

An active actor in regional development

Supporting and enhancing the health and welfare of its citizens...

The Faculty of Social and Health Care is one of the three faculties of Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK) that operates in the west coast of Finland, in the Satakunta region. Since its establishment in 1992, SAMK has focused its resources not only on high-quality education, but also on RDI (Research, Development, Innovation).

One of the aims of universities of applied sciences is to give advantage and reinforcement to the regional development, to furthermore strengthen local business and enterprises. Any conclusions or exact results achieved in RDI, are directly integrated in education and curricula in order to answer the needs of regional social and health-care services.

With 1,600 students and 110 staff, including teachers, office workers and RDI personnel, the education and supportive activities do have a daily challenge in coordination. New ways to complete the studies are constantly searched for, and ongoing RDI projects can give brand new possibilities to teachers to plan the courses in a different way. The students may get totally unique chances to advance through the studies and gain new experiences in the learning process.

The Satakunta Region, as well as Finland, are meeting new challenges of demographic change. SAMK has recognised in the RDI strategy that development of technology presupposes diversified expertise and cooperation. Particularly, it is essential that older people – and also society – have a chance to influence the development and implementation of technology.

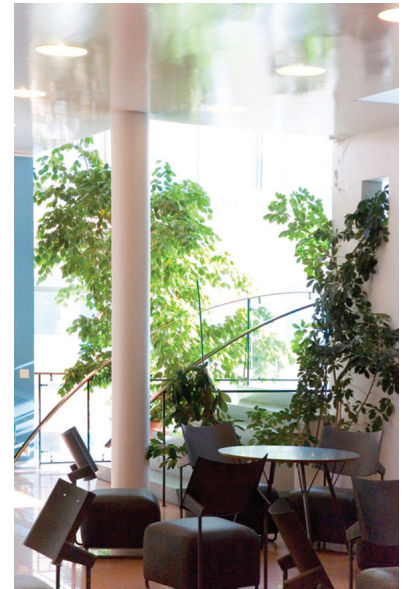
Providing people opportunities for participation and influence helps to ensure that technology suits their everyday life, increasingly independent activity and safety. The decision to use technology should be based on conscious consent, and solutions must be to the benefit of people. In Finland, main ethical principles in elderly care are self-determination, resource orientation, equality, participation, individuality and security. These principles are also essential in the development of technology for older people.

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In the ongoing project supported by TEKES (the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation) the usefulness of new technologies in service-centre environments of the elderly are studied. The environments are at the same time residential environments for senior citizens and working environments for staff. The aim of the project is to develop a user-centred building environment that can be used to enhance security, usability and comfort of the residents.

In this project special emphasis was put to the active agency of the elderly and to acknowledge their perspective on the use of gerontechnology (gerontological technology).

SAMK also participates in the SURE project, where new socioeconomic methods of urban rehabilitation in deprived urban areas are developed.



One of the aims is to support user-centred and user-driven planning by doing research among people living, working or using one city area. The SURE network is a space for learning and exchange, structured around core themes such as tourism, enterprise, physical improvements, strategy and community.

SURE is designed to support officers and politicians from municipalities in working hand-in-hand with their counterparts of other towns to explore whether there are better or different ways of tackling the commonly shared problems. Preliminary study focuses on sensitive groups like children, families with small children, children with special needs, the elderly and drug-users.

Within this task, human impact assessment (HuIA) will be done. HuIA is predictive examining the impact of decisions still at the planning stage. This predictive assessment enhances cooperation and seeks new user-orientated solutions to city planning. Our aim as a partner is also to facili-



Local politicians and stakeholders discussing about Mood for Work in a project representation

tate discussion of values, aims, welfare and environment.

Mood for Work – alternative employment

The objective of the Mood for Work project is to increase the awareness of companies operating in the Satakunta region, and of their opportunities for employing mental health rehabilitees. Through this project, employers will acquire information of rehabilitees as possible employees and find out about government subsidies for employing them.

The university works in cooperation with employers and different authorities such as rehabilitation centres, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland and national employment administration. A new guidance and education model has already been created for employers and rehabilitee job applicants to support the employment of special groups.

The results of the project have been outstanding, as the influence in general attitudes has been highly encouraging in every target group. Furthermore, the education model has attracted international interest in applying the model for other groups of alternative employment, such as immigrants in the EU.

Soteekki – strong together

Soteekki is the service centre of the Faculty of Social Services and Health Care of SUAS, started as an externally funded project in 2008, and settled in 2010 as an integral unit of the faculty. Soteekki offers welfare services to companies, organisations and private customers. The services are carried out as student work under the supervision of faculty teachers.

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Students of Soteekki are from the fields of nursing, healthcare, social services and physiotherapy. The services are fee-based and continuously developed. New ideas and service products are regularly launched. Soteekki produces multiprofessional tailor-made services based on customer needs and wishes. Soteekki’s target is to contribute the tasks of SAMK in regional development by enhancing entrepreneurship, developing business skills of its students and encouraging the start-up of new enterprises already during their studies.

SAMK has developed together with regional, national and international actors the Research Programme for 2010-2013. Based on this programme in the Faculty of Social and Health Care three development groups has been nominated in order to focus the thematic issues. Topical and active collaboration with stakeholders has already built up several ideas for both short and long-term projects as well as themes or even items for thesis.

New options are available for SAMK also because of the upcoming change in ownership. From the beginning of 2012 SAMK will become a limited company, as currently the municipality of Pori and the neighbour municipalities are the biggest owners. This fresh situation can give new aspects to the regional development, but will also demand even more accurate integration between RDI and education. Satisfied and highly skilled students are the primary goal of SAMK, and in this goal a major success has already reached, as the students of SAMK are very appreciated and sought after in the labour markets.

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