

**Interreg  
Europe**



European Union | European Regional Development Fund



# Innovation Vouchers

*Director, business development and business environment  
Niina Immonen  
Business Tampere*

## Online Discussion

13 July 2021 | Online



# Who's talking? – Niina Immonen



- **Director, Business development and business environment** in Business Tampere, Finland
- Horizontal responsibility for developing the business services
- 20 years experience of business development
- PhD (Adm.Sc), certified business advisor and business services broker
- Special knowledge of co-operative entrepreneurship, social economy, social enterprises, networks and ecosystems



*Outdoor activities, horse riding, salsa, family, nature, forest, cooking and farming*



# 1/3 Innovation voucher in Tampere region

- Project carried out by Business Tampere (economic development agency)
- an **ERDF – funded** project, January 2016 – June 2018
- additional funding from the City of Tampere
- before the project, preceded by preliminary functional and legal surveys - **IMPORTANT**
- the budget of the project 1,7 M €, of which **1,0 M € was distributed as vouchers** to companies (max 5.000 € / company)



# 2/3 Innovation voucher in Tampere region

- the aim was to **lower the threshold to use innovation- and growth services** and enable the management of a voucher system on a digital platform
- during the project, **217 vouchers** were distributed to 205 companies
- **over 400 service providers** participated in the form of product cards
- no competitive tendering of service providers – **free choice** by the customer
- granting in the order of applications or by lottery
- an electric platform aiming at **fast and digital process**

# 3/3 Innovation voucher in Tampere region

## ➤ Main objectives:

- An **open and market-based** innovation voucher system, utilizing a **digital platform**
- A co-operative process among all the parties involved (Voucher applicants, service providers, administrator)
- A **dynamic process** reacting to companies' innovation needs

## ➤ Principles:

- **"An opening to something new"** for the company
- Supporting growth and innovation activities
- Max 5.000 €/company
- 5 different themes

IoT

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

RENEWING INDUSTRY

SMART TRAFFIC AND MOBILITY

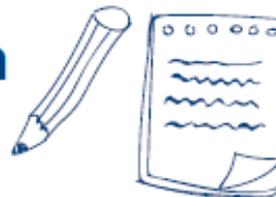
SOLUTIONS FOR SMART CITY DEVELOPMENT

# This is how the Innovation Voucher system works

Before you issue a voucher, check the following:

**Administrator checklist**

- Legal adviser analysis
- Funding in order
- Voucher applicant terms set
- National service voucher and out-sourcing (PSOP) system under control
- Communications plan set



The Administrator makes

Service search - announced

Product card check and approval

Service launched and voucher application call announced

**Confirmation**  
→ Notification for the service provider and vouchers for the applying business

**Acknowledgement**  
→ The Administrator acknowledges and transfers the payment to the service provider

**Monitoring and impact reporting for funding providers**

Communications: • for participants • for authorities • for funding providers • for the media/press

