

# University-Business Collaboration

## Structures and Processes Towards Sustainable Partnerships

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University of Applied Sciences





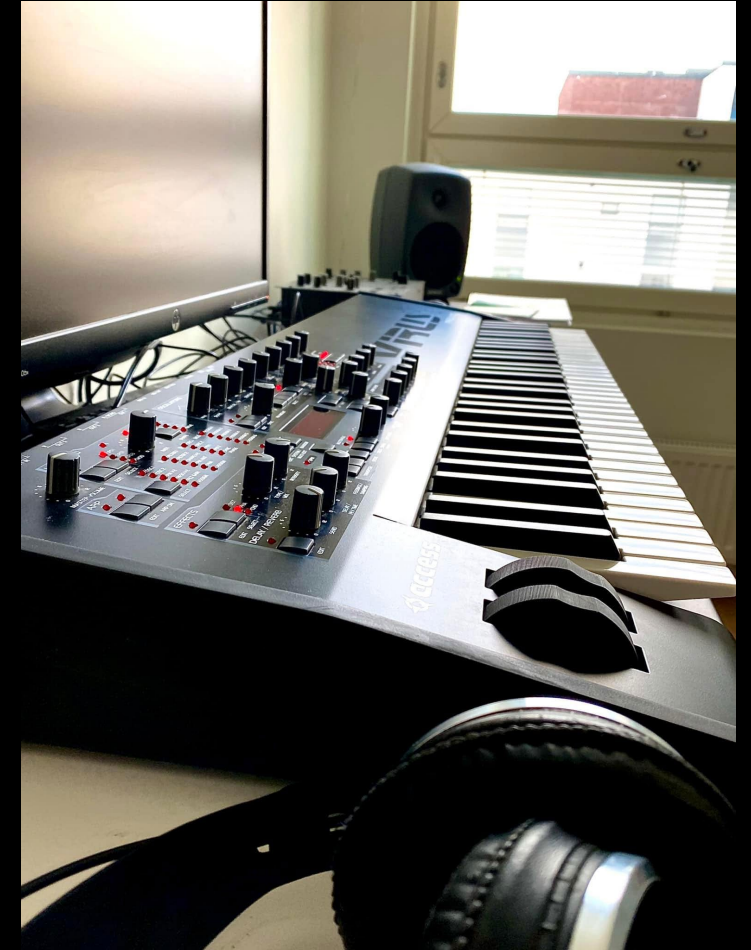
# Ilkka, who?



Work



PhD Studies



Hobbies

Today's focus:

# University–Business Collaboration (UBC)

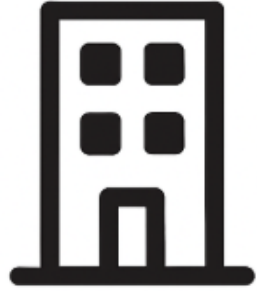
Education-driven focus.

- 1) Basics of UBC
- 2) My Research Framework
- 3) Case-example from Laurea
- 4) Conclusions and takeaways



## Student's challenge?

How to find a  
meaningful job and  
learn the skills needed  
in working life?



## Companies challenge?

How to attract talented  
future employees?

How to develop operations?

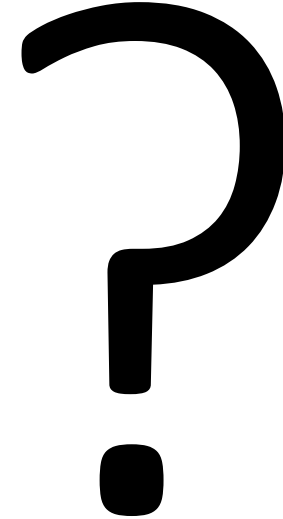






## Higher Education Institutions challenge?

How to ensure that degrees  
remain relevant, up-to-date,  
and attractive to students  
and employers?



# University-Business –collaboration as a solution?



UBC is a **dynamic phenomenon** that requires **ongoing adaptation** and alignment from all parties involved.

