



# ***Towards the Responsive University***

***The Regional Role of Eastern Finland Universities***

*Professor Ilkka Virtanen*

FINHEEC International Conference on

## **The Response of Higher Education Institutions to Regional Needs**

Helsinki, 22-23 March, 1999





## *The regional role of universities in the official statutes*

- **The new university act**
  - No reference to regional tasks
- **The annual agreements between the universities and the Ministry of Education**
  - No specific reference to Eastern Finland (UoJ an exception)
- **The regional engagement not strongly figured in the strategic planning processes**





# *The Evaluation Context*

- **International trends**
  - growing concern to regional challenges
- **The national situation**
  - EF universities have reached a nationally and internationally established position; it is time to evaluate also their regional role
  - the new university act gives universities greater freedom; is the regional role a part of the mission?





## *The Evaluation Context, cont.*

- The establishment of the new polytechnics (AMK institutions) with very strong regional affiliations
  - » universities have to react
- Changes in the structure of regional governance
  - » regional councils, regional offices of central government departments, EU structural funds etc.



# *Regional Dimensions of the Universities*

## ● Enrolment profiles

EF universities' share of the total enrolment

from the EF provinces, development 1977      1995

- Kuopio province:                      25%      53%
- Kymi province :                        24%      52%
- Mikkeli province:                      24%      45%
- North Karelia province: 45%      77%
- Decrease in Helsinki (by a half)
- Jyväskylä and Tampere almost the same (N-K!)





# *Regional Dimensions of the Universities*

## ● Effects on the Regional Economy

Direct effects (salaries, acquiring of commodities and services, student consumption etc.)

- 341 MFIM (UoJ) + 207 MFIM (UoK) + 155 MFIM (LUT)
- 1100 pers. (UoJ) + 1150 pers. (UoK) + 530 pers. (LUT)

Indirect effects (influence of direct money flows on production, tax incomes, employment etc.)

- 515 MFIM (UoJ) + 322 MFIM (UoK) + 233 MFIM (LUT)
- 980 pers. (UoJ) + 660 pers. (UoK) + 480 pers. (LUT)





# *Regional Dimensions of the Universities*

- **Universities as regional dynamos**
  - Technology villages, science parks, centres for expertise
  - Innovations and entrepreneurship
  - R & D
  - Education and consultancy
- **Cultural and social benefits**
- **Way to internationalisation**
- **Putting the city on the map**





## *Two models: Eastern Finland vs. Oulu*

- The result from a long and hectic political debate in the 1960's: three separate and independent universities
  - Each university has its own profile
  - Together they form almost a full-service university with 10% share of the Finnish university system (after 30 years)
- University of Oulu has also (after 40 years) a 10% share of the "Finnish University"
  - Same quantitative results with similar resources!
  - Differences in the regional impact?







## General Remarks

- The benefits of the universities are highly appreciated by the local stakeholders. They are trade-marked goods for the cities.
- The influence is more local than regional, the effects decrease sharply as a function of distance (especially in rural areas)
- Deficiencies in co-operation between the regional agencies of different ministries
  - MinEdu has no regional dimension in HE





## *Recommendations for the Universities*

- A need for an increased systematism in local and regional external income generation
  - it has been based more on individual activity than on systematic steering by the university
  - financial monitoring of interdisciplinary research groups and projects needs to be redefined
  - external funding should be more closely integrated as a part of the total funding
- A need for more documentary and result-oriented internal fund allocation procedures



## *Recommendations for the Universities*

- Systematic contracting – covering both the use of the human resources and financial arrangements – between the departments and CTD's should be established
- Universities and polytechnics should be seen – more than it is done at present – as partners and regional collaborators
- The university as a whole should share in the ownership of the regional mission



## *Recommendations for Central Governm.*

- An interdepartmental (Min. of Education, Labour, Industry and Interior) review of the role of HE (both universities and polytechnics) in regional development across the whole of Finland should be undertaken
- It should be considered whether indicators based on regional impact of the institutions could be developed and added to the set of performance criteria (the “third role” of the universities)





## *The Regional Role as a Part of the Mission of the University*

- Do the universities have a dilemma in balancing the endeavours towards
  - a national and international reputation and success
  - regional initiativity and development work?
- In order to benefit its region best the university has to fulfil national and international criteria of a high standard in its research and teaching
- Think globally, act locally! (P. Barnevik, ABB)

