



Oulu Sote Labs

The internationally recognized innovation, testing and development environment OuluHealth Labs is the result of the Oulu Sote Labs project. This technologically advanced environment is available for use by public healthcare institutions, enterprises and educational institutions. The project was a collaborative effort by the Northern Ostrobothnia Hospital District, the City of Oulu and the Oulu University of Applied Sciences. Oulu Sote Labs competed as a finalist in the category for modernising health services in 2019 in the European Regiostars Awards, where the EU awards its best and most innovative regional projects of the year.



Modernising health services in the European vanguard

How can businesses efficiently develop new services and devices for the specific needs of the healthcare sector if they cannot compare and improve solutions in an authentic environment? How can the public sector improve its operations if it does not have the tools and channels to present new development ideas to businesses that make products?

The Oulu Sote Labs project set out to find answers to these difficult questions. The answers resulted in the OuluHealth Labs innovation, testing and development environment, which has become a permanent part of public healthcare and healthcare education in Oulu. The goal was to achieve

new structures for fostering innovation in the sectors of social welfare, healthcare and medical sciences. The project succeeded in bringing together public and private sector actors in a mutually beneficial way.

The project stands as a good example of the open-minded Finnish culture of experimentation, which aims to create new solutions by finding new networks and forms of cooperation. The project deployed the latest technology comprehensively. The 5G mobile testing network spearheading the utilisation of digitalisation serves as a good example. Virtual technologies are also used for modelling the ongoing Future Hospital 2030 project. The operating model has enabled fruitful co-development activities between businesses and public institutions.

A unique team spirit guarantees a successful project

Project Manager Timo Alalääkkölä from the Northern Ostrobothnia Health Districts praises the team spirit in the project, which enabled a level of cooperation that transcends traditional organisational boundaries.

“Becoming a finalist in the Regiostars competition would not have been possible without the expertise and efforts of the Oulu University of Applied Sciences and the City of Oulu. These partners decided to take a risk and open their own operational cultures for critical assessment by other organisations.”

All three organisations are now operating under the umbrella of OuluHealth Labs. The unit enables the controlled participation of healthcare professionals in the different stages of product development by businesses. An example is the testing of development-stage products in an authentic environment.

Excellent results achieve international recognition

The Oulu Sote Labs project was recognised internationally by being chosen to be a finalist in the European Regiostars Awards competition. The EU’s best and most innovative regional development projects are awarded in the competition. The 2019 competition assessed 199 excellent projects from all around Europe in five different categories. From each category five projects were chosen as finalists. Oulu Sote Labs charged its way to the finals in the category of modernising health services.

The Oulu Region has had earlier success in the competition as well. The development company Micropolis from the municipality of Ii was awarded in 2017 competition for its project InnoHiili. The project was considered as the most successful in significantly reducing carbon dioxide emissions in Europe. Three Finnish regional projects were chosen as finalists in the 2019 competitions, which is a testimony to the high level of ambition of Finnish regional development work.

Objectives

- **Building innovation, testing and development processes, which enable the user-oriented development of products and services in the care pathways of health and welfare services.**
- **Enabling the engagement of businesses, professionals and citizens to bring forth new ideas, perspectives and development needs as part of new innovation processes.**
- **Increasing the growth and internationalisation opportunities of the region’s businesses, organisations and educational institutions.**

Results

- **OuluHealth Labs, an internationally recognised innovation, testing and development environment for the healthcare and welfare sectors, which is now an established and permanent part of the operations.**
- **A defined, productised and priced selection of testing services for the new testing environments has been created.**
- **OYS TestLab, a new innovation, testing and development environment, in which a digital testing platform has been built as part of the testing environment.**
- **Oulu WelfareLab, a unit providing test cases in the City of Oulu’s health centres and even in patients’ homes.**
- **OAMK SimLab, where the testing environments of the Oulu University of Applied Sciences have been integrated. The simulation environment can be used for conducting test cases in multiprofessional training.**

The use of biochar in order to reduce emissions from fur farms

Project code: A70185

Northern Ostrobothnia Hospital District,
The City of Oulu, Oulu University of Applied Sciences

1.9.2014–30.6.2017

Budget: 947 521 €

ERDF funding from the Council of Oulu
Region: 663 265 €



Oulu Regional Council allocates funding for regional development from the ERDF

Oulu Regional Council is a Managing Authority for the Sustainable growth and jobs 2014–2020 – Finland's Structural Funds Programme in Northern Ostrobothnia.

European Regional Development Fund's (ERDF) main objectives are to improve the competitiveness of SMEs and produce and use the latest information and knowledge.

'Sustainable growth and jobs 2014–2020 – Finland's structural funds programme' has two priority axes and seven specific objectives for ERDF. Each project must deliver at least one of these specific objectives.

ERDF priority axes and specific objectives:

1. Competitiveness of SMEs
 - Generating new business
 - Improving transport and logistic connections that are important to SMEs (Eastern and Northern Finland)
 - Promoting growth and internationalisation of enterprises
 - Promoting energy efficiency in SMEs
2. Producing and using the latest information and knowledge
 - Development of the centres of research, expertise and innovation on the basis of regional strengths
 - Strengthening innovation in enterprises
 - Developing solutions based on renewable energy and energy-efficient solutions

More information on Structural Funds in Finland from the dedicated website www.rakennerahastot.fi