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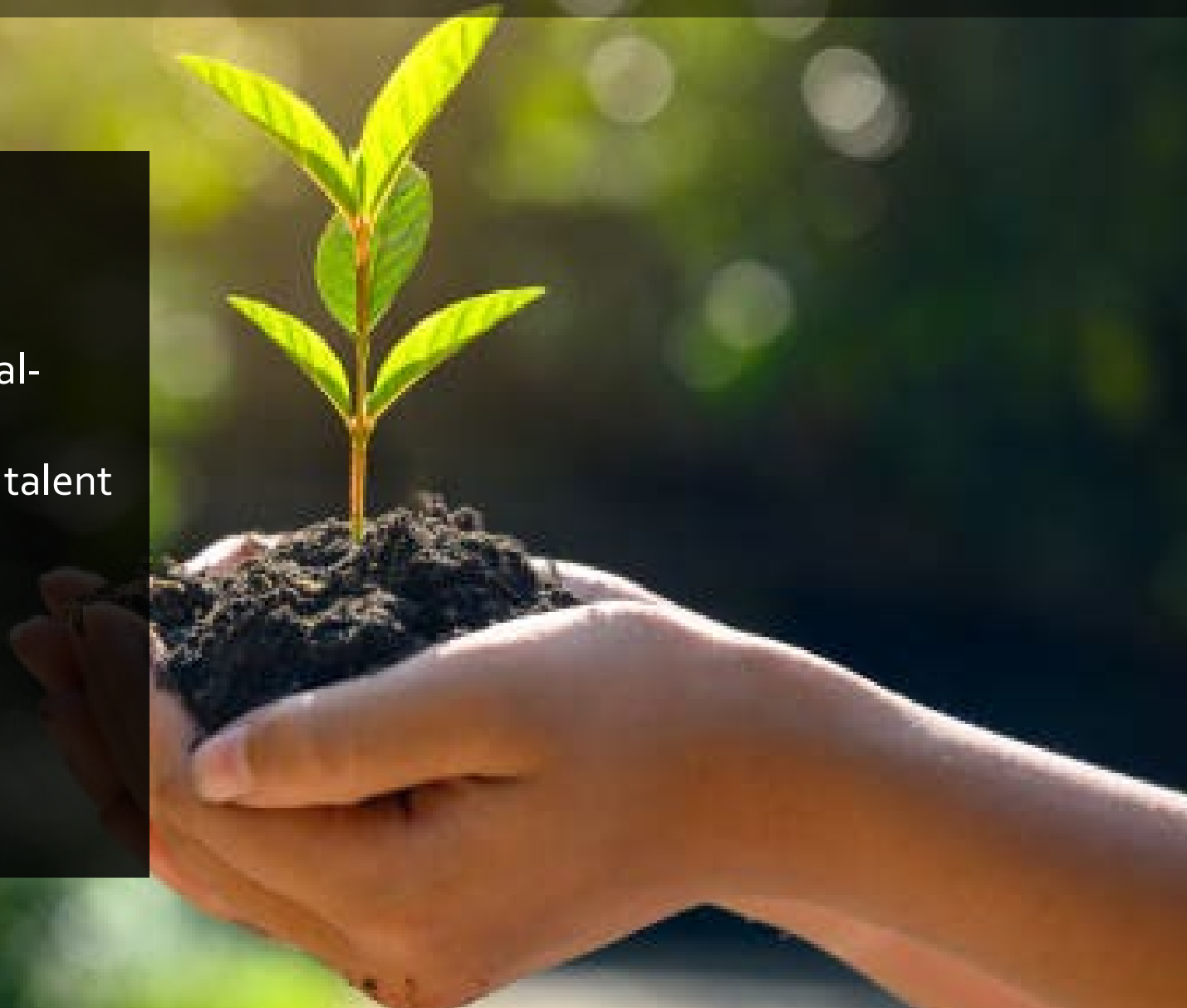
# University–Business Collaboration (UBC)

- Collaboration between universities and businesses has a long history.
- In recent years: a trend towards systematizing collaboration models.
- Many forms: internships, thesis projects, guest lectures, events, projects, etc.
  - Both Benefits and challenges (“dark sides”)

# University–Business Collaboration (UBC)

## BENEFITS

- Supports student learning through real-world experience.
- Helps companies get access to future talent
- Improve HEI's attractiveness
- Strengthens the link between higher education and societal needs.
- Promotes innovation and regional development.