Preparations made

Services for the voucher system

Voucher search up and running

Innovations underway

Final sprint

Lasts no more than 5 months

The service provider joins the Tilaaivastuu Reliable Partner service

The service provider registers with the system and makes product cards

The applicant checks the service category

**Opening discussion**  
→ Service provider and applicant talk about what constitutes a suitable service

The applicant applies for a voucher

**Innovation Voucher agreement**  
→ Applicant and service provider reach an agreement

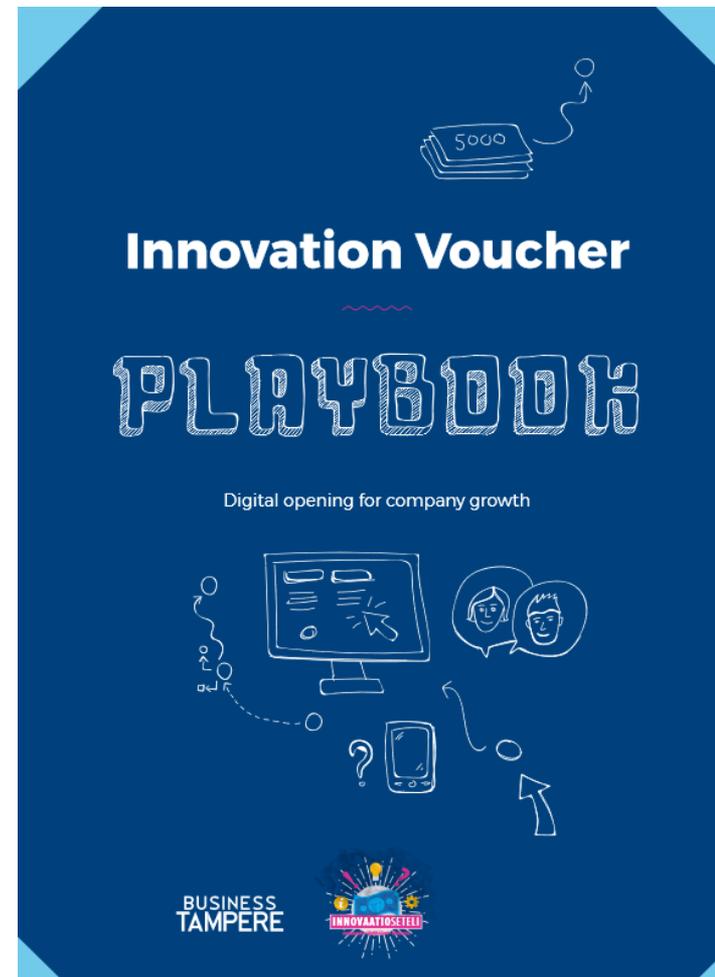
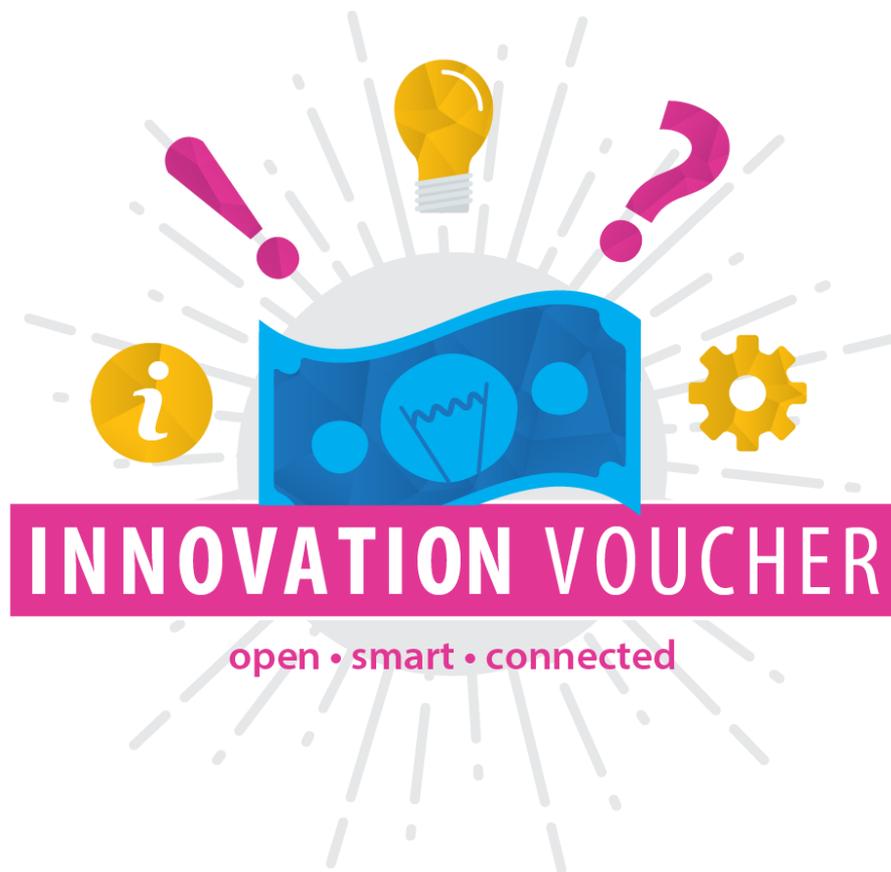
**Done!**  
- The applicant acknowledges receiving the service and gives feedback on the work performed

The service provider reports (voluntarily) and submits a VAT invoice to the voucher applicant

★ Need for business development



<https://business tampere.com/entrepreneurs/innovation-voucher-experiences/>



**Watch a video about innovation  
voucher user experiences**

**[https://www.youtube.com/  
watch?v=K6TI77WBIhQ&t  
=52s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6TI77WBIhQ&t=52s)**



## 4. Recommendations

1. Targeting and combining with national and regional strategies
2. Digital platform and minimizing handmade work
3. Openness to all serviceproviders (minimum criteria) allowing local markets to develop as well, no tendering, customers own choice
4. Service/product cards to clarify services (kic-services difficult to productize)
5. No pre-selection – applying order or lottery (administrative costs minimum)

# Evidence of success

**217**

Vouchers

**50%**

of companies starting export operations or entering a new market area

**17%**

of companies have increased their turnover considerably

**64%**

of companies expect a considerable boost in turnover

**27,5**

jobs created due to voucher activities

## COMMENTS FROM THE USERS:

*"An easy and fast process"*

*"A concrete tool with real impact"*

*"Enables new innovation activities in our company"*

*"We were able to buy professional know-how we were lacking ourselves"*