

Expert exchange provides fresh ideas to teaching

Kristiina Pääkkö from baking industry in Vocational College Lappia spent a fortnight in Bruges, Belgium in November 2014 on a worklife period. She broadened her scope of knowledge about chocolate as raw material as well as teaching practices in Belgium.



Shadowing teaching in Syntra West and training the staff how to make Finnish products serve as wonderful examples of expert exchange. Making chocolate, visits to chocolate factories and meetings with chocolate professionals brought forth new ideas and techniques to both processing raw materials and teaching, states Kristiina Pääkkö.

Kristiina Pääkkö would like to express her special thanks to the highly esteemed Syntra West where they had prepared a really diverse program for the visitor.

- They have serious know-how there. The skills they define as basic, constitute profound professional skills in Finland. Many of the teaching staff have run businesses of their own and published field-related literature.

Ms. Pääkkö's personal mentor was the 72-year old chocolatier **Guido Hosten**. His still ongoing career has lasted nearly 50 years.

- Chocolatier Mr. Hosten freely opened up his skills and knowledge: ideas, techniques, various work methods and even recipes. He even graciously gave a recipe and working methods to making liqueur pralines; I plan to use all this as something new in my teaching and product development, says Ms. Pääkkö.



Tradition and respect for the chocolate and confectionary industries are clearly present in teaching in Belgium.

In Belgian chocolate and confectionary teaching long traditions and teachers' and students' respect toward their line of business are clearly present and evident.

-I sincerely hope that the well-started collaboration between our educational institutions shall continue and cover student exchange in the future. The exchange period provided excellent networks considering potential on-the-job learning placements for Lappia.

Ms. Pääkkö arranged a Finnish evening to the staff of Syntra West and some local entrepreneurs. She prepared eight Finnish products from cinnamon rolls to yeast bread. Ms. Pääkkö is a multiply skilled person who teaches anything from baking bread to making layer cakes. The Belgians found such scope of skills rather hilarious.

- Ms. Pääkkö compares and states that the difference in teaching in our countries is that in Finland we have to be jacks of many trades. On one hand this prepares us to making products from sausages to chocolates. On the other hand needing to master the entire range of grocery production, we find it difficult to focus and emphasize in any one particular field of expertise.

A woman with a long teaching career, Ms. Pääkkö, has been interested in her field since her childhood. Experience in teaching has given her patience towards students' cyclic learning processes.

- Learning does not always happen here and now. It is more than easy to become frustrated when it seems that one's students don't make much progress. However, out of the blue one day students reveal their true skills and manage to make something quite stunning.

Ms. Pääkkö is genuinely very proud of her students.

-In Lappia bakery we have high criteria in both working methods and product quality. The students at our department are highly motivated and quite a few of them show extracurricular interest in training baking. In the course of several years our students have made it to the final round in Finnish Championships of the Skills Competitions. This year Lappia will be represented by Hannes Toppi.

The expert mobility program of Leonardo da Vinci Project, funded by the European Union Lifelong Learning Programme, enabled Kristiina Pääkkö to take part in the worklife period in Belgium.