

# Promoting sustainability through education and social innovation

by Erik Rosenblad



Sanna Teinilä has been working for about two years at the non-profit expertise company EcoFellows Ltd. (Ekokumppanit Oy in Finnish). At this moment, she is involved in several projects where circularity and waste prevention are at the core and where innovation and new ideas play a big role. However, from her perspective, the ideas that most often provide sustainability solutions are the human-oriented ones, related to our behaviors and how we interact with others and the physical world around us.

- Innovation does not have to be hi-tech to work, she says.

Sanna Teinilä has a background in food economics and marketing, and in one of the projects she is working on – FUSILLI – her qualifications are a good match. FUSILLI is a transnational EU Horizon 2020 project focusing on sustainable food systems. The name (also a pasta variety!) is an acronym that stands for Fostering the Urban food System transformation through Innovative Living Labs Implementation. With twelve cities participating all across the EU, with dozens of implementing partners, the objective is for them to find and share ways of supporting the transition towards circular, healthy and inclusive food systems in urban, peri-urban and nearby rural areas, placing citizens in the heart of the process. Each city will develop a so-called Food 2030 Living Lab, a kind of open innovative



The opening party of community farming boxes in Käräjätörmä, Tampere.

ecosystem, to implement and try new actions through all stages of the food chain. These actions can concern everything from production and processing to logistics and food waste, as well as governance. In the Tampere region, Sanna and her colleagues have initiated multiple activities in relation to farming, cooking and tasting. One of the basic ideas they are wanting to establish and strengthen is the appreciation of food and its value and how it is produced.

- With urban microfarming we make it possible for everyone to experience what it means to grow your own food and to really understand the processes before it ends up on the table, Sanna Teinilä explains.

Ecofellows is since 2019 also immersed in the project Kiertö (Circle or Cycle in English) that focuses on job development in the circular economy. The subheading of the project is “Functional Learning Environments for the Circular Economy” and one of the core activities in Kiertö is the expert service provided to both employers and job-seekers to increase their skills in circular economy and accelerate a transition towards it. As an unemployed individual, the project can give you career guidance, circular economy training, business contacts and company visits.

Sanna’s and Ekokumppanit’s most recent undertaking is a waste sorting design competition that was launched during the autumn of 2021. The name of this project is From Home to Recycling, or rather Kotona kiertoon!, and the challenge

that it addresses is to find a convenient and space-saving way of sorting “waste” already in the households and residential buildings. Valuable materials must be kept in circulation for as long as possible, and the goal of the competition, obviously, is to find solutions that make the sorting intuitive and smooth. The competition was open for everyone but it

## Ecofellows Ltd. / Ekokumppanit Oy

EcoFellows is owned by the City of Tampere, Tampere regional waste management Ltd. and Tampere Power Utility. The company was founded in 2003 with the purpose of promoting sustainable development in the Tampere region and to assist public organizations and private companies in the area with their sustainability goals. EcoFellows organizes many events, campaigns and seminars and educational events for the public, is very active in social media and has good collaboration with the local media. EcoFellows implements versatile, sustainable services in an environmentally and human-oriented manner.

was especially targeted towards students in the field of design or construction. According to Sanna Teinilä, new smart ways of source sorting is really needed to get the waste fractions right from the beginning and to curb the flow of household trash.

- Unfortunately, the volume of unsorted waste is currently increasing in Finland, she laments.

As regards to the Leader Circle project, Sanna Teinilä is pleased to be part of it and to be representing Ecofellows. It has been exciting to meet new people from different professions and to get fresh ideas for future projects and innovations.

