave us hope for the future on connecting people with our countryside.

We also saw how technology is supporting users of the countryside and managers. With a predominant terrain of tree cover, and limited use of landmarks, smartphones are now relied upon for navigation in recreational outdoors access.

Cooperation continues

PRIDE-project was finished by December 2017 and Grampus Heritage and Training applied for PRIDE II. The funding was confirmed in August 2018. The partnership changed a little and consists now of partners from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Germany, Italy and Oulu UAS from Finland. Staff in the Department of Natural Resources is looking forward to a new group of visitors and to sharing the responsibility of hosting the group with students.

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