



## Product development and networking project utilizing Green Care methodology

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Green Care is an operational model, mobilizing individuals and utilizing rural environments, animals and nature to enhance the rehabilitation and well-being of various customer segments.

Luontohoiva - green care project is sponsored by European Social Fund and it has been running about a year. The main implementor is Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences and Ruralia Institute and ProAgria are partners in cooperation. Ruralia institute is an independent institute at the University of Helsinki. The activities of the Ruralia Institute are multidisciplinary research, training and research geared to innovation development. ProAgria is the leading agricultural expert organization in Finland, serving members as well as other rural entrepreneurs.

The target group of the Luontohoiva-project is the companies in region Southern Savonia, Finland that are offering or/and that are interested in developing Green Care services. In our project we have 20 companies, most of them operating in countryside:

- 5 nursing homes (1 for seniors, 2 for mentally ill, 1 for mentally handicapped and 1 for those suffering drug abuse)
- 5 professional family foster homes (for children and teenagers)
- 5 farms (3 of the farms having dairy cattle and 2 of them horses -> horse therapy)
- 5 tourism companies offering nature activities for travelers

We have offered education on Green Care methods for our target group (social, health and tourism entrepreneurs and their workers) with the goal of creating customer-based Green Care services. As part of the Green Care training we arrange excursions in Finland and abroad. We also offer know-how and support on product development and business operations.

A part of the project is dedicated to research: network research for evaluation the effects of nature-assisted interventions among different client groups. The aim of the evaluation is to find out what are the mechanisms supporting client's rehabilitation and in what kind of circumstances and living conditions those mechanisms may promote client's wellbeing. The network research addresses the role of social networks (understood broadly as inter-firm and inter-actor collaboration) in the building up of green care entrepreneurship and industry in Finland.

The main targets of Luontohoiva-project are to develop service models that base on Green Care methodology and creating networks between the entrepreneurs, specialists and authorities.

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