# Education-driven University–Business Collaboration (UBC)



## RISKS & CHALLENGES

- Conflicting timelines
- Difference in expectations
- Unequal power dynamics & interests
- Short-term focus / Lack of resources
- Dependency on external funding
- Academic freedom vs. institutional autonomy

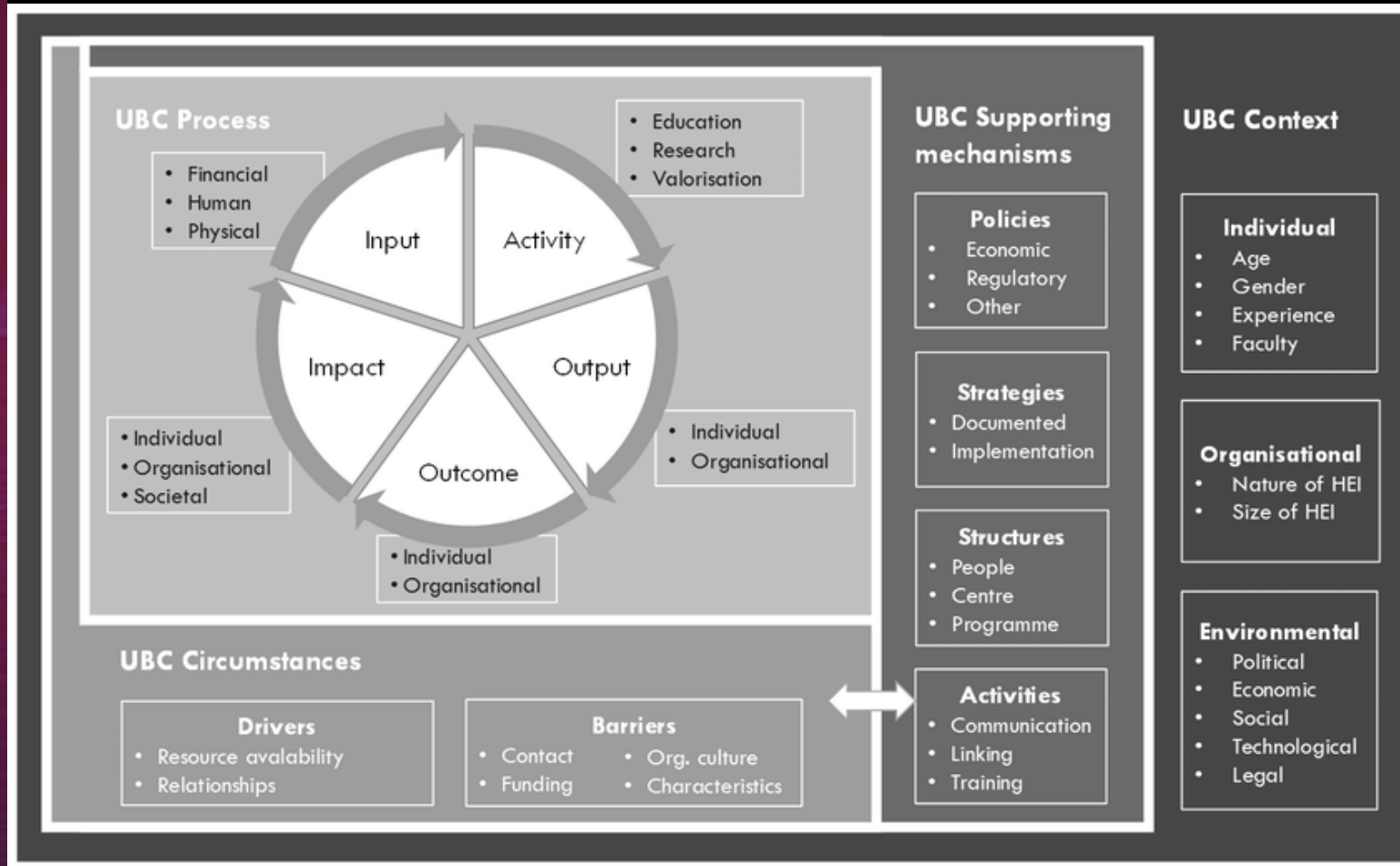


# Starting points for my Research

- Extensive existing research (mainly RDI focus)
  - Societal push for closer collaboration
  - Evolving higher education practices (strategic partnership models)
  - Economic drivers for partnerships
- A research Gap on a European level



# Theoretical framework 1/2: UBC Framework (Galan-Muros & Davey 2019)



*Galan Muros & Davey (2019) Basis of UBC and UBC Ecosystem*

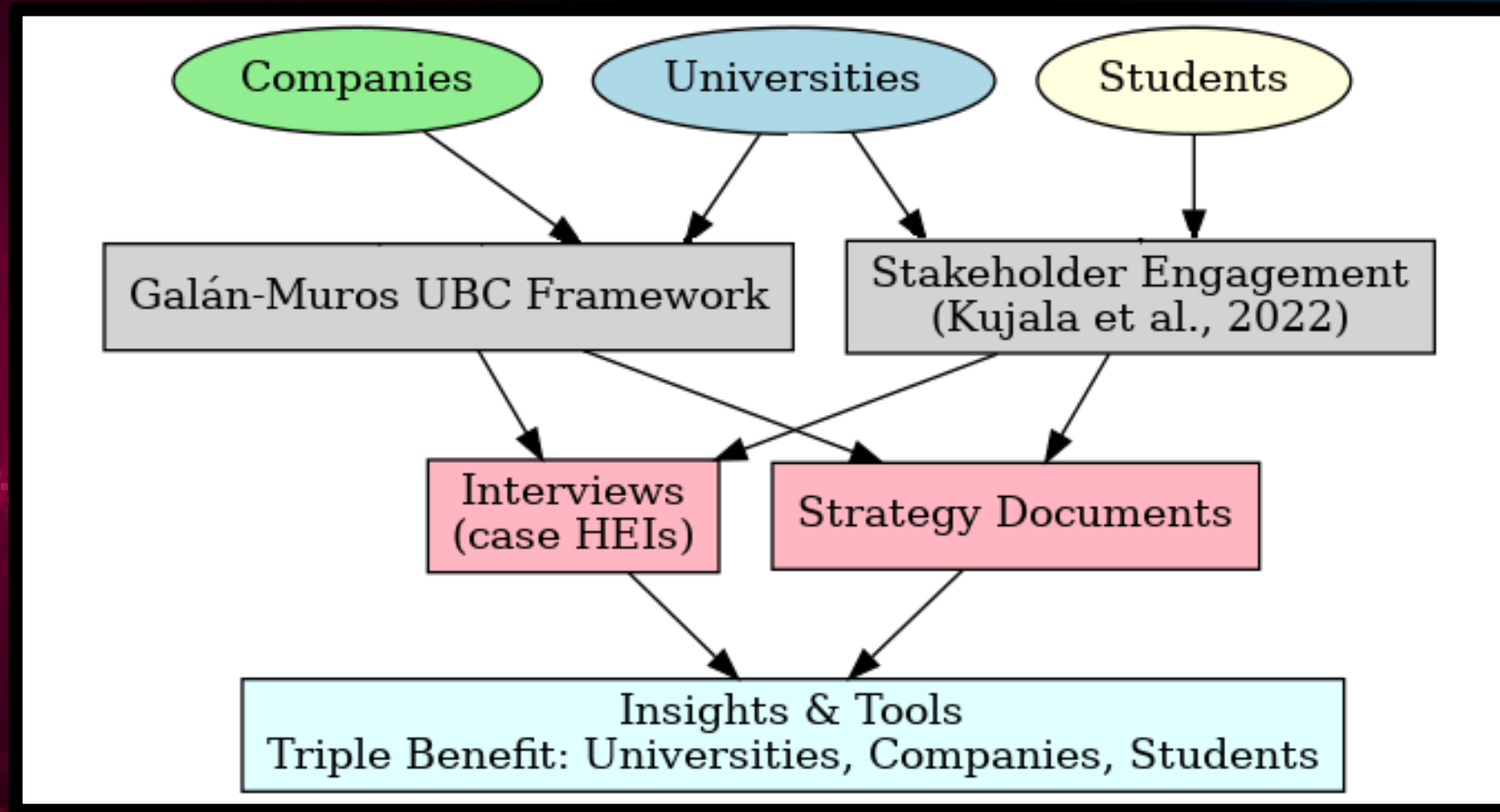
# Theoretical framework 2/2: Stakeholder Engagement Research (Kujala et al. 2022)

**Table 5.** Guide for Stakeholder Engagement Research.

Component	Aims	Activities	Impacts	Research gaps
Moral	Legitimacy, trust, and fairness Corporate responsibility and sustainability Stakeholder inclusion and accountability	Stakeholder empowerment Democratic activities	Enhanced social and ecological well-being Giving voice to stakeholders Stakeholder value	Broader variety of philosophical underpinnings to acknowledge the moral component Stakeholders in their full complexity
Strategic	Financial performance, risk management, and value creation Knowledge creation and learning Reputation building	One-way and two-way communication activities Co-creation Supportive organizational structures	Improved efficiency and competitive advantage Innovation Enhanced reputation	Enhancing the relational view Heterogeneity of stakeholder relationships Including marginalized and non-human stakeholders
Pragmatic	Context-dependent problem-solving and decision-making Organizational and societal development	Collaborative and dialogic activities Relationship cultivation	Broad stakeholder involvement Inclusive accountability and disclosure activities Achieved resolutions	In-depth understanding of the practice of stakeholder engagement in different contexts Iterative and ongoing processes of stakeholder engagement

*Guide for Stakeholder Engagement Research p. 1162 (from Kujala et al. (2022), p. 1162, highlighted green by Kurkela)*

# My research framework in a nutshell:



Source: Kurkela (2025) on-going PhD-research

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# **Case example: Laurea UAS Key Partnership concept**



Missio: "Työelämä"

Visio: "Työelämä"

LAU  
REA

# -AMMATTIKORKEAKOULUN STRATEGIA 2035

MISSIO:  
**Luomme kestävää  
tulevaisuutta yhdessä  
työelämän kanssa**

## FOKUSALUEET

- 1 Teemme tulevaisuutta hyvinvointia vahvistamalla
- 2 Vahvistamme osallisuutta ja turvallista yhteiskuntaa
- 3 Ennakoidemme ja luomme polkuja kestäviin tulevaisuuksiin
- 4 Edistämme teknologian kestävää roolia tulevaisuuden tekemisessä

KRIITTINEN MUUTOSTARVE 1:  
Yhteiskunnan kasvava osaajapula edellyttää uudistumista ja tulevaisuuden kansainvälisen työelämäosaamisen kehittämistä

KRIITTINEN MUUTOSTARVE 2:  
Laskeva julkinen rahoitus edellyttää kestävää kansainvälistä kasvua

KRIITTINEN MUUTOSTARVE 3:  
Tulevaisuus vaatii systemaattisen ja vastikkeellisen yritysyritysten tiivistämistä

KRIITTINEN MUUTOSTARVE 4:  
Kestävä uudistuminen tapahtuu digitaalisuutta ja teknologiaa hyödyntämällä

VISIO:  
**Kansainvälisesti  
kilpailukykyinen  
työelämäkorkeakoulu**

Nykyhetki

2035

# Laurea's Key Partnership Team



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**Saara Suominen**

Specialist

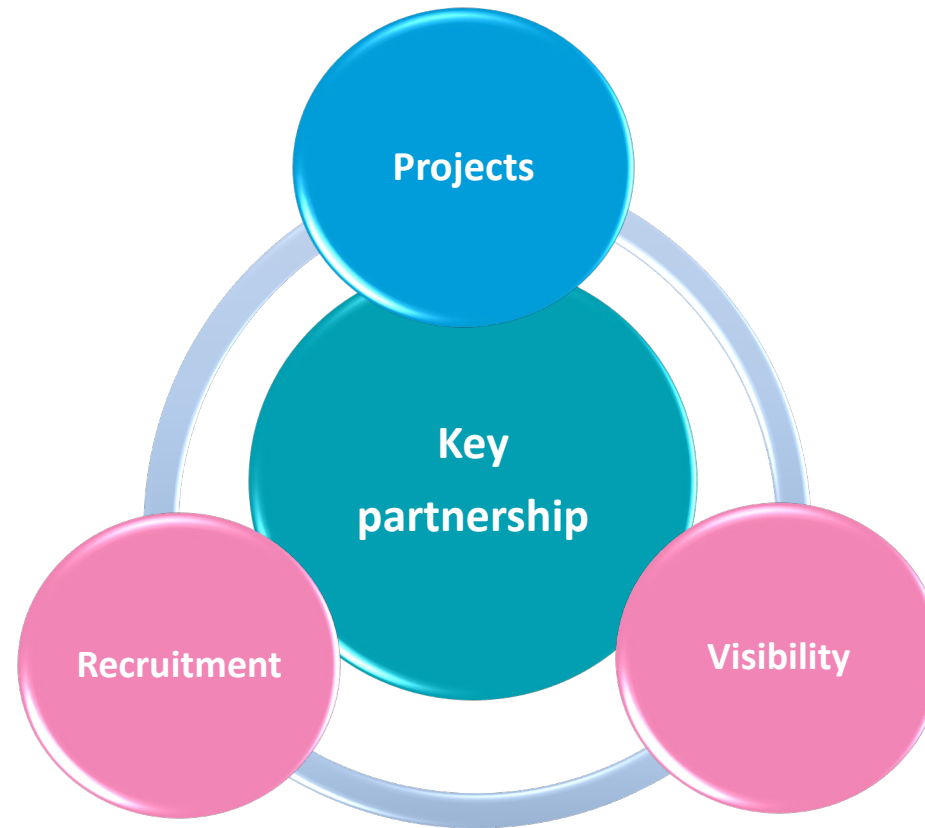
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Tel [+358988687184](tel:+358988687184)



# Laurea UAS

## Key Partnership model





# Laurea's Key Partners



**Terveystalo**



**VARMA**



**VINGIT**



**KCITYMARKET**  
JÄRVENPÄÄ

ILONION CARE



**Bonne**



**LUMON**



**LOIHDE**



NORDIC  
BEAUTY  
INC.



**nivos**

**KESPRO**

**Kela|Fpa**



**TALÉNOM**



**Dieta**



**HKSCAN**



Lastensuojelupalvelut  
**Laaban Oy**



**Caverion**

targetpartners+

transmeri



RAVINTOLA  
**FACTORY**

**TRADENOMIT.**

**barona**

**ECKERÖE LINE**



**Safetum**

**RAMIRENT**



**efecte**

**digia**

**CGI**

**NOKIA**



# Laurea's Key Partnership Model: Selected Highlights



- Strategically prioritized + dedicated team
- Strong network of influential companies
- Partnership process and management model
- Projects (+LbD)
- Project booking calendar
- Events connecting students and employers
- Long-term partnership development
- Communication and visibility
- Benefits the students, companies & Laurea



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# Conclusions

## Selected success Factors in University–Business Collaboration:

- 1) Package your services into clear offerings
- 2) Implement clear processes and responsibilities
- 3) Understand and adapt to business timelines and practices
- 4) Communicate actively to build trust

*Disclaimer: These are not official research results – just perspectives and selected highlights based on my own experience and early observations for this session. I hope they're useful 😊*

@ilkkakurkela





# Thanks!



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