

# Structural Funds support for forestry sector training in Eastern Finland

(Structural Funds newsletter for Eastern Finland 1/2017)

Eastern Finland is one of the key wood production areas in the country. Significant investments are being planned in the region and its neighbouring areas that will considerably increase the consumption of wood. Forests, refined forestry products and forest-related production chains are also some of the most essential spearheads of intelligent specialisation in the region of Eastern Finland. A strong focus on forestry sector education, training and development is a precondition for exploiting this value chain.

## Forest machine operator training takes centre stage

Basic training for forest machine operators in Eastern Finland is provided by North Karelia College Valtimo and South Savo Vocational College Esedu as well as Savo Consortium for Education and Ylä-Savo Vocational College in North Savo. Some 580 students are currently completing a vocational upper secondary qualification in forestry at these institutions. The attraction of forestry sector programmes is underpinned by development work focusing on the practical implementation of training and personnel commitment to turning out highly skilled labour for the sector.

## Improved quality and efficiency in forestry and timber transport logistics programmes

Structural Funds support has played an important part in developing teaching in the forestry sector. ERDF-ESF project pairs have been launched in both South and North Savo as well as in North Karelia to improve the quality and efficiency of forestry and timber transport logistics (on regional council and ELY Centre funding).

In North Savo, Savo Vocational College and Ylä-Savo Vocational College have started developing the training in cooperation with entrepreneurs in the sector and forestry companies. The goals of the project pair are meeting the growing needs for raw wood in the region's wood-processing industry, securing the availability of skilled labour for companies, and creating new entrepreneurship and increasing the attractiveness of the sector. Major procurements of machinery and equipment will be made to attain these goals, and a mobile forest machine learning environment will be commissioned. These procurements will support the introduction of a new learning environment known as the 'Farm'. This environment will allow the students to practise working with a forest machine in an entrepreneurial spirit and bring their vocational skills up to the standard required in the labour market. A track on which drivers can practise operating and loading a timber lorry is being set up in Kuopio. Its length will be some 8 km, and it will enable hands-on learning in authentic but safe conditions. The constantly improving simulator pedagogy also supports the student's transition to authentic work environments.

South Savo Vocational College Esedu's digital leap in forestry sector teaching started in 2003, as a Simago trailer containing forest machine simulators was purchased on Structural Funds support. This mobile learning environment has been a crucial factor in developing teaching activities. The current project pair titled Metsiin mobilises the latest technology to support forestry sector teaching. The ERDF project invests in 3D technology for simulation-based teaching, develops new tools for the monitoring and documentation of on-the-job learning, modernises classrooms used for teaching technology subjects and digitalises the machine shed. The ESF project supports the development of teachers' pedagogical competence. The purchase of a timber truck simulator and a training site set up as part of this project will make it possible to launch training related to timber lorry operations at Esedu, thus also securing the availability of skilled labour for logistics supporting the forestry sector.

In North Karelia, North Karelia College Valtimo has been involved in a number of projects aiming to develop forestry sector instruction, including [metviro](#) and [metsimu](#). Its partners have included several forest machine and simulator manufacturers, universities, universities of applied sciences and institutions providing teaching in forest machine operation. In the next phase, the actions to improve the quality of teaching will focus on developing skills in forestry tractor operation. The investment project (ERDF) will set up a training environment for forestry machine operator training, 'a training field for skills teaching', that contains four field simulators and two practice tracks for forestry tractors, which will crucially increase the students' hands-on practice time for developing these skills. The teaching development project (ESF) focuses on operator training and its guidance and supervision. The aim is to get the students to learn faster, develop a better understanding of the financial and production-related impacts of their working methods, and teach them to analyse their own work and identify their development needs. The services and training environments

developed and productised in these projects will be piloted and tested in vocational education and training as well as in training provided for operators already pursuing the occupation.

**Adequate funding for education as a challenge**

Agriculture and forestry, and bioeconomy in a wider sense, are seen as a significant future opportunity for the entire region of Eastern Finland, also in the future. This opportunity and the shared ambition of all stakeholders are also a good foundation for the future development of education and training. One of the greatest challenges will be the adequacy of funding for vocational education and training and the education providers' possibilities of constantly delivering high-quality teaching.

Further information on the projects: <https://www.eura2014.fi/rriiepa>

[Effective wood supply chain investments](#) (A71832), [Effective wood supply chain](#) (S20795)

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[METSIIIN - development project for the forestry education, investments](#) (A71619), [METSIIIN - development project for the forestry education](#) (S20528)

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[Development of forest machine operator learning environment for CTL \(cut to length\) harvesting machinery](#) (A72063), [Development of harvester operator education and learning environment for CTL \(cut to length\) harvesting technology](#) (S20743)

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