

## **Naturefin Invited to Present Good Project Practices at an International EU Seminar**

On behalf of Naturefin project, the City of Heinola in Finland was invited to showcase responsible project implementation methods at an online seminar organized on December 4 by the EU's Interreg Europe funding program, which gathered around 200 experts from across Europe. The City of Heinola was asked to present its approach to catering and venue arrangements in project activities, specifically, how projects adhere to responsible serving, nutrition, and dining practices, and how sustainability is reflected in the choice of meeting and event venues. The topic was requested to be presented through the Naturefin project, which was launched in May earlier this year under Interreg Europe funding, coordinated by Corvinus University of Budapest in Hungary.

The project manager of Naturefin in the City of Heinola, Jaana Kuula, explained in the seminar how the project handles catering, dining, and venue booking practices in everyday work as well as in separate meetings and events. Kuula emphasized that the same practices applied in the city's general operations are followed in the project's daily work, and that sustainability can be planned even more thoroughly for dedicated events. According to Kuula, both environmental and social responsibility are highly important.

In her speech, Kuula highlighted good practices such as the city's 25% lunch benefit for staff and the opportunity to use the services of a local social enterprise for daily lunches and meeting catering, which also supports elderly housing and dining. Kuula noted that the food offered is largely plant-based, tasty, diverse, high-quality, and healthy. Furthermore, it is produced and served responsibly, respecting Finnish food traditions and avoiding unnecessary waste and disposable dishes. Similar services are also procured from other local businesses to support employment. Kuula also pointed out a Finnish specialty, the right to coffee breaks written into employees' collective agreements. Heinola complies with this rule and additionally offers free coffee to staff, which greatly contributes to social interaction and well-being at work.

For the upcoming international Naturefin project meeting in Heinola next June, Kuula shared that sustainability will be implemented in various ways. At least one project dinner is planned to be held in a renovated historic building, with the entire dinner designed to be as ecological as possible, using domestic and locally sourced ingredients and dishes that honor traditional recipes. Local drinking water will also be highlighted, noting that according to UNESCO studies, Finland, and specifically the Salpausselkä region, has the best drinking water in the world.

Next summer's Naturefin meeting will also showcase Heinola's forestry expertise, and weather permitting, foreign guests will be taken on a visit to a local forest. The aim is to hold a related discussion session in nature, accompanied by a light lunch in the midst of clean nature and water.

The goal of the good project practices seminar organized by Interreg Europe on December 4 is to encourage project actors to consider sustainability in all project activities. The seminar is based on the EU's early-year publication "7 Steps for Greener Project Activities" and a related survey

conducted among member states. According to the guidelines, projects should favor online events, responsible venues, low-carbon travel, reduced consumption and recycling, as well as responsible catering and communication practices. Additionally, projects should, for example, include information in event invitations and announcements about how sustainability will be implemented in the event.

**More information of green project activities:** <https://www.interregeurope.eu/news-events/news/7-steps-for-greener-project-activities>

#Naturefin #InterregEurope @Heinolankaupunki

**Contact:** Project manager Jaana Kuula, City of Heinola, Business Development Services, Tel. +358 (0)44 7975809, Email. [jaana.kuula@heinola.fi](mailto:jaana.kuula@heinola.fi)