



VANTAA, Finland

The Urban Growth Project/The jobs and Skills Ecosystem

Key facts

The Urban Growth Vantaa project is about co-creating and testing new innovative solutions with the aim of supporting both local SMEs and their employees in employment, upskilling and digitalization, as well as developing a local jobs and skills ecosystem.

Timeframe and funding

Timeframe: 1/2019 - 4/2022.

Funded by Urban Innovative Actions (UIA). UIA is an Initiative of the European Union promoting pilot projects in the field of sustainable urban development.

City and county population

270 000 inhabitants

Governing body

The City of Vantaa

Link

<https://uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/vantaa>
<https://urbaaniakasvua.fi/about-project/>

Main objectives

The key objectives of the programme are:

- To co-create innovative solutions combining elements that support company growth and enable social investments, responding to the needs of Vantaa-based SMEs and their employees in the era of technological change.

It works according to four overall goals:

1. SMEs receive stimulus and support in sustainable growth, competence development and technological change.
2. SMEs start investing time in employees' education and training.
3. SMEs' employees, especially those with low skill levels, learn new skills and earn new degrees.
4. SMEs' efforts in growth and social investments are supported by a firm-specific project account manager.

Content and mode of delivery



The City of Vantaa faces a challenge of low-skilled workplaces and an under-educated workforce. This causes risks for the Vantaa-based SMEs' competitiveness, especially in the era of digitisation and automation. The problem has been addressed in Vantaa with the help from the Urban Innovative Actions initiative, which offers urban authorities the possibility to take a risk and experiment with innovative and creative solutions. An interesting aspect of the project is the set-up as a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT). Not all potentially eligible Vantaa-based companies were divided into a treatment and a control group. The RCT will help to compare the two groups in an impact evaluation of the project at a later stage.

The city of Vantaa has been involved in the co-creation of the programme together with education providers, businesses and research institutes. The co-creation has taken place in three consecutive cycles addressing employment, competence development and digitisation issues. The result is so-called co-created training services that combine elements supporting company growth and social investments. The main idea of all co-created training services is to bring training closer to working life and vice versa. The project has reached 70 SMEs and provided training or support to 714 adults.

The Urban Growth Vantaa project has paid attention to the needs of lower-educated adults, who cannot in all cases be referred to as learning adults, but rather working adults. Their learning needs differ from those of so-called continuous learners, as they may need stronger guidance and support measures than adults who actively seek learning opportunities. An example of supporting lower-skilled employees in continuous learning is the co-created apprenticeship services programme. Typically, apprenticeships are targeted at individuals as an opportunity to earn a vocational degree. Urban Growth Vantaa's solution is to contact companies to introduce the training idea with its benefits to the SME decision makers and employees simultaneously. Both their needs are recognized and addressed.

Due to SMEs' resource constraints, competence development needs to be easily accessible. SMEs need a single external partner. In response, the Urban Growth Vantaa project launched the idea of a project account manager, who remains in contact with a company representative in the long term. The project account manager can help companies and employees in their specific learning needs, whether they are vocational or academic.

Stakeholders



The main stakeholders in the project are:

- City of Vantaa
- A range of education institutions and research institutes, including the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Vantaa Vocational College, Etna – The Research Institute of the Finnish Economy, and the Labour Institute for Economic Research LABORE.
- Helsinki Region Chamber of Commerce
- A range of private companies, including ISS Services Ltd, Infocare Ltd., Solteq Plc., Finnair Cargo Ltd., and Vantii Ltd.

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