



Identification, Dissemination and Exchange of good practice in
Local Employment development and promoting better governance

Lapland Centre of Expertise for the Experience Industry (LEO) – Rovaniemi, Finland

Background on leader organisation

The Centre of Expertise Programme was launched in 1994 in eight different Centres of Expertise across the country. Due to its subsequent success the Government decided to extend the programme in 1998 and 2002 by appointing new centres of expertise and by increasing the number of fields of expertise in the existing centres. There currently exist 22 centres of expertise covering 45 fields of expertise, which have been appointed for the period of 2003–2006. The field of expertise for each locality is chosen by *local* actors and policy makers.

The Lapland Centre of Expertise for the Experience Industry (LEO) focuses on developing tourism industry into an experience industry through incorporating the potential of new media/ICT, entertainment and design industries in the development of tourism and experience products.

Purpose of the project

The experience products of Lapland are based on the nature and culture of Lapland. From this base, innovative cooperation between information technology, new media, tourism, design and entertainment industries enable developing the experience industry into a business that will have both national and international significance to Lapland in the future.

Objectives:

- To develop the experience production and businesses in Lapland
- To coordinate experience excellence
- To produce practical tools for business life and educational institutions
- To increase employment and trade on experience branches
- To promote cooperation between research sectors, higher education and industries
- To boost experiential elements in present supply and to contribute to creating new experience products
- Strengthen the existing businesses, create new businesses
- Strengthen the regional competitiveness.

Geographical focus

Finnish Lapland with national and global point-of-view

Project partnership

The Centre of Expertise Programme is operated by Lapin Elämystuotanto Oy, which is owned by the joint municipal authority of Rovaseutu, the University Foundation of Lapland, the joint municipal authority for education in Rovaniemi, Business Developer eero Rovaniemi, Rovaniemi Polytechnic, Kemi-Tornio Polytechnic, Lapin Markkinointi Oy (*Lapland Travel Marketing Ltd.*), Suomen Matkailun Kehitys Oy (*organisation responsible for developing Finnish Travel and Tourism industry*), Kemi-Tornio Regional Development agency, Joint Municipality of Authority in Eastern Lapland, Tunturi-Lappi Development and Pello, Ylitornio and Sodankylä municipality.

The projects are developed and implemented in partnership between local businesses, educational institutes and public authorities.

Activities

The Centre develops better circumstances and operational environment for enterprises which operate on the experience industry. Lapland Centre of Expertise operates through a model called *Triple Helix* which is based on a cooperation triangle of businesses – universities – public sector. Actions taken offer added value to universities and polytechnics as well not forgetting the public sector, municipalities and regional developers.

By summer 2004, the experience cluster of Lapland will have seen the launch of approximately €60 million worth of projects that support the development of the experience economy.

Target groups

The main target group are local businesses. However, the project also aims to benefit local educational institutes and public sector organisations.

Particular successes

The overall income from experience industry has increased by 90% between 1994-2002 in Lapland and the number of new tourism related businesses during the same time frame has increased by 30%. Tourism and leisure industries also have the greatest influence on the regional competitiveness and economy after the forest and metal industries and retail sector. The tourism industry significantly contributes to the strong regional image of Northern Finland.

The project has also created a number of new experience and tourism industry products. The *innovativeness* of new products is based on the integration of different fields of know-how for instance the use of information and communications technology to create services which support an experience product. New products (e.g.):

- Aurora Borealis Testing Lab is the world's first testing environment for wireless experience and tourism services, as well as for mobile terminal devices, where the testing focuses on users and customer interfaces in place of technical testing. Testing Lab offers its client-enterprises the opportunity to benefit from a functioning Testing Lab network, a testing chain from terminal device manufacturers to tourist companies. Testing is performed in an international environment – the Rovaniemi district, the Lappish ski resorts and tourism regions where it is possible to test services and terminal devices in a real environment with real users. The concrete products developed by the lab (to mention a few) are Northern Lights Alarm System and Mobile Wilderness Guide.
- The Christmas tourism product of Lapland is developed through cooperation across business fields aiming to strengthen the position of Lapland as the top Christmas tourism destination in Europe. The website, www.santaclaus.fi contains a comprehensive ensemble of stories, facts and other material relating to the genuine experience of Christmas in Lapland.
- The special reindeer bone porcelain and the reindeer tourism as a whole are good examples of product development projects based on the culture of Lapland.
- Other themes for developing experience products include snow and ice, crafts, culinary experiences, music, fishing and hiking. Animation and cinema production, experiential environments, safety and professional expertise are other areas of emphasis in Lapland.

Lessons learnt

- The most successful experience products are based on authenticity
- Lappish experience products make the most of local culture, local stories, way of living and exoticism
- Cooperation between business life and research is challenging because of the different language; the more we discuss with each other the more we know about each other
- The better the action is defined and planned, the easier it is to implement
- Prioritize by focusing on core competencies
- The fragmented field of projects needs to be unified, there are too many on-going, inefficient projects
- In order to motivate different parties, the benefits have to be clearly